

Interviewee: Anthony & Gail Uglesich
Interview Date: July 13, 2006
Location: their home, Sixth Street, New Orleans, LA
Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Southern Foodways Alliance
Project: Guardians of Tradition

[Begin Anthony & Gail Uglesich]

00:00:00

Sara [Roahen]: This is Sara [Roahen]; it's July 13th, 2006. I'm on Sixth Street in New Orleans with Anthony and Gail Uglesich. Okay; and if I could have the two of you individually state your name and your birth date and what you did for a living.

00:00:23

Gail Uglesich: I'm Gail Uglesich; I was born April 3rd, 1941. And I worked in a restaurant called Uglesich's.

00:00:37

Anthony Uglesich: I'm Anthony Uglesich; I was born December 4th, 1938 and I've been a restaurateur all my life.

00:00:45

SR: Thank you. All right; well so could you start by telling me when the restaurant opened and when it closed?

00:00:58

AU: My father was--started the restaurant business on South Rampart Street the year 1924. By 1928 he moved to Baronne Street where the restaurant has been for--well all those years. And it remained there all those years with very little changes other than the prices.

00:01:21

SR: And what was the last date you were opened?

0:01:23

GU: May 7th.

00:01:25

AU: Yeah; May 7th. Yeah; May 7th, 2005.

00:01:27

GU: Two thousand five.

00:01:30

SR: And where on Rampart Street was that; do you know?

00:01:32

AU: I don't know the exact address. I remember it was right next to where Gregory Jewelers was. I don't know the address though. Right now it's--near the Dome--in that area.

00:01:43

SR: Oh okay, okay; so not too--too far--

00:01:45

AU: Across from the Post Office, yeah right.

00:01:47

SR: --from where you wound up?

00:01:50

AU: Uh-huh, yeah--just a few blocks.

00:01:52

SR: And what--what is your earliest memory of the restaurant?

00:01:56

AU: Well [*Sighs*] it was entirely different at that time; it was a neighborhood business. And I remember working as a young person there and that's when a soft drink was five cents and you could get an egg sandwich for a nickel in the morning with a cup of coffee. [*Laughs*] And that was about ten--fifteen cents for both and at that time it was opened up for lunch as well as a night business. And at that time it was predominantly seafood, but it was all fried seafood at that time; that was you know a typical New Orleans neighborhood restaurant with seafood.

00:02:44

SR: And so I imagine that you grew up running around in that.

00:02:50

AU: Oh yeah--not that I really wanted to because when I first started I used to say to myself I'll never do this for a living--never. **[Laughs]** But my father put me in there at a young age and I can remember even going down there on Sundays and have to help out in the--in the evenings. And that's why I said to myself never will I ever do this. **[Laughs]**

00:03:10

SR: And so it was open seven days a week?

00:03:14

AU: Seven days a week.

00:03:15

SR: All day and night?

00:03:16

AU: Right.

00:03:17

SR: And your mother, did she work there also?

00:03:18

AU: No, my mama didn't--no; it was--at that time it was my--my father, his brother they brought in from Yugoslavia--over the years he'd have nephews occasionally to come in and help out. He'd bring them to this country and some other staff that worked with him oh, I guess around 30 years.

00:03:39

SR: Wow; and did you--once you entered adulthood you stayed at the restaurant the entire time or did you take any time off?

00:03:48

AU: Well I--I went in the service for--for two years and I was in college part of that and while I was in the service my father took ill. And I came back home and finished up my military term at Camp Leroy Johnson and what I would do I'd do my military obligation in the morning and then in the afternoons I'd go work with my father 'til at night, and I'd stay with him 'til 10 and get home at 11 and then get up very early and report for military duty, which was really tough.

00:04:19

SR: Yeah.

00:04:19

AU: Yeah.

00:04:20

SR: What year would that have been around--what--around what year?

00:04:24

AU: What year was that? That was about what around late '50s, '60s huh?

00:04:29

GU: Right.

00:04:30

SR: So you were married at the time?

00:04:32

GU: We got married in '63.

00:04:32

AU: Right around--yeah, yeah.

00:04:35

SR: You got married in 1963?

00:04:35

GU: Right.

00:04:38

SR: And what--what's your earliest memory of the restaurant--Uglesich's?

00:04:42

GU: What is my--?

00:04:42

AU: Earliest memory of the restaurant?

