

KENNY MAUTHE
Mauthe Family Dairy – McComb, MS

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen
Southern Foodways Alliance
Project: New Orleans Eats/Guardians of Tradition

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Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Sunday, August 6th 2006 and I'm in McComb, Mississippi. Could you state your name and your birth date and how you make your living?

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Kenny Mauthe: This is Kenny Mauthe. My birth date is September 3, 1960, and I'm a dairy farmer.

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SR: And can you tell me, to start out, where you grew up?

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KM: I grew up in Folsom, Louisiana.

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SR: On a dairy farm?

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KM: On a dairy farm, yeah. My family—I'm the third generation dairy farmer. My grandfather and them actually dairied in the New Orleans area.

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SR: And we have some pictures here of that first farm. Can you explain to me again for the record where that was?

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KM: Okay. That was on Claiborne and Forstall Street and my grandfather, they dairied there. That's where they—when they settled into this country, that's where they dairied and they delivered milk door-to-door and also made cheese—Creole cream cheese—and delivered it door-to-door in the city.

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SR: Where did they settle here from? Where did they come from?

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KM: From France and Germany.

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SR: And that was your—so that was your paternal side?

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KM: Yeah, that was my paternal side.

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SR: It—were they dairy farmers in Europe?

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KM: Yeah, they were dairy farmers there and my—my grandmother’s family, they were all truck farmers.

00:01:45

SR: All what kind of farmers?

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KM: Truck farmers, they were truck farmers—grew vegetables and—.

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SR: I didn’t know that term. [*Laughs*]

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KM: [*Laughs*] Yeah, that’s what they called them.

00:01:56

SR: And where was her family from?

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KM: They were from Germany.

00:02:02

SR: Okay. And so from the very beginning, your grandfather made Creole cream cheese?

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KM: Yes. They—my grandfather and them made Creole cream cheese. That was back whenever they made it with raw milk. That was before the pasteurization act had come into place. And yeah, they made Creole cream cheese.

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SR: Were you—was the farm in the Lower Ninth Ward part of your childhood?

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KM: No, it wasn't—it was part of my dad's childhood.

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SR: And—and can you tell me what your grandfather's and father's names are?

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KM: My grandfather's name is Henry Mauthe and my father's name is Henry Mauthe.

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SR: Okay, and so at some point in your father's lifetime, they moved the farm to Folsom?

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KM: Uh-hm; by—well, my grandfather sold out of the dairy business and my father took it over, and he was the one that moved to Folsom. When—when the city started to grow, that was whenever he moved to Folsom, Louisiana.

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SR: And you were telling me earlier about how I think it was your grandfather delivered directly into New Orleans?

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KM: Yeah, they delivered directly from—from house to house and then they had one or two restaurants that they delivered to in the French Quarter. I know there's one that is named Tujague's that is still there today.

00:03:46

SR: When did you know that you were going to be a dairy farmer?

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KM: Probably when I was 15 years-old—that's you know—I decided then that that's what I was going to do for a living—to make a living.

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SR: So it wasn't always—it wasn't always in your consciousness?

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KM: No; from time to time there was other things I thought that I might would want to do, but when I was probably 15 years-old I decided that was what I wanted to do.

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SR: And did you grow up working on the farm?

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KM: Yeah, yeah; I grew up working on the farm. We dairied—my dad dairied in Folsom and that's where I grew up and we diary(ed) there.

00:04:42

SR: At that point—so I should say for the record that you more recently have been known for reviving Creole cream cheese in New Orleans. It sort of fell out of the culture for a little while, and I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about why it almost went extinct.

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KM: Borden's Milk Plant was the last one to—to make Creole cream cheese probably 25 years ago, and from my understanding the reason that they quit making it is because it—it was too labor-intense to make. And that's what kind of give us the idea to make it, because the people in New Orleans had craved for Creole cream cheese for years since they quit making it and we felt like we could do well if we made Creole cream cheese.

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SR: And I guess at some point even your—your family’s dairy farm stopped making it.

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KM: Yeah. I—my grandfather and my father, they quit making it whenever they passed the pasteurization act, and they had to—they either had to pasteurize their own milk, go through the expense of pasteurizing their own milk, or they could just sell their milk to the local dairies that—that were—that were doing the processing, and that’s when they quit making it.

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SR: Okay.

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KM: That was kind of the time that—what happened then was the smaller dairies that couldn’t afford to—to put in the processing equipment, they kind of had no other choice but to sell their milk to the processing plants and that’s kind of what started the big processors coming into the picture over the years and that. That—the farmers kind of got away from—from direct marketing their own products because it was easier just to sell it to the—the large co-ops and that.

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SR: And so then it’s—it’s on the—so then the farmers stopped being the producers of the—

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KM: Right.

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SR: —for the product beyond the milk?

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KM: Beyond the milk, right; when the milk left the farm, that was the last time that they had anything to do with it. And it was into—in the processor’s hands then of—of how it was being handled, how it was being processed, and—and what they’ve done with it.

00:07:55

SR: And can you describe for me what Creole cream cheese is like?

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KM: It’s—it’s almost—I don’t know; the way I would I guess would—would tell you it would be like, it’s almost—it has the tartness in one sense of a yogurt and it has the texture of like a cottage cheese.

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SR: And how do you eat it?

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KM: Traditionally it was eaten—people sprinkled sugar on it and eat it just straight out of the container like that. And there's—there's all kinds of ways: you can put fresh fruit on it or you can use it to cook with; it's good in—in pastas. You can make cheesecakes with it. It's good like that.

00:09:04

SR: When you were growing up, how did your family eat it?

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KM: With sugar—they sprinkled sugar on it and ate it straight out of the container.

00:09:12

SR: For breakfast or—?

00:09:14

KM: For breakfast—yeah, for breakfast—that was their breakfast—that was our breakfast.

[Laughs]

00:09:19

SR: And so were you also missing it?

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KM: Probably not as much as what [*Laughs*] my parents were and my grandparents, you know. I mean, I liked it but I never grew accustomed to the taste of it like my parents did because when—when—it was never really around when I was young—not like they grew up with it. I mean, they grew up with it day-to-day. But I never did. I mean, it was something that really wasn't around that much whenever I was growing up.

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SR: I imagine that you had some customers who you actually got to meet because you sold it at the farmers market—

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KM: Yeah.

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SR: —who were more like your grandparents and your parents, and what—what was the reaction like when you came out with it?

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KM: It—it was just unbelievable, you know. I had—we had people that shopped with us that would buy a container or two of Creole cream cheese and would talk about—they would bring it to their grandmother, and how it would bring a tear to their grandmother's eye whenever they brought that to them, you know, that they—it had been so long since they had Creole cream

cheese and that was how much they enjoyed it, you know. It's—it was just people talked about how it brought them back to their childhood and—and it was just unreal.

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SR: How did you get—get around the—the obstacles that made people stop making it—the pasteurization? What did you all do?

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KM: Well actually we do—I mean, we still pasteurize the milk and that but we—we looked at equipment on a small scale to—to be able to process it, and basically we just took a chance that it would work, you know. I mean it was—it was just a chance that we took in making it that it would work and the health department actually encouraged us a lot to—to do it whenever we started talking to them about it that it—that they thought there was a need for it.

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SR: They thought there was a need for Creole cream cheese?

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KM: They thought there was a need for Creole cream cheese, yeah, because they had told us there was one supermarket in New Orleans that was still making it and that they couldn't make near enough for what could be sold there.

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SR: Hmm, what supermarket was that?

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KM: Dorignac's, yeah.

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SR: Oh.

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KM: They were still making it in the store and that was—they couldn't sell it other than in the store because they didn't have the equipment to package it to sell it out—outside their store.

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SR: And so when you decided to do this, you had a—a full dairy farm operating?

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KM: Right.

00:12:43

SR: And—and so what—how did it—how did it change how you were farming already?

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KM: It—it made us look to—to farm on a very small scale, that we could direct market our product. Instead of trying to milk 120 to 150 cows, we could milk 20—10 to 20 cows and—and—and turn a better profit on—on a smaller number of cows than we could milking a bunch of cows and having a lot of land to have to take care of and all of that, and—and could—could possibly give us a better way of—of life on the farm.

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SR: And so you—you got rid of some of your animals and—?

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KM: Yeah, we sized down to—to about 40 head of cows is what we sized down to.

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SR: Okay—okay and then your day became not only milking but also processing?

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KM: But processing, uh-hm; we started wearing about three different hats. We used to just be dairy farmers. We went from being dairy farmers to—to being processors, and then we also went from being processors to marketing our product. So we—we—**[Laughs]** we was—we had to branch out in different areas to—to be able to market our product instead of just being on the farm.

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SR: And how did you do that?

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KM: With the help of my family. We—my wife and—and our four children were a big help to us. They—we took turns here on the farm doing the milking and we—we rotated in and out at the plant doing the processing and also going to the—to the farmers markets and selling our product.

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SR: Can you take me through the process of making the Creole cream cheese?

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KM: To—what we done was we pasteurized our milk and—and after we pasteurized it, we cooled it down to a certain temperature and—and then we would—we would skim the cream. We would run the milk through a cream separator and skim the cream off of the milk and then we would—we would put our—put the skim milk in a vat and—in a cheese vat—and we would add our cultures and everything that we was going to put in it, and we would let it set for a day. And then we would dip the curd out of there and—and then let it sit another day in drain cups. And—and then after that, it would be ready to be packaged. And so—

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SR: So it's really fat—essentially a fat-free product?

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KM: Well no, it's not because you take the cream—the cream that you take off of the skim milk you add back to it on the finished product, so no, it's not fat-free. *[Laughs]*

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SR: Well it doesn't taste like it.

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KM: It would be fat-free if you didn't add the cream back to it. Which actually it—it—from the research that we've done, our cows on the dairy are all grass-fed, so though—the grass-fed milk, and with the milk being pasteurized and not homogenized, and the same thing with the cream—the cream was pasteurized; it was never homogenized. Actually, the cream was healthier for you than the conventional creams that you buy in the store that has been homogenized or ultra-pasteurized.

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SR: Can you tell me the difference between—what pasteurization and homogenization is?

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KM: Pasteurization is bringing the milk to a certain temperature to kill supposedly the bad bacterias in that milk. Homogenization breaks the fat molecules open in the milk and makes it more readily absorbed for your body—is what homogenization is. Pasteurization does not break the fat molecules open, so the fats that has caused a lot of the problems of the—a lot of the heart

problems, your body—in pasteurized milk, your body cannot absorb those fats. So there's supposedly—the pasteurized milk is healthier for you, or the pasteurized cream is healthier for you, than the homogenized.

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SR: Why—why do you have to—or why do people homogenize? I don't understand.

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KM: Well homogenization, I think—I don't know exactly what year they started homogenizing milk but from what I understand, homogenization was all about getting a more uniform product. The big plants wanted a more uniform product and—and that's why they went to homogenization, because when they homogenized milk and distributed the fat all throughout the milk when it broke—when it broke it up, so you didn't have the cream that rose to the top of your jug. And supposedly they—they claim that they had a milk that the shelf life would be a week to two weeks longer on it than what—homogenized milk shelf life would be a week to two weeks longer compared to pasteurized milk...is what I've been told. But I think it was just more the big—you know, the large plants, they had so much volume that they were trying to move and they wanted the longest shelf life they could get, and by homogenizing the milk it—it made it more uniform and it made it last longer.

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SR: Okay. Did you homogenize—was your milk homogenized before you downscaled? When you—when you sold it—I guess you sold it to a co-op?

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KM: We sold—yeah; our milk was—it was—what we done is we sold—we were under a contract to the milk co-op, and we sold all our milk to them that was produced on the farm, and then that milk they sold to the large co-ops like Borden's, Brown's, Dairy Fresh, and they all homogenized it. So the milk that was produced on our farm before we started doing our own processing was homogenized.

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SR: Before you started doing your own processing were your cows all grass-fed?

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KM: No, we actually were pushing our cows for production before we started processing. We was trying to get the most milk that we could get out of every individual cow because the price that we was getting paid was very small. So we was—you know we was—we was pushing them; we was pushing all of the feed, all of the grain that we could get in them. We used to feed a lot of silage, and when we started doing our processing, we didn't have to put our cows under that kind of stress anymore. We could just let them have grass and—and just let them produce to whatever their potential was instead of trying to—to add all of this stuff to their feed and—and to get them to produce as much as they could. So the—even the cows, when we started doing this they were put on a program where they were a lot less stressful, too you know. It made a difference for them also. Before we started doing this, I mean we—the amount of—of things that we was feeding, we put—we put our cows under a lot of stress, and trying to get everything we could out

of them and we had a lot of vet bills—veterinary bills. We had sick cows. I mean, it wasn't nothing and—and it wasn't—we—from trying to feed them so much, it wasn't anything uncommon to get a cow that would have an upset stomach and she might go off of her feed for a day or two and you had to have the veterinarian out here to treat her, or we did a lot of the treating ourselves. And you had an expense of trying to keep cows from getting sick and that all the time. So, it made a difference on our cows—on our animals—after we went to processing our own milk.

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SR: They got sick less?

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KM: They got sick less, yeah. When we went to strictly grass, they—which we do feed a little grain in the barn and we do that just to maintain their body weight but we've had very, very little—we probably haven't had a veterinarian out here on the farm in the last, I'd say two years, by making that transition to grass.

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SR: Hmm, that's so interesting.

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KM: Yep, it made a big difference on the animals.

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SR: Did you transition—did you make the transition with animals you already had?

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KM: Yeah, uh-hm; yeah, it was the same animals that we had that we made the transition with.

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SR: That's fascinating.

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KM: Yeah, we had read a lot of stuff about the dairies over in France. You know, they claim that there's a lot of dairies over in France, your European countries, and they milk just a few cows, you know. They might milk 10 cows—20 cows, and we had so many people that would come to the market that traveled overseas and would tell you that the dairy products—they could compare our dairy products with what they got over there, you know. And they said that their dairy products over there were just by far better than what we had here in the United States. And the more we got to reading up on the way they farmed over there, it was a lot of grass farming that they were doing. And we actually had, you know—in—when we were dairy—when we was milking 120 to 150 cows, you know, we planted grass in the winter-time but we done so many other things like feed silage and all of that, and we've always drank milk out of the tank. We've drank raw milk out of the tank, you know, and—and we'll buy milk at the store too, but we've never paid no attention to the color of the milk, you know. The milk was white and that's what we always thought it was [*Laughs*] and—and I never paid that much difference—never paid that

much attention to the taste. Well, when we started doing this and—and we was bottling our milk, we started noticing in the wintertime whenever rye grasses—we'll plant rye grass like in September and we'll start grazing on it in November if we get the rain and all. Well November through May is some of the best milk that you'll produce. The weather is cool; you've got a top quality grass for your animals, and we never really paid that much attention to the color and the taste. Well we noticed whenever we got on rye grass that the carotenes was coming through that grass and the milk, and we would get—the milk and the—like this time of the year, well it's not as much right now as whenever we—you start getting to the end of August, the first of September. You'll kind of hit a dry spell and your summer grass plays out—your milk will get a pale white color, you know; you really don't have that much color to it, and then when you start raising rye grass it will kind of throw a golden color to it. And we actually had customers that had been buying milk from us after two years would want to know what we was doing different, like from November through May, because the milk tasted so much sweeter. And—and all it was—it was the grass that we was feeding; that's what made all the difference. It give the—the grass—having that good type of grass for them even put a sweetness in the milk, so it—. And even in the cheese and that, you know it made a difference on making it; it made a better quality cheese. And that was something that, you know, when we was dairying before we never paid no attention to none of that. We was just milking, trying to get as much milk as we could get. We never realized the difference in the quality of it.