00:04:44

GU: Well [*Laughs*] when Anthony and I were courting I would go down to the restaurant and--because I taught and it was after teaching I would go down to the restaurant and--and help him out as much as I could.

00:05:00

SR: When you were dating?

00:05:01

GU: Yes, when we were dating; and then we got married and I would help him out in the kitchen area and then that stopped. And then I started to make things for the restaurant at the house and he would bring them to the restaurant. And then I gradually started to--to do what I had to do at home for the restaurant and then go down and help him out. In other words, it was--it was a continuous--you know for us--in other words, early in the morning do what I had to do

for the restaurant and then go--he would bring it to the restaurant and then I would go down there around 11 o'clock and help him out 'til around 2 or 3 o'clock, come back home, and do what I had to do here.

00:05:52

SR: So you--when you were dating you were a teacher; where were you a teacher?

00:05:56

GU: I taught in Jefferson Parish; I taught at Waggaman School.

00:06:03

SR: Oh okay, Waggaman--and well once you married you--

00:06:08

GU: I stopped teaching.

00:06:09

SR: --stopped?

00:06:11

GU: Yeah.

00:06:11

SR: So you were involved early on?

00:06:13

GU: Right.

00:06:15

SR: Did you go to the restaurant as a young person before you knew each--knew each other when you were growing up or anything?

00:06:22

GU: Did I go to the restaurant?

00:06:23

AU: No.

00:06:23

SR: Yeah; did you ever eat there?

00:06:25

GU: No, no.

00:06:25

AU: No; she didn't.

00:06:27

GU: I just went there to help him--to help him.

00:06:28

SR: Okay; and how did you meet?

00:06:30

GU: On a blind date.

00:06:32

SR: Oh really?

00:06:33

GU: [*Laughs*] He thought I had money and--and I thought he had money. [*Laughs*] He tells everybody that story, but that's not true.

00:06:43

SR: Wait; he thought what?

00:06:45

GU: That I--he thought I had money and I thought he had money. [*Laughs*]

00:06:48

AU: I always tell everybody that. I said I thought she had money and she thought I had money and we got married and found out after we got married neither one of us had money. [*Laughs*]

00:06:56

GU: We didn't have money. [*Laughs*]

00:06:57

SR: You had to keep working?

00:06:59

GU: We had to keep working. [*Laughs*]

00:07:02

SR: Oh that's funny. Well what--I know that--so when your father opened the restaurant and while you were growing up it was more of a--sort of bare bones fried seafood, neighborhood place. At what point did you all start experimenting?

00:07:20

GU: I think Anthony knew that--that you know--

00:07:22

AU: I had to change with the times.

00:07:24

GU: --changes had to be made.

00:07:24

AU: Yeah, yeah.

00:07:25

GU: You know people would come in--I think out of town(ers) in fact would come in and say--

00:07:32

AU: And they didn't want fried--fried foods.

00:07:35

GU: --you know they didn't want fried foods; they wanted things like either sautéed or--they were more health-conscious. So they would want things like sautéed or grilled or not--not deep fried and I think that's when we started to work on different things.

00:07:55

SR: And around what era would that have been in?

00:07:58

GU: I think that was in the '70s--the early '70s.

00:08:04

SR: Huh, okay; and so I'm not sure--was your father around then?

00:08:12

AU: My father passed away-- had cancer in 1974.

00:08:16

GU: Seventy-five.

00:08:17

AU: Seventy-four or seventy-five?

00:08:17

GU: Seventy-five.

00:08:18

AU: Yeah, seventy-five.

00:08:20

SR: So he didn't see a lot of the changes?

00:08:22

GU: No, no.

00:08:23

AU: No; he did not, no.

00:08:25

SR: Can you sort of describe what some of the newer dishes were that you--what was the--what were the first couple of the newer dishes that you introduced?

00:08:37

AU: We started grilling right off the bat. I said--we put up our own mixture of grilled product and I remember looking at K-Paul's recipe and we--we tried to make a sample of it and we toned ours down because we thought it had a little bit too much salt in it and we added this and we did something different here--there, and from there it took off. We started doing different things.

00:09:01

GU: I don't think--the first thing I think that I made if I'm not mistaken was Dirty Rice; that was the first thing I made. And it was something besides having fries. I know--so we wanted to offer something else and I think the second thing I made was gumbo. They had--they had no soups, so I know--I'm positive the second thing I made was gumbo--and that was just from experimenting.