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SR: Well when you started making this different milk, did you personally like it?

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KM: Yeah, oh yeah. Well we did because we had already been drinking the raw milk. *[Laughs]* You know we never—drinking store-bought milk, we never really drank a lot of it but because we always just took milk straight out of the tank and drank it and—but it just amazed me the difference—even after pasteurizing it, it was—the difference in the taste of it and the taste of the—the other brands of milk. I never realized there was that much difference in there, but there was.

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SR: Yeah, so you—you end up with a completely different product—not just the cream cheese, but your milk.

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KM: The milk, too yeah.

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SR: That was a big leap of—of faith, making that transition. What—what made you want to do that?

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KM: Well it was kind of a do or die situation for us. We was in a position to where we wasn't—you know we—we wasn't surviving here on the farm milking 120 cows. It was just—it was like the more cows you milked you—it was just as hard to—to make a living on the farm, and we

knew we had to do something different to—to survive and—and to carry on another generation in the dairy business. And so we—you know, we had read about—we had read about a guy in Alabama that was doing the same thing. He was processing his milk and had read about a lot of dairies up the East Coast, up into Canada, that was doing the same thing—that was processing their milk and making cheese and that. And so we figure—and you know, it was—it was a chance but it—we was kind of left with—with no options because it wasn't getting any better, you know, doing it the conventional way. They want you to milk 200—300 head of cows and that's not the answer to—to survive that's for sure.

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SR: Did—did you know, going to the market and meeting your customers, probably sometimes—in some cases for the first time—did that change your relationship to your—how you spent your days?

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KM: Yeah. It, you know—it just really made—going to—I guess whenever we was—when we were dairying before, the—the people in the city, the—the milk co-op always made you feel like the people in the city didn't want to pay for your product you know, and—and after we started going to the market and here you're meeting all these people, it just made you feel so much better that—that people thought as much of your products and what you were doing; and just—it just gave you a whole new outlook on what you were doing in life. That's for sure; it made you really feel good about what you were doing. And we—we got to meet a lot of people and—and they were just like family, you know. That—that's how it was.

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SR: Well I—I definitely made it to your table too late a few times.

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KM: [*Laughs*] Yeah, in the very beginning when Slow Food endorsed us and they done the first article in the *Times Picayune*, we were selling like 100—maybe 125 cream cheese at a market. And—and when the *Times Picayune*, they did the story on us we were selling like 500 cups in—in an hour's time. [*Laughs*] Yeah; it was unreal, yeah.

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SR: How many gallons of milk would that take?

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KM: We used to get—the Creole cream cheese is different than any other cheese, and I don't know why but you might today—like most cheeses, you get a pound of cheese out of every gallon of milk is basically, you know, what you're going to get. You might make Creole cream cheese today and you might get four cups of cheese out of a gallon of milk and—and you might make it next week and you might get six cups of cheese out of a gallon of milk, and you might the following week—you might not even get four, you know. And I could never figure out—and I had a guy actually that worked at the milk plant in Franklinton, where you come through. I don't know if you knew where you come through Franklinton? Okay, well you come through Franklinton; Borden's actually had a plant there that supplied just about—they made probably

75-percent of the Creole cream cheese that was sold in the New Orleans area 25 years—30 years ago, and they moved the plant to Jackson. But there was a guy that worked there that actually—that come and helped me kind of—he really—he come there and showed me a lot of things they—they did at the plant and it helped me. But he was telling me one day that all the cheeses they made there, he said the Creole cream cheese was the only one that would never do the same thing every time they did it. And they made mozzarella there; they was making cheddar there and all of that, and he said Creole cream cheese was the only thing—he said you didn't know from week to week what you was going to get out of it. So I don't know what it is about it, but you don't—you know but it—on the average we would dip, you know, 500 to 600 cups out of 110—115-gallon vat of milk is what we would get, and I would say that would probably be the average because that was—we usually—we'd do 110 to 115—120 gallons of skim milk at a time—we'd make cheese with that. And that—on an average that was probably about how many cups of cheese you would get out of it.

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SR: So when you were going to the market three days a week, you were doing that a lot?

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KM: Yeah, we was doing it a lot. We was working like 24 hours a day—because we were small. We never realized, you know, that it was going to take off like that. We was hoping that it would, but we never realized that it would, and the equipment that we had was small equipment and the pasteurizer and all of that, and when the markets took off like that it wasn't nothing for— for me to—to—to put in 20—22 hours of making—making cheese. I had this one old guy that

used to come help me because my daddy, he never did do nothing. You know, he didn't—he never did none of the process. He didn't—never did want to learn how to process the milk. He never did want to do none of that and the—this old guy that worked at the plant, I had found out about him and he come and help—I got him to come help me, and there was days that he would come at nighttime a lot of times and I would go sleep in the truck for a couple of hours and he would be doing the processing, and then he'd come get me. **[Laughs]** But it was wild there for a while that—the amount of hours we was putting in, doing it.

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SR: So you would sleep in the truck because—your processing plant wasn't here at your home, the farm.

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KM: Right, it wasn't here. It was down there. See it's an hour from here to Folsom. And what I would do is when we'd get through milking here, that tank that's sitting out in our front yard, that stainless steel tank, I would load the milk in it and then haul it on a trailer to Folsom and then unload it there, and then we'd process it all there. And—and then I'd come back home with the tank and then reload it up the next day. And—and that was something else. It had taken—I missed a lot of my two boys'—there's a lot of things that I missed with them that—because I was gone from here six days, seven days a week, because we was processing—. I went to the market—the only market, actually—I used to go on Tuesdays some with my wife and—but it got to where she was going by herself and then I always did the Saturday market; that was usually the one that I went to and—and I processed every day except Saturday. I'd even go down on

Sunday and process. I'd make cheese on Sunday to have ready for Tuesday a lot of times. Or what I would do Friday, I'd go back Sunday and then have it ready for Tuesday. So it—

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SR: So going to the market actually made your workload hard—more you know, that added to your workload?

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KM: Yeah, it did. It—it added to our workload but it got us out because what—a lot of what happened, we had so many—we had people in line you know for 45 minutes. We'd have a line for 45 minutes to an hour and—and that lasted for a while and people got tired of standing in line and—and a lot of times we'd run out. And we had so many people that come to us and asked us, you know, *would ya'll try and put your all's products in this store and that store?* And we decided that we would try and do that, and we was able then to get more—. You know a lot of those people quit coming to the market, but yet they were able to go to the grocery stores and get it.

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SR: So you did get it into stores, huh?

00:38:53

KM: Yeah. We had 20—we had 20 or 22 stores in the city that we delivered to.

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SR: That you delivered—was it just the Creole cream cheese or also milk?

00:39:04

KM: The milk never would sell. We never—the stores that we tried selling the milk in, it just never did really move. You had a few people that would buy, you know, a couple half-gallons. The Zuppardo's out in Metairie was a store; they wanted the milk. They wanted to handle the milk. We put the milk in there; they had just a select few people that would come in there and buy it and—and I mean it's—the young people, when they saw that cream on top of that milk, the first thing they thought is *something is wrong with this*, you know, because I mean *this isn't what milk is supposed to look like*. **[Laughs]** And so that killed a lot of your sales, you know. What I mean—with that milk not being homogenized, if they didn't know what they was looking at, they thought something was wrong with it. And the only—Whole Foods, when they opened up on Arabella, they wanted our product. Well we never did have the barcodes on our labels; well when we went there, the guy said, you know, that if we didn't have our barcode on our label that they wouldn't take our product. And a lot of the other stores, what they done—we never had it on our Creole cream cheese container, but they would do—they would label it themselves; they would put their own barcode on it. And the guy at Whole Foods said that, you know—he said *we're not going to do that*, he said, *because we look at what our labor situation is here*. Well we had—we didn't sell—we sold more Creole cream cheese than we did milk, and when we bought our labels we had to buy like 10,000 labels at a time. So we was sitting here with all these labels, so by the time we got to the point to put the barcode on our labels and we went back to Whole Foods, they told us they didn't have room for it. And that would have probably been our best

place because people that shop at Whole Foods know what that milk is, you know. Whereas your other—all the other stores that we was in, people just wasn't familiar unless it was an old person that remembered that milk like that. So we never did—we never did get in there, and I think that would have probably been our best milk sales out of all the grocery stores if we would have sold milk anywhere.

00:41:41

SR: Did you also sell to restaurants?

00:41:44

KM: Uh-hm, yeah; we had—we had quite a few restaurants in the city. The Bourbon House was our biggest user of milk and they used it in their bourbon milk punch, their signature drink. They used a lot of it. That was our biggest seller, was in there. But we had several, you know, other restaurants that would buy cream cheese, or they would buy a—you know, a little bit of milk to use. Scott—I can't think of his last name—that has Stella's—.

00:42:24

SR: Yeah, Scott Boswell?

00:42:25

KM: Yeah; he said that—he used to buy a lot of cream from us, and he said it made the best soups or whatever it was that he ever had made, you know whenever he was getting the cream. And he—he bought a lot from us.

00:42:40

SR: What sort of things would the chefs make with the cream cheese?

00:42:45

KM: I'll tell you the truth, the Red Fish Grill used it and I have no idea what they did with it over there. [*Laughs*] We had a few that was making cheesecakes with it, but there were several of them—well, my wife used to sell cheesecake. She made the Creole cream cheese cheesecakes and she sold to Bacco's for probably about three years, and Mr. Lewis who was the purchasing agent there, he used to get the cream cheese and Red Fish Grill would pick it up from him and I really—I don't—. We never even went there; we never delivered there. I used to just deliver everything to Bacco's, and I had people that would come to the market and tell me that it was on the menu over there, you know, but I never really knew exactly what they were doing with it there.

00:43:42

SR: I'm curious to know how you figured out how to make the—what recipe you used. Was it the man from Franklinton, or what recipe did you use initially?

00:43:55

KM: It was—actually Doctor—a guy Doctor Gough from LSU had kind of built a recipe for us. He—he was a big help to us and the—the—Mike Vorasic with the health department, he had brought us to Dr. Gough over at LSU, and Dr. Gough kind of put a recipe together for us to make

it. And that was the original recipe that we had started—started off with, and then I kind of changed it from there. We ran into a few different problems with different things and—and we made some changes in it. But he—he—and basically, you know, the Centannis were well known—the Gold Seal Creamery in New Orleans—for their Creole cream cheese and basically the recipe that he had was pretty similar—almost the same as the one that they used over at Gold Seal Creamery.

00:44:59

SR: Hmm, and is that—do you know how to spell Dr. Geoff's last name?

00:45:03

KM: It's G—G-e-o-f-f.

00:45:07

SR: Oh okay.

00:45:10

KM: I think that's how you spell it. [*Laughs*] [**Kenny corrected the spelling after we stopped recording.**]

00:45:13

SR: Do you have any idea where Creole cream cheese came from; was it the French?

00:45:18

KM: Let's see, **[Laughs]** it was—Lord, I've been away from the market a year but I usually have that one down. I don't—it was—I know the—the Spanish—is it the Spanish or the French?—and the Spanish when there was no refrigeration and everybody had a cow or two that they milked—they milked them and whatever milk they didn't use for the household they would let curdle and put it in a cheesecloth and hang it underneath the oak trees. And that's where they got their Creole cream cheese, but Creole—Creole comes from—what was it, the native word *Criollo* or *Crioulo*, I think is how it goes. I don't know; Poppy would be the one to—**[Laughs]**. As many times as when I was asked that, and I always could spit it out; I can't today. **[Laughs]**

00:46:38

SR: You're a little out of practice.

00:46:39

KM: Yeah, that's it—it's been a year and it's—I'm out of practice for sure. **[Laughs]**

00:46:44

SR: Well when you were growing up, I was wondering were there dairy farmers who just made it for themselves—for their whole families, that you know of?

00:46:52

KM: Yeah. Well, not when I was growing up—when my dad and them were growing up. You know when I—actually, when I came along they were—my dad and them they were milking like

50 to 60 cows and their big thing was—was selling the milk to the co-op, and which—I'm the youngest of four children. My brother is the oldest and then I have two sisters and they probably would remember more of those kinds of things than what I did. But when I came along, it was mostly just, you know, you was milking cows to—to sell your milk to the co-ops and that. There wasn't any dairies that was doing—doing their own processing.

00:47:47

SR: Well, you mentioned the next generation earlier. Can you tell me about your family—how many kids you have?

00:47:58

KM: Okay; we have four children. We have two daughters and two sons, and they will be the fourth generation dairy farmers in our family. They—the—the—actually, both our daughters are very interested in farming and—and the boys, they're at an age now to where they—they—you know, they don't know what they want to do. They're just wanting to play football [*Laughs*] and stuff like that, but there's a possibility that they will want to farm and—and I hope you know—our youngest daughter, Katie—our oldest daughter, Sarah, she—she works at the hospital and she is just dying to be able to—to come back on the farm and be able to do something like this. And—and our youngest daughter, Katie, she loves it also. She actually helps us milk and all, still sometimes now. But their heart is in it; there's no doubt about that and I just hope, you know, that we can continue to do this and—and they can carry on that fourth generation of—of doing it.

00:49:18

SR: So for the record, the hurricane—you took a hit both physically and financially—

00:49:30

KM: Right.

00:49:30

SR: —from the hurricane.

00:49:32

KM: From the hurricane.

00:49:33

SR: And you're basically not farming right now. So when you said that you're—that Katie helps you milk now, did you mean now—?

00:49:42

KM: Yeah, we're still milking cows.

00:49:43

SR: You are?