00:09:33

SR: Was that--did you use--did you do it the way your mother did it or how--how did you--?

00:09:38

GU: I think I--I--no; I just taught myself.

00:09:41

AU: And we had the influence of my mother. My mother had a--really a great background. She's from St. James Parish and really could cook. And unfortunately everything was up here, you know. [*Gestures*] You didn't go by measurements.

00:09:55

GU: Right; it was never on paper.

00:09:56

AU: But--

00:09:56

GU: In fact, she taught me actually how to make a roux. I did not know how to make a roux. So in other words, my gumbo is made with a roux, so I started experimenting from there, you know by making a--making a roux. And that was not--that's not in the first cookbook. My son is writing another cookbook.

00:10:18

SR: Oh he is?

00:10:18

GU: And the gumbo is going to be in there, so it's to show how--in other words, I made a roux and I started experimenting, you know with different seafoods. I wouldn't put oysters in it, because believe it or not a lot of people don't like oysters. Now Anthony likes oysters; when I make--when I make gumbo for him home, I will put oysters in it because he loves oysters--especially fried.

00:10:44

AU: There's nothing I don't like. [*Laughs*] I like everything.

00:10:47

GU: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:10:48

SR: So your parents--your father came from Yugoslavia?

00:10:52

AU: Uh-hm.

00:10:54

SR: And your--so your mother was from here?

00:10:57

AU: She's from St. James Parish; she's a country girl.

00:10:59

SR: Oh okay; and I've heard a little bit about the story of your father getting here, but could you--could you tell me that story about his first try?

00:11:07

AU: Well his--his first intention was to make his home in New York and his first attempt failed. He jumped ship and swam ashore--tried to swim ashore or something to that effect and it didn't work out. They put him behind--back on the boat and sent him back home. So the next time, he had a better game plan and he had asked to get some help--for someone to help him--about getting to this country. His name was John [Gentlich] and they tried to help him out so that he could come to this country and they would help keep him here, you see and that worked out.

00:11:45

SR: And John [Gentlich] was in New Orleans?

00:11:48

AU: Yeah; he owned the Marble Hall Restaurant on Rampart Street and it was a very popular restaurant for a lot of--lot of years.

00:11:59

SR: And--and then he met your mother?

00:12:02

AU: At the place--you know she--

00:12:04

SR: Oh at the restaurant?

00:12:05

AU: Yeah, yeah.

00:12:05

GU: She lived on Baronne Street.

00:12:08

AU: Yeah; she lived in that area.

00:12:08

SR: Oh.

00:12:09

GU: Right; she lived on Baronne Street.

00:12:12

SR: Okay; and so I guess when--when you started experimenting and adding foods when it was the two of you your mother was interested in that; she helped develop recipes or--?

00:12:23

AU: Mama was a good--good cook, but she--she made just a few things for the place. She would always do my potato salads, you know--

00:12:31

GU: Potato salad.

00:12:33

AU: --things like the small end, but as far as someone cooking at the house, she was really, really unique. I mean I really do miss her--her meals--very, very--.

00:12:43

GU: And we tried to you know get the recipes from her but it was all up here. [*Gestures*]

[*Laughs*]

00:12:49

SR: That's how it works?

00:12:51

GU: Yeah, right.

00:12:51

SR: What was her style? Did she--was it New Orleans, Creole, Country--?

00:12:58

GU: She was a Creole cook.

00:13:00

AU: Yeah.

00:13:01

GU: And everything she did in other words, it was a slow process.

00:13:06

AU: She grew up on the plantation.

00:13:08

GU: You know she never took any--she never took any shortcuts. You know how you can take a shortcut cooking?

00:13:14

SR: Uh-hm.

00:13:15

GU: She never took shortcuts.

00:13:18

SR: Hmm; that's interesting. I didn't know that. So for a dish, for example, like the one I miss which is Shrimp Uggie, what--what was your inspiration for that? Do you remember?

00:13:31

AU: Gail is responsible for that.