00:49:43

KM: Yeah, we're still actually—we've—we've never stopped milking cows since the hurricane. We're just selling our milk to the co-op. We were under—we never dropped our contract with the co-op. When we started doing this, we was milking 120 cows. Well we didn't know if it was going to work or it wasn't going to work. Well the guy in Alabama kept his contract with the—the milk co-op, so it looked like it had worked real well for him and that's what we was going to do. We had all of this milk; we didn't know how much of it we was going to use to process, so we just kept our contract with them, and what we did is, every month I kept track of how much milk we used at the plant in Folsom and we bought our own milk back from the co-op. And we done that for four years. Well, we was at the point when we got down to just milking 40 cows, we was using 20—we was using half of that milk and we were at the point where we was going to drop our contract with the co-op and we wasn't going to sell to them because it—it had gotten to the point to where it was actually costing us money to buy our own milk back from them—what they was paying us and what we was having to pay for it in the—the first two years was just a paperwork shuffle and—and it got to where, well then they started charging us more than what they was paying us. And so—but we wasn't that concerned about it 'cause we was at the point, you know, to where we figured our business was established and we would just milk 20 cows and—and we wouldn't sell the co-op any milk anymore. Well, when the storm hit we—since we were still under the co-op, we—under the co-op we still had a place to sell our milk. They just started picking it all up here.

00:51:55

SR: I see.

00:51:54

KM: And so we're still milking, yeah; we still—we're milking 27 cows, is what we're actually milking here right now. It's just none of it's being processed. We sell it all to the co-op.

00:52:12

SR: Okay, and so—so Katie is helping with that?

00:52:17

KM: Uh-hm, yeah, Katie is actually fixing to have a baby in October and yeah, we're fixing to have our first grandbaby.

00:52:25

SR: Congratulations.

00:52:28

KM: And she comes up and helps. Well actually, I started working off the farm, I guess it's been five or six months now and—and actually my wife and Katie comes up and helps her. She does the milking—my wife does the milking and Katie comes and helps her out. And they milk every day because I leave early in the morning and I don't get home 'til late in the afternoon, and they've been taking care of this here.

00:52:59

SR: And the storm—what—the storm damaged your barn, is that right?

00:53:04

KM: It did—yeah, it damaged our barn.

00:53:08

SR: Uh-hm—yeah go ahead.

00:53:10

KM: We actually—the barn that we milk in—that afternoon it had ripped half the roof off and the half that it ripped off is the side that all the electrical boxes are on, and all of those were saturated with water so that—that night we actually milked them all by hand. And that next morning then we was able to dry everything out ‘cause I’ve got a generator that you run off the tractor, and we could have milked them that afternoon but everything was so wet you couldn’t do anything. And so we milked them by hand, and then the next day we used our generator. Now we milked for—we ran the generator for I think eight days and twice a day.

00:53:59

SR: And were you—I mean, was the co-op taking milk at that time?

00:54:03

KM: And all of that was poured down the drain. Yeah, we poured every bit of that down the drain. All we done was milked them to—to keep them healthy, you know. If we wouldn’t have milked them they—they would have got an infection in their—in their utter, and that would have

made them dry up to where they wouldn't have given any milk at all. So basically for that period of time—actually, where you come across the river over here, the milk—the guy that picks up the milk from here, he was stranded over there on the road with trees down on all sides of him.

[Laughs]

00:54:44

SR: Without any shelter?

00:54:46

KM: Uh-hm, yeah; they were trying to pick milk up that—that day during the storm, yeah. We—the damage, see we received a lot of damage up in here, but what our damage was—was trees down on power lines and roads, and that's where we got all our damage out here.

00:55:10

SR: If you're a dairy farmer, you can't evacuate?

00:55:14

KM: No, there's no evacuation. You've got to be here, yeah; you've got to be here. It's a seven-day a week, twice a day job.

00:55:26

SR: And so the goal—so since the storm, you haven't been processing the Creole cream cheese. But the goal is to do that again at some point.

KM: We will be doing it, you know. It could be six months from now, but we will be back doing it. If everything goes through with the—with selling our place and—and we'll sell it one way or the other—part of it within the next, I'd say, three to four weeks. And I've got a guy actually that—actually, the real estate agent that has it listed, him and his brother-in-law is an attorney, and they buy a lot of property and—and they'll go in and clean it up and they'll kind of develop it and then turn around and resell it, and he has—from the way he's been telling me that—to keep us from losing it—to keep the FHA from foreclosing on it, that he'll—they'll buy part of it and so with—if all of that—if we don't sell it to anybody else within the next couple of weeks, he's probably going to buy part of it and it will put us in a position then to where we'll be able to—to look at putting up a building and—and go back to processing our milk in that. I don't know if we're going to go back this time and do any milk—any bottled milk to—to drink. We're probably—probably what we're going to do, is just start out strictly making cheese and—and if—if we've got an excess of milk, we—we might go back to—to bottling some milk 'cause there's a lot more regulations when you go to bottling milk than what there is in making cheese, so we've kind of got our mind made up that we're probably going to start off with just making the Creole cream cheese, and we're going to look at doing some little short-aged cheeses and—and probably some mold-ripened cheeses. That's kind of what we're looking at. Martin's Wine Cellar was real interested probably two years ago—a year and a half ago—and—and doing some—some mold-ripened cheeses, so that's kind of what we're looking at. I don't know if they still are, but that's kind of the direction we're headed.

00:58:22

SR: What is a short-aged cheese?

00:58:25

KM: Well short-aged I guess would be like a chevre or something like that, you know. It's what you would call—I don't even know if you would call that a short-aged cheese. I think that's just more of a fresh soft cheese. I know there's some short-aged cheddars out there that—that are being made, and we might—I don't know if we'll make any cheddars or anything like that, but there's a couple of little cheeses. There's a lady over at—in Alabama that has a—a small dairy that—I don't know if you know Miss Alyce Birchenough?

00:59:05

SR: I think I've been there.

00:59:06

KM: You've been there?

00:59:06

SR: Is it called—what's it called—Sweet Home?

00:59:07

KM: Sweet Home, yeah. That's kind of what we're looking at—at doing, a lot of what she's doing there. She's—she makes some good little cheeses, and that's what—I think there's a big demand for it—for a fresh, you know, farmstead cheese. Yeah, I think there's a good demand.

00:59:29

SR: I'd buy it. *[Laughs]* One—one thing that we were talking about before I started recording that is interesting because it's topical now is that the farm that your father grew up on was in the Lower Ninth Ward, right in the area that totally flooded.

00:59:59

KM: Flooded, yeah.

01:00:00

SR: Just to mention that.

01:00:02

KM: Yeah.

01:00:06

SR: And I mean, in your lifetime was that area always residential?

01:00:13

KM: Yeah, in my lifetime it was—yeah, yep it always was. I never—I wasn't around whenever they was farming down there. *[Laughs]*

01:00:25

SR: Yeah, kind of hard to imagine that it was farmland.

01:00:28

KM: Yeah, it is hard to imagine. You know I've—my daddy, I've heard him talk about how they would walk from there to Canal Street. That was the big thing when they were young.

[Laughs] And I thought yeah, okay; you know, you wouldn't walk from there to Canal Street now. *[Laughs]* And Fats Domino—evidently wherever Fats Domino lived is where he's always lived because he's always told the story about, on Sunday evenings or Saturday evenings Fats Domino and them would be out there on the front porch playing music. And he said he'll never forget they was all out there drinking one Saturday or Sunday evening and he said they caught the sofa on fire. *[Laughs]* But yeah, it's—you know, it's hard to believe. My momma actually—she was raised out toward the lakefront and her—my grandpa, he dairied out there, and my grandma on my mother's side. And they used to deliver milk door-to-door, and they dairied out in that area, and it's just really hard to—to believe that they've done, you know, all what they've done down there—that there was actually farming going on down there. And I've heard them talk about the truck—in my grandmother's family, the vegetables that they used to grow—and see, they used to at that time, they used to go rent a stall at the old farmers market, and that's where they sold. And at one time it was a—a true farmers market, you know because the farmers there used to go there and sell their stuff.

01:02:26

SR: Are you talking down at the French Market?

01:02:28

KM: Yeah, the French Market—yeah. Yep.

01:02:34

SR: Did your dad ever talk about flooding in that area?

01:02:40

KM: They've talked about when Betsy hit; I've heard them talk about when Betsy hit. I've heard them talk about the big—the problem is the levees. They said—I've—all they've ever talked about was if a storm ever come and hit the city, that it would flood. Because years ago the water was able to get out, you know—that even though the city is as low as what it is, they didn't have the levees back then and the levee system is what—is what's going to keep the water in there. And they said once they built the levees, they always said that if a hurricane ever come that the city would flood. So—. I guess they was right. *[Laughs]*

01:03:33

SR: Guess so.

01:03:34

KM: Yeah, but I mean, you know I don't know. That's old people talking too, and I don't know, you know, what the purpose was of—of the levees or what all they done. You know, it might have been no other choice than building the levees, but that's what they always said. We was—I was at my grandma's one day and she was—she won't pull out old pictures very much but she had some old pictures of whenever they was digging the Industrial Canal, and sometimes you can get her to—to take out pictures and other times you can't 'cause I just think it's interesting to see stuff like that, you know, because they were all—they were farming there whenever they done all of that.

01:04:24

SR: Is—is she still alive?

01:04:27

KM: Uh-hm, yeah; she's still alive. She's 98 years old. [*Laughs*] Yep.

01:04:31

SR: She doesn't like to reminisce that much, huh?

01:04:34

KM: No, she won't hardly talk to anybody. She's kind of getting to where she really don't want to talk to anybody anymore, you know, and if you go over there she'll get to kind of rambling about different things and—and you don't know, you know, what to believe. But she—she—there is a lot of old history in her, there is no doubt that she could tell, you know.

01:05:06

SR: Where does she live now?

01:05:07

KM: She lives right next to my dad in Folsom.

01:05:10

SR: Oh okay.

01:05:12

KM: Yeah, she lives right next to him.

01:05:13

SR: And your dad is still farming?

01:05:15

KM: Yeah; well actually, he don't milk any cows there. He don't milk any cows; he buys his milk from another farmer—what he's doing there and—but he's not milking any cows at all. He buys what milk he gets and that's—I don't know. You know, that was kind of one of the downfalls; they—they believe in—in where your greatest profit is, you know. Yeah, it would be cheaper to go buy milk from somebody. You know, it would be cheaper to go buy milk from a dairy farmer and bring it to you—bring it there and process it, but I appreciated what we done

here because it's just like the grass and—you know, when you can control the milk that's coming straight from the farm, it can make a big difference in the end product. And there's things that he would never agree upon that I know for a fact made a difference, you know, but they—they don't look at it like that. They—they look at where they're going to make the most money off of it.

01:06:31

SR: Well it seems like that's—that is what drives the industry in—from what you said earlier, in large part.

01:06:42

KM: Yeah, that's exactly right.

01:06:46

SR: Yeah.

01:06:46

KM: That's what's wrong with our whole food supply I firmly believe. You know it—it's—you know, there's a lot of good food that's grown on farms. There's a lot of good milk that's produced, but when it goes to the processors, the way they handle it, they ruin our—you know, our food supply. You know it's all about shelf life, you know. I mean milk is kind of like a tomato. A tomato is—is a fresh vegetable that's not supposed to be able to sit there for a month and still be good, you know. I mean that's not what it—what it was grown for and it's kind of

like milk, you know. Milk is not—is something that's fresh that shouldn't—you shouldn't be able to put in your refrigerator and last a month, you know. It's not—it's not made—and the way these plants handle it is—is the reason why it lasts the way it does. You know, we went—we went to a processing plant in North Mississippi. We bought a piece of equipment from them, and the guy was saying that you can't take pure cream and make it whip. He said that you have to treat that cream in order for it to whip. Well my daddy, he was—you know, he was raised in the era where my grandmother and them—my grandfather, they was bottling their milk and—and he knew what good cream was and—and he knew that you didn't have to treat cream because they never did, you know. As—as a teenager coming up, my grandmother and them sold cream and they used to take cream and whip it and use it and make butter or whatever they was going to do with it you know. And he told this guy that day—he said *you don't have to treat cream to make it whip*, and the guy was arguing, you know, that you do. Well you don't. And it's—it's what they do to the product is—is what's wrong with a lot of—. You know you—there's a lot of cream, you can't go in a grocery store and buy cream unless you buy whipping cream. You can't go in there and just buy a cream that comes from—from Barbe's or whoever, you know, and whip it—and it's because of what they do to it. They do so much to our food supply it's—it's I think—it's just unreal. And when you hear—and after we started going to the market and, you know, you have people that travel overseas and they come and tell you, *you know how much better the dairy products are over there than what they are here?* You know, my wife's friend just went to Portugal and she come back and was telling her about, you know, over there that I think they eat yogurt every morning and they drink milk over there. And she told my wife, she said you know—she said they—she said over there they do a lot of dairy products, but she said here in the United States, she said you know, they're telling us that dairy is killing us, you

know—that that's what's wrong with our health here. But she said over there, those people are just as healthy as they can be and they drink the milk, they eat yogurt, you know and—but it's the way that the dairy products are handled here. It's the way they're processed is what's—is what is wrong with them. You know, it's kind of like the homogenized milk. I mean, I don't know no more than what I've read about homogenized and pasteurized, but I do know for a fact that, you know, for years people drank raw milk out of their tank and it didn't cause them to be obese or nothing like that, you know. And—and now all of the sudden, you know, they're blaming all this hardening of the arteries on milk and—and I mean I—I firmly believe the things that I've read about pasteurized milk versus homogenized that you know, the fats—if your body can't absorb those fats, it's not going to be harmful to you whereas, you know, they went to homogenizing milk, well then your body could absorb all of these fats that weren't good for you in it; so—. I don't know. **[Laughs]** It's just sad really when you—when you, you know, when you look at the amount of farmers that's went out of business; this area through here, there was a lot of dairies here and there's—. When we moved here 22 years ago, there was 120 dairies in this county, and we don't have 10 left right now. And it's kind of the same thing all over the United States, you know. From what—my wife and them went to New York—New Hampshire—two years—three years ago, they went up there and picked up a bottle filler, and while they was up there they—they visited a dairy in New York that we had read a lot about and they kind of—they reminded us of what we were trying to do, you know. It sounded like they were on the same level that we were; they were milking their own cows and bottling their own milk. And while they were up there they—they went by there and—and visited them, and my wife said that where they were at, you know, she said going down the road, it was just this dairy had sold out and that

one had sold out, you know. She said it was no different up there than what it was, you know, down here.

01:13:08

SR: Uh-hm.