00:13:33

GU: I experimented with that. I wanted to make a marinade so I started experimenting and--it--it just--I just put something together. I'd make him taste it and he liked it and so that's what made us put--put it on the menu. In other words, it's just something that just came up. In other words, I--it's basically--was trial and error because the first time I tried something it didn't work out. And I think it took me about three tries to get it right. And when I--I would make Anthony be my taster and he--he would say this is and everybody loved it, so that's how we got Shrimp Uggie. And I--we named it after my son because everybody would call him Uggie; they couldn't pronounce Uglesich. So we--Anthony not only is the--the taster but he would come up with the names for the different things.

00:14:39

SR: Like Muddy Waters?

00:14:41

GU: Now that's his; that's--that's Anthony's, right. I don't know how he got the name Muddy Waters.

00:14:49

AU: I don't know. I came up with the dish because I was trying to do something else and I came up with something else. *[Laughs]*

00:14:53

GU: Yeah. *[Laughs]*

00:14:54

AU: By accident, but sometimes some things come to you pretty quick and some things, I know I fooled with for like after a year or two and I give up--not that I do it every day but every few weeks I tried to do something and--.

00:15:06

GU: Right; he tried to make a sauce.

00:15:07

AU: I mean even to this day I'm retired; I've probably spent so far this week looking at recipes--what would you think--maybe 10 hours already this week?

00:15:15

GU: Right.

00:15:15

AU: Yeah; to this day--taking notes.

00:15:18

GU: We still try to think of different things, you know.

00:15:20

AU: Getting ideas and looking at things, you know.

00:15:22

GU: For ourselves. [*Laughs*]

00:15:24

AU: And I'm--

00:15:25

GU: We both like to cook.

00:15:25

AU: Yeah; we buy a lot of magazines, a lot of books. I look at the *Food Channel* and try to get ideas; you know and then try to come up with something you know on our own, you know just to--just to--

00:15:36

GU: Right; just like Angry Shrimp--that wasn't in the first book and everybody said why didn't you put that in the first book? I said well it will be in the second. Okay. But how that came--a customer gave us that name because I had made this dish with shrimp and a customer told Anthony--Anthony you know what name this should be--Angry Shrimp because oh, they're hot and they're spicy. **[Laughs]**

00:16:01

SR: Can you describe what Angry Shrimp--yeah, what Angry Shrimp is like or--?

00:16:05

GU: Well it had Chinese chili paste in it; that is what made it angry. **[Laughs]**

00:16:12

AU: I love Asian ingredients.

00:16:13

GU: He loves--see in other words--

00:16:14

SR: I was going to ask you about that.

00:16:15

GU: Right; it's anything that pertains--you know he wants me to come up with something that had an Asian ingredient in it. Well that would be Chinese chili paste, and of course it's got garlic in it which he likes and to make it colorful we--we put the different colored bell peppers in it, and of course put--well we--I never use butter. We use--always margarine.

00:16:44

AU: Even though we're going to use butter tonight though.

00:16:45

GU: Yeah; I know we are.

00:16:45

SR: For what?

00:16:46

AU: I'm doing barbecue shrimp tonight. *[Laughs]*

00:16:48

SR: Got to use butter for that.

00:16:49

AU: Yeah; well in that one, yeah--butter and yeah I've got to go get some beer.

00:16:54

GU: Yeah.

00:16:54

AU: Mix it up.

00:16:55

GU: [*Laughs*] We're trying a different barbecue.

00:16:58

AU: Yeah--

00:16:59

GU: It's not our barbecue; we're trying something different.

00:17:02

AU: Yeah; I mean this is--

00:17:03

SR: You--it keeps going huh?

00:17:04

GU: Yeah, right. [*Laughs*]

00:17:05

AU: Right, yeah.

00:17:07

SR: And I've always been interested in the Asian ingredients in some of your food. Like you had a dish with fermented black beans did you--?

00:17:17

AU: Yeah.

00:17:17

SR: What dish was that? I can't remember.

00:17:19

GU: Which one is that?

00:17:20

AU: [*Sighs*] God, I can't remember right off hand.

00:17:22

GU: What?

00:17:23

AU: Fermented black bean sauce with garlic--I liked that.

00:17:26

GU: Right; he likes it with the black bean sauce.

00:17:28

AU: Yeah; we have a hard time getting it.

00:17:29

GU: The--

00:17:31

AU: I have a hard time getting that product. I can get the black beans--

00:17:33

GU: Voodoo Shrimp.

00:17:34

AU: But I can't get the--with the garlic all the time.

00:17:36

GU: Right; it was Voodoo Shrimp and it's just a little bit--

00:17:40

AU: Yeah; it's really good.

00:17:42

GU: It's just that little bit of that--you know that gives it that--it's the black bean taste with garlic. You've got to get the one with the garlic.

00:17:49

SR: And how do you--was there an inspiration for that or did you just--?

00:17:53

AU: Again I--I was fooling with some dishes and I think I ran across this by accident again you know. But that--that came out to be a very, very popular dish; they liked that.

00:18:03

GU: Right.

00:18:04

AU: And it's good; and I mean I don't think you'll find anywhere(s), any place--it's just I was trying to do something and I started coming up with different things and it really came out good and it was pretty.

00:18:15

SR: I liked that one. Well before I move on away from the food, we mentioned Muddy Waters and for the--for the record, could you tell me what that--describe what that dish is like?

00:18:28

GU: Of what Muddy Waters?

00:18:28

AU: Muddy Waters.

00:18:30

GU: You were making a sauce and you wanted to do something with chicken broth because Muddy Waters is made with chicken broth and anchovies, but you don't see--you know everybody says oh, anchovies? You don't taste the anchovies.

00:18:44

AU: You don't.

00:18:45

GU: It's just a seasoning purpose and with a little flour and it's very easy to do--that's one of John Rhea's favorite--is that Muddy Waters.

00:18:55

SR: That's why I ordered it. And that--so you made a sauce with chicken broth and anchovies and served it with fish?

00:19:03

GU: Right; and a little flour to thicken it up and--and it's really, really good.

00:19:10

SR: So you--you started--Mrs. Uglesich, you started describing earlier what your day looked like. Can--can we go into that a little bit--when you were running the restaurant, take me through your day--what time it started--?

00:19:29

GU: Mine started 4:30 in the morning; mine started real early in the morning.

00:19:30

AU: She started early.

00:19:32

GU: Because I had to make all the sauces and--and it--either I had to make a étouffée or I had to make gumbo or the Uggie; in other words, I had--I started out real early in the morning and--

00:19:46

AU: Creole and all those things, yeah.

00:19:46

GU: Right; Shrimp Creole or Dirty Rice or Jambalaya--I would do that all right here and Anthony would take it to the place in the morning. So I'd get up early and then Anthony would--would follow--

00:20:02

AU: And I would finish what she could not finish when I'd get to the place 'cause by the time I'd get to the place in the morning which is around eight, huh normally?

00:20:12

GU: What? You--you left the house around--about 10 after 8--well 8:30 to be exact.

00:20:18

AU: Yeah; and I would finish up what she didn't and I did--we did do a lot of the sauces over there myself early in the--you know in the morning because by 10:30 you've got to open up the doors, so you're kind of rushed, you know with everything.

00:20:33

GU: Right.

00:20:34

AU: That's why a lot of the stuff has got to be done here; in fact, you'd get a head start--
sometimes we'd do it when I'd come home late in the afternoon.

00:20:41

GU: And then there was like the Crawfish Balls--in other words I would put it altogether and--

00:20:46

AU: Get a head start--you've got to.

00:20:47

GU: --he would take it to Baronne Street and in other words and--and roll them and then freeze
them. And another one that had the--is for the Crawfish Balls, it had a lot of Thai ingredients in it
for the sauce.

00:21:06

SR: Oh--oh really; what kind of ingredients?

00:21:08

GU: The Crawfish Balls--remember you did the--it had the chili peppers in it; in other words, the--the small Thai chili peppers and of course--and the fish sauce--that's all Asian ingredients.

00:21:25

AU: Fish sauce, oyster sauce, ginger--

00:21:27

GU: Right.

00:21:28

AU: --lemon grass we used; oh my God you can go on and on and on.

00:21:32

GU: Right.

00:21:32

AU: Rice vinegar which is my--one of my favorites to make salads; I just love rice vinegar.

00:21:38

GU: I do too.

00:21:39

AU: But you can go on and on; I love a lot of the ingredients. It's just--just superb.

00:21:43

GU: And you know you have to watch--like when you--if you use fish you don't use salt because that's--it's salty enough.

00:21:54

SR: Uh-hm; so then the restaurant would open at 10:30 and would there be people coming in for lunch at 10:30?

00:21:59

GU: Oh yeah.

00:22:01

AU: Well I'll tell you what; for the last year plus--I guess people realized that it was coming to an end--when I'd open up the doors, we'd probably--10:30 in the morning mind you, we'd have a line outside.