01:13:10

KM: And the—the—I feel like there’s a—you know, it’s kind of like the cheese and—and even the milk. I think there’s a need for those products because the—the big dairy—you know the dairy—the dairy industry now, they’re going to milking 500—1,000—2,000 head of cows, and I think if you can produce a quality product that you will sell, you know, people will buy it. The big thing is now, from what they’re telling us, is you know, all your big dairies are out West: New Mexico, West Texas; there’s an ideal climate. Even Idaho now is—is starting to get a lot of big dairies out there. And what they’re telling—you know, they’re—they’re sitting on probably some of the best quality forages and—and feed that they can feed the cows sitting out in those areas, and—and they can produce a big volume of milk, but what they’re doing is, you know, the—the tankers that they haul the milk on, they can take three tankers now and dry that milk down and put it on one tanker. They can dry the water out of it. Yeah; they—and it’s what they call *reconstituted milk*. They’re already doing it; they’re just not making them label it. And what they do is, like all these big dairies out in West—West Texas and New Mexico, they’ll put—they’ll dry that milk down, put it on a tanker, and they’ll ship it either this far or down into Florida, and then they add the water back to it. And then they’re putting it in a jug. And people don’t know that’s—you know, there’s a lot of that going on. And one of the big things right now

is, the guy with the health department was telling us that they're hoping they're going to make them label it. That it's going to have to be labeled that it is reconstituted milk. But he said, as of right now, they're not; you know, he said what's there—they're telling them that they're kind of in a trial and error type thing with what they're doing right now. But he said if they—what they're predicting is that if they don't make them—if they don't make them, the federal government don't make them label it that—that will just finish off the dairy industry in this—this area all through in here, because they're—they'll be able to produce that milk cheaper out West than what the farmers here will be able to do. And it will—he said it will pretty much—they'll keep the cost down so low that it will put just about everybody else out of business here.

01:16:16

SR: Well it will force—or force you to do what I guess you—you all have done.

01:16:23

KM: Right, or do what we're doing you know. That's—that's the only other alternative that you have. And I really think it would work for a lot of other dairymen to do it, you know. There's so many little specialty cheeses out there that a farmer could make, and I think you could sell them. You know, I mean most of our cheese that comes here is coming from up in Wisconsin or out in California, you know, so why shouldn't a farmer here want to try and make some cheeses and—and sell it. Or why not, you know, bottle your milk—instead of milking 100 cows, milk 20 or 30 cows and bottle your milk and make cheese and sell it locally. 'Cause after what happened with the hurricane, we're going to try and see if we can go to Jackson and—and try and develop a market. We'll definitely go back to New Orleans once we get started; that will be the first place

we'll go, but we're either going to go to Baton Rouge or else we're going to try and go to Jackson and see if we can—can establish another market in the case if another storm was to come, you know. And we won't be just with that one option, you know, to go to the city.

01:17:47

SR: Right—diversify?

01:17:48

KM: Yeah.

01:17:51

SR: It does seem like it could work both ways; also because being dependent on the big national grocery stores did not pay off in New Orleans after the hurricane.

01:18:07

KM: No, it didn't; no, it didn't.

01:18:09

SR: And it still hasn't paid off in a lot of ways, because they take a long time to reopen in areas that they don't think will be totally profitable for them.

01:18:20

KM: Yeah, and if they don't think it's going to be profitable, they're not going to open there.

01:18:27

SR: Yeah, right.

01:18:28

KM: Yeah.

01:18:31

SR: One thing I wanted to ask was, I'm not sure when you all made that transition—when you down—downsized a little bit and started processing your own—.

01:18:41

KM: When we started processing our own milk?

01:18:45

SR: Uh-hm.

01:18:46

KM: May—let's see, May of this year was five years ago.

01:18:54

SR: Okay.

01:18:56

KM: And I could give you an exact date if you wanted it, because I went to—my daughter graduated. Our youngest daughter graduated Friday night and I went to the market Saturday morning. **[Laughs]** Yep, Katie—she graduated that Friday night and we had our first market that Saturday morning that I went to. Yep, and it's been five years. May—May was five years ago; like the 20-something of May is five years ago, was the first day that we were standing on Magazine—yeah.

01:19:37

SR: And then at some point your Creole—you became involved with the Slow Food Ark of Taste?

01:19:47

KM: Uh-hm.

01:19:47

SR: When was that; when did Creole cream cheese get on there—do you know?

01:19:51

KM: I don't know exactly what the date was there. **[Laughs]**

01:19:53

SR: That's okay—just curious.

01:19:56

KM: But it seemed like it was a year—we met—Richard put us in contact. Richard McCarthy put us in contact with Poppy right after we started going to the—the market, the farmers market, and it seemed like it was about a year later that we got on the Ark of Taste, I think. I’m not sure, but I think it was.

01:20:26

SR: That’s sort of exciting.

01:20:26

KM: Yeah, that was—that was one of the best things that—the Slow Food was—was the best thing that ever happened to us with the Creole cream cheese. I mean they—you know they—we—we sold a lot of Creole cream cheese because of them. *[Laughs]* They—Poppy and them—you know, we got a lot of publicity. It was just unreal the difference they made. There is no doubt about it.

01:21:00

SR: Well it will happen again, I’m sure. What does it mean to you to be known—I guess you know as—as someone you know who contributed to that coming back and—and also someone who, you know, we call the Guardian of the Tradition?

01:21:24

KM: I don't really know how to answer that. *[Laughs]* I would rather Jamie be here to answer that question. *[Laughs]* It just, you know—it—it all has—has been very rewarding I guess you could say, you know. I mean it—we love what we do here; we wouldn't still be here if we didn't, you know and—and Creole cream cheese has—has just like been a part of our life, a part of these cows, a part of our family, you know. By being able to—to do that, it's been very—you know it's—it's kept our farming alive here and it's given us hope that we can keep this tradition, you know, for another generation in our family.

01:22:36

SR: Oh I hope so.

01:22:38

KM: Yeah, I do too. *[Laughs]*

01:22:42

SR: Well I think that's a good note to end on. Thank you so much.

01:22:47

KM: Okay, well thank you for coming. I've, you know—I really thank you for coming this far out. I—I appreciate all what ya'll have done; I can tell you that. It's meant a lot to us. I never would have dreamed that we would have went from milking cows to doing this, you know. I mean it just—it was almost like sometimes it was almost just too much to grasp at times, you know with the—with the Slow Food and the Creole cream cheese, but yet it—it just felt—it

made you feel so good because we do what we do here—farming and, you know—and it gives us hope that there—there is a way that we can survive and stay on this farm. And—and when you have—you know, whenever your children love it as much as what you—what you do, it’s heartbreaking to think that, you know—that they—they might not have the opportunity to continue doing what you’ve done. It—it’s definitely made a difference; I’ll tell you that and I just, you know—I felt like a lot that I just couldn’t—couldn’t thank everybody enough for, you know what all they’ve done with the—you know with Slow Food. I mean it was just—you know, like I say it was just sometimes just too much to—to grasp [*Laughs*]*—*you know what all was going on.

01:24:37

SR: I think that it is heartening, you know—for farmers and for consumers—that there are movements like that, you know, that support the more local philosophy to eating.

01:24:54

KM: Uh-hm, yeah, yeah. And this—this country needs this you know. I mean we—as a whole in the United States, we need more of this. There’s no doubt about that. When you look—you know, I mean it’s—I don’t know. You—it’s kind of like tomatoes that’s been shipped from California all the way to here, you know, and I mean it’s not that they don’t grow good produce out there because they do; it’s just the way that they have to treat it to ship it this far, you know. And—and why shouldn’t a farmer here be able to—to grow a crop like that, you know and—and sustain a—a family farm?

01:25:57

SR: Right.

01:26:02

KM: And you're—the—you know, it's kind of I don't know—sometimes we felt like we was working ourselves to death trying to—to deliver to all these grocery stores. Sometimes we felt like we was so wrapped up in all of it trying to—to sell as much as we could that maybe we should have just stepped back and just concentrated on the farmers markets, you know, and just reached those people instead of worrying about going into the grocery stores. Because when you start dealing with the grocery—with those food stores, they—you know, it's all about bottom line with them; they want it for the cheapest price they can get it. And—and sometimes I've wondered if it was—you know, if it was worth it to—to deal with those stores—if we would have been better off just sticking with the farmers markets and selling to them.