00:22:13

SR: Wow.

00:22:15

GU: Yeah; I have to show you this. This is something--a customer was waiting in line and did this. [*Laughs*]

00:22:26

AU: What you going to get? Oh, I know what she's going to get.

00:22:30

SR: That's pretty early.

00:22:32

AU: Oh my God, yeah; let me tell you--puts some stress on you too. **[Laughs]**

00:22:38

SR: Yeah; **[Laughs]** I was going to ask if you were ever tempted to expand and I can see why maybe you wouldn't--

00:22:45

GU: Let me put the light on so you can really see this.

00:22:47

SR: Oh. Oh that's beautiful.

00:22:57

GU: Isn't that--isn't that really pretty?

00:23:00

SR: Oh it's--it's a painting?

00:23:02

GU: Right.

00:23:04

SR: Of waiting in line?

00:23:06

GU: Right.

00:23:06

SR: Outside the restaurant.

00:23:07

GU: She said well I had to occupy my time. I said okay; [*Laughs*] but I'm going to fix it up with--my daughter is going to raise it--you raise it with pins and I'm going to put like a crawfish--I have a shrimp, you know not real things, but I'm going to put them down here to decorate it.

00:23:24

SR: That's really--I like how she has people reading books [*Laughs*]. That's beautiful; I love that.

00:23:32

GU: I thought that was really nice.

00:23:35

SR: Well people would wait in line for--how long do you think the longest wait ever was?

00:23:41

AU: Two hours--two and a half hours they'd stay out there.

00:23:43

GU: Or more--three Anthony.

00:23:44

AU: Yeah.

00:23:46

GU: I had one person say I've been waiting in line for three hours.

00:23:47

AU: But a lot of two--two and a half the other times. You know I can't get over it and I'd say ya'll got to be crazy.

00:23:51

GU: Right; and then what we'd do with that--the last person--we started to make the time like 4 o'clock--

00:23:59

AU: Closing.

00:24:00

GU: --in other words, it actually was when we would take the--put the cut-off on it, but we had to start making it 3:30 because it--it was so long, the line, that we didn't want anyone else by the time the last customer would come in--

00:24:16

AU: It would be 6 o'clock for us.

00:24:17

GU: Right; it--it would be--

00:24:17

AU: That's too long.

00:24:19

GU: --a long time, you know and--

00:24:21

AU: Yeah.

00:24:22

GU: --of course--

00:24:23

SR: And meanwhile you've been up since 4:30?

00:24:26

GU: Right.

00:24:26

AU: Yeah; it's also hard on the help too. I mean they--when you're stressed like that they're beat up.

00:24:30

GU: And we'd run out of everything, you know. We started to run out of things. I mean you only--we thought we would be prepared but we started running out but even when that last customer would come in [*Laughs*] I'd go kiss them.

00:24:46

SR: I bet. So you would show up at the restaurant when it opened Mrs. Uglesich?

00:24:52

GU: Right; in other words--during like--if I knew he was going to be busy I'd get there before it--right before it opened, but usually my time like normal--like when I knew he wouldn't be busy it would be 11 o'clock or 11:30.

00:25:10

SR: And then during the day can you describe to me what your different roles were--your jobs, what--during service?

00:25:20

GU: What was that?

00:25:20

AU: She wants to know what was your job--when you were there?

00:25:24

GU: Oh, I took the orders; we both took the orders, you know.

00:25:28

AU: I would take the orders--

00:25:29

GU: He would take the orders and I would collect--

00:25:31

AU: Gail would ring it up and so on like that.

00:25:33

GU: Right; or I'd make drinks until finally it got to the point where we--we needed help even to make the Bloody Mary(s).

00:25:42

AU: Right.

00:25:42

GU: Yeah; right so this girl came and helped me out.

00:25:44

AU: We had to bring someone on to help making Bloody Mary(s).

00:25:47

SR: And how many employees would you have working at the same time, you know at one time?

00:25:52

AU: [*Sighs*] Three, five--

00:25:56

GU: About five to six--that's all.

00:25:57

AU: About six, something like that normally and if we were busy at times we'd put more on-- that's besides ourselves. It's a small place.

00:26:05

SR: Well that's what I was going to ask--

00:26:04

AU: I mean--

00:26:06

SR: So how many people could be sitting down eating at one time?