01:27:08

SR: Yeah. That's a whole different world, huh?

01:27:11

KM: Yeah, that's a whole different world when you start dealing with—with them.

01:27:18

SR: Well I guess that you'll be able to reinvent yourselves a little bit?

01:27:24

KM: I think so. Yeah, I think so.

01:27:29

SR: For the second time?

01:27:31

KM: Yeah, for the second time. [*Laughs*] Yeah, for the second time, yeah—we've got actually—we've got a lot of ideas if—if we can just you know—if all of this can—can happen. We're going to come back with a different face than we—we had before that's for sure, and we feel like we have to, you know. We feel like we have to come back with something different and like I say, we've got a lot of ideas. It's just to make them all happen.

01:28:11

SR: Well I love that your kids want to be involved so much.

01:28:13

KM: Yeah, it makes us feel real well that they do. And—and that's one of the sad things in this area: where we're at our—both of our girls went to school in Mount Herman, which is in Louisiana, and the public school system in the county that we're in right here is not real good and we were—a friend of ours told us that we could put them in—in the Washington Parish down there in Mount Herman, and we did. We knew more people five miles below us—south of us here in the Mount Herman area because that's where the kids went—that's where the girls

went to school; that's where they played ball and they were very active in 4-H and showing calves and—and we knew more people in that area. Well Washington Parish probably had 200- and some dairies at one time; just in the Mount Herman area there was probably, I'm going to say probably 50 or 60 dairies. And out of all those dairymen, there's probably only two young boys that will continue to dairy that I know of in that area, and that's why it's almost scary sometimes too because—and it's not only just there—Tangipahoa Parish, you know—you don't see any—any 19, 20 year-olds that's wanting to continue farming. They've went to town and got jobs; they can make more money in town working, and you know if—if—when their parents decide they've had enough and they quit and there's none of the children that want to dairy, then that's—then surely there's not going to be any—any left, you know. And I feel like, you know, that's a part of—of that community that has just died whenever you don't have any young people that want to continue doing those kinds of things.

01:30:42

SR: Do you think that the transition that y'all made had something to do with how interested your kids are in it?

01:30:48

KM: I think so; yeah, I think it did. I think they—they—I think they loved it anyway, but I think it also give them something positive—you know, a positive outlook on—on how they could continue to dairy and continue to farm. Our—well our oldest daughter, if—if all of this—what we're hoping is if all of this—we can get all of this worked out, she's going to move back here, and her and the little guy that she's—they're going to get married, they're wanting to build them

a house here and we're going to try and sell more products here at the farm than we ever did before. We're going to try and attract people to come here even though we're going to continue going, you know, to New Orleans and that and to the markets, and if we go to the Jackson area or Baton Rouge, we want to see if we can attract a group of people to come here and come here and buy. And—and my oldest daughter, she is wanting to look into doing the educational part of it by doing farm tours and getting school-aged children out here and—and she's also wanting—she loves to garden and she's wanting to grow vegetables and to be able to sell those vegetables right here. And—and I think it will all work, you know, if we can get it all set up like we want to. And you know, it just makes me feel good that—that they want to do that, you know, that they're that interested in doing it and—and I think because of this doing this, you know, they see that they can make a living being able to do it.

01:32:48

SR: That's great. Where does she live now—Sarah?

01:32:52

KM: She lives in Bogalusa; that's where her and this little guy that's she's fixing to marry—that's where they live there. She works at the Heart Hospital in Lacombe down by Slidell. And she's—he actually—he works for the power company out of the Slidell office, and that's what they're wanting to—they're wanting to move up here and—and build them a house here once they get married, and she's hoping that by then, you know, that maybe we'll have all of this settled and—and she can start growing her garden and concentrating—because I really think

there's a need for the educational end of it to do school tours and—and I think she could do real well with that part of it here.

01:33:50

SR: That's inspiring.

01:33:51

KM: Yeah, yep it is that.

01:33:57

SR: Hmm, all right. Thank you.

01:34:06

KM: All right. Well, if there is anything else, give us a call.

01:34:11

SR: I will.

[End/Begin Kenny Mauthe]

01:34:15

KM: —our children and there's a hormone shot that—that we can use; it's called lutalyse, and it's actually a natural hormone that—that a cow produces in her body. You can buy it and you

can give it to her and it's different uses for it, but my wife was saying one day, you know, that she spent—our oldest daughter is 25 and, you know, she's been to the doctor for quite a few years with them, and she said that she honestly thinks that the amount of stuff that's being put in the animals that is actually being transferred into our food—whether it's the chicken with the growth hormones—because she said to her, she sees a lot of young girls that are, you know—they're getting breasts at—at a very young age, you know, and she said she just can't help believe that it's the food supply that has something to do with a lot of this. And it makes you wonder sometimes.

01:35:24

SR: Well yeah.

01:35:25

KM: And you know you take a company like Monsanto—they're the ones that invented the BST and that, and they're—it's not about what the effect is on the human life; it's what about—how much money you're going to put in my pocket to get this passed, to get it out there on the market, you know. That's—I firmly believe a lot of that.

01:35:56

SR: When did you—you—did you use those hormones at one point on this farm?

01:36:00

KM: Uh-um, no; we never did—we never did, and the reason that we didn't, at the time we were strictly pushing for production, in the summer—in the wintertime you can get good production with, you know, good grass and—and what we was feeding. In the summertime here is when you take your biggest cut in production because of the heat. And there was farmers that used it, but I just never could. I never did even at that time feel like it was worth using because when a cow was under that much stress in this area in the summertime, why give her a shot to increase her appetite? Because all that is going to do is elevate her body temperature and—and she's already under enough stress with the heat. Why add more to her, you know, and take a chance on—on burning them out?

01:37:00

SR: Were other farmers in this area using it?

01:37:02

KM: There was a few; there was a few farmers in this area that was using it, and they were mostly the ones that was milking 200 to 300 head of cows that were using it. That's mostly the ones that you're going to find using that kind of stuff—all the big ones, the big dairies.

01:37:20

SR: So when your milk would go to the co-op, or when it does go to the co-op, does it get mixed up with other milk that has that in it?

01:37:28

KM: Yeah, yeah; it gets mixed up—. See there's a truck that picks our milk up. He comes here every other day and—and he picks up all of our milk. Well he's got—he's probably got 15 other dairymen that he's picking up milk from, and when he pulls in here the—you know, if he's picked up five other dairymen and he sucks my milk out, it all goes—it all gets mixed in the same thing. And right now all the milk that—that the truck that's hauling my milk, it's all going to Mobile, Alabama. Dairy Fresh has a plant down there, and that's where they haul it all to. And it's mixed—it's everybody's milk is mixed, you know, together.

01:38:18

SR: Hmm.

01:38:20

KM: And—and then if they haul any milk in here, you know, or whatever they do—they add skim milk powder to milk to—to get more out of it, you know. That's one thing that they do. A lot of these big plants, they'll take that skim milk powder and add it in and it gives them more volume with their milk.

01:38:42

SR: So the milk that you might be selling—?

01:38:45

KM: Yeah, yeah; they'll add water to it and it gives them more volume.

01:38:52

SR: There's such a disconnect between what you work so hard producing and what it ultimately becomes.

01:38:59

KM: Yeah, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. It's sad what they do.

01:39:11

SR: Hmm, yeah.

[End Kenny Mauthe]