00:26:11

AU: Hmm; probably--I mean if you're going to count outside it's a good you know 60-something or like that, yeah. The--the volume was--I mean incredible, because I mean you've got to realize we're turning those table over for lunch like 10 times.

00:26:31

SR: So in one day what was--what would you say would be the maximum amount of customers you could serve?

00:26:38

AU: I guess we did around 300 customers a day.

00:26:42

GU: Right.

00:26:43

AU: Yeah; that's a lot of people for a little place like that.

00:26:45

SR: It is--it is; and so I was--one of my questions is going to be were you ever tempted to expand?

00:26:54

AU: At that time no, yeah. If I was to go back there you'd need a little bit more space to make everything more comfortable for every--you know everybody.

00:27:07

SR: Well I think--I'm sure--I think a part of the charm for the customers too was squeezing in that little place you know and feeling--.

00:27:17

AU: It's something.

00:27:19

GU: Right, yeah.

00:27:21

SR: So you closed every summer; is that right?

00:27:24

AU: Uh-hm.

00:27:26

SR: Always--did your father do that or--?

00:27:28

AU: No; I did it because one, you know as you know things slow up in the summer and it starts getting--the hotter it gets the harder it is to get some seafood you know. Even the seafood has got enough sense to go into hiding. They get into deeper waters, etcetera. And the big thing is that you--we--we had a big clientele with out of town(ers) and most of them--our good customers

won't come to New Orleans when the temperature is in the 90s you know or high 90s. And you don't have as good of conventions, etcetera, so we took advantage of--when it's busy we took advantage of being open; when things got slow we were lucky enough that we could afford to close up you know. And my help seemed to like, I mean--

00:28:21

GU: They were tired too.

00:28:23

AU: Yeah; they--they get enough. I mean they start over fresh and you know it's a good--good setup and they're happy. I think they did well enough that they could put money away and--and survive for a few months and it worked out fine.

00:28:38

SR: Well that's good. Yeah; I was going to ask--so it seemed to me that you would have mostly the same employees season after season.

00:28:47

AU: Uh-hm.

00:28:48

SR: So you didn't lose people by closing?

00:28:50

AU: No, no; I mean they were content and I mean if they needed money like John to do something, he'd--he'd go back home and--

00:28:57

GU: They all found things to do.

00:28:58

AU: Yeah; they all found something and most of them--some of them didn't do anything. They just waited until we opened up. Some had to you know--

00:29:04

GU: Because I mean a lot of them were married and they were dependent upon their husbands, so this was like extra income for them.

00:29:10

AU: The guys, and like Mike and Anthony, they always had child support, so they had to look to do something, but for the most part, the others didn't.

00:29:19

SR: And so you told me that one of your long-time employees, John--how do you pronounce his last name-- Rhea?

00:29:30

R: Ray [*Pronunciation*]

00:29:31

SR: Ray [*Pronunciation*], right; but it's spelled R-h-e-a, yeah--so John is now helping paint your house.

00:29:39

AU: Uh-hm.

00:29:41

SR: What about your other employees?

00:29:44

AU: Well we just heard from Mike about two days ago.

00:29:46

GU: Right; he's living in San--

00:29:48

AU: He's still in San Antonio.

00:29:49

GU: --Antonia with his brother.

00:29:50

AU: With his brother.

00:29:50

SR: Where he went after the hurricane?

00:29:52

GU: Right.

00:29:53

AU: Yeah; so he's trying to do something--own an own business and I think for the most part the other people are still out of state.

00:30:01

GU: Right.

00:30:01

AU: Over in--one is in Arkansas; most of them are still out of state.

00:30:07

SR: So Mike, he was the shucker--the oyster shucker?

00:30:09

AU: Yeah; when Mike left me he went to work with his brother, Greg.

00:30:14

GU: Anthony got him a job.

00:30:16

AU: Yeah; you know 'cause they all come to my place and I said I don't--I don't know if I'll be coming back and they're looking for good oyster--I mean he went to work for Drago's for a while but it didn't work out.

00:30:29

GU: Um--

00:30:29

AU: He didn't get the same kind of setup he had with me.

00:30:31

SR: I'm sure. *[Laughs]* Well I was wondering about him. I'm glad to hear that.

00:30:37

AU: Yeah.

00:30:40

SR: Could you describe for me the ambience of the restaurant?

00:30:50

AU: Hmm; well I don't know how to put it. It's been called a shack [*Laughs*]

00:31:03

GU: What word do I--I don't like?

00:31:08

AU: A dump?

00:31:08

GU: A dump--I don't like that word 'cause I didn't consider it a dump.

00:31:12

AU: No; it's not.

00:31:13

GU: I considered it--I mean it was clean.

00:31:15

AU: Let's put it this way.

00:31:15

GU: It was an old-time place.

00:31:18

AU: Yeah.

00:31:19

GU: It was family-oriented for one thing; well you didn't have--you could be yourself.

00:31:25

AU: You know--

00:31:26

GU: You didn't have to put on anything and I like a place that's down to earth and it was down to earth.

00:31:35

AU: I mean we could have fixed it up but in that area I mean it--it wouldn't have fitted in you know.

00:31:41

GU: No.

00:31:43

AU: And I mean it didn't deter people with a lot of money, because I mean I had the richest people in the--in the country come eat at my place over the years. I mean it's incredible, and I mean they loved it. I mean--I mean when you--

00:31:56

GU: And then it really--and many movie--people have wanted to make movies there.

00:31:59

AU: And all kinds of stuff like that.

00:32:00

GU: And we said no. [*Laughs*]

00:32:03

AU: I mean it's the--you know I just--I'm just amazed at the people that would come in from around the country. I mean--

00:32:10

GU: And don't ever change it Anthony.

00:32:12

AU: Yeah; like I said if you--if it's not broke--

00:32:15

GU: Well I take that back. When we painted the place, it made the newspaper. [*Laughs*]

00:32:19

AU: Yeah--kind of big.

00:32:20

GU: You know--

00:32:22

AU: [*Laughs*]

00:32:23

GU: And it was--I mean they had the show--you know the building, but we didn't change anything. We just painted the building and you know and--and changed you know a few boards here and there and they thought [*Laughs*] the prices were going to up.

00:32:39

SR: When was that? Around what year--?

00:32:41

GU: What was that in the '80s--**Inaudible** was there when--right in the '80s and believe me we didn't do anything but paint the building. Everybody got upset about that, but I thought it was you know--it looked--it made the place look better. It was just a down to earth place where you could enjoy yourself and then we did not have coffee or dessert because we wanted the people to eat and leave. *[Laughs]*

00:33:10

SR: That's true. I never had dessert there.

00:33:11

GU: That's right.

00:33:14

SR: I never thought of that; I never left wanting anything though. There was definitely--I got enough food every time I went there.

00:33:22

GU: Right.

00:33:22

SR: So what--the area that the restaurant is in is now called Central City. Is that what it's always been called?

00:33:28

AU: Hmm; I think so.

00:33:30

GU: Yeah; Central Business.

00:33:33

SR: Uh-hm; and tell me about--you said that you had some of the richest people in the country--
tell me about some of your more famous or known customers.

00:33:46

AU: Hmm; well that's hard to say. I mean--

00:33:51

GU: Well I think what started it all off is when the head of Atlantic Records--

00:33:57

AU: Yeah; Ahmet Ertegun, yeah.

00:33:59

GU: Right.

00:34:01

SR: Ertegun?

00:34:02

GU: Right.

00:34:03

AU: Ertegun.

00:34:03

GU: He came in and a friend of ours brought him in and he just fell in love with the place. And I think he brought his wife the next time--I'm not sure but he wanted to give a party and he wanted it at the place. And [*Sighs*] you'd be surprised how the place changed--in other words, because I think his wife put on white tablecloths which we never had. We never used them and we had candles. In fact I still have the candles saved; I told her that's for the next party. And he had the party I think for Kellogg. Is that the one he had it for--somebody in Houston?

00:34:58

AU: That's the Kellogg family.

00:34:59

GU: Right; and he brought in Oscar de Laurentiis, the actress that wears white--she married somebody--on her face, who was that--?

00:35:13

AU: I don't know but he had quite a few people.

00:35:15

GU: All kinds of--

00:35:16

SR: All kinds of famous people?

00:35:18

GU: --famous people and with him bringing in like let's say Oscar de Laurentiis, every time Oscar de Laurentiis would come to New Orleans he would come to our place.

00:35:28

AU: Even if he was in an area he'd--he'd tell his--his people, you know on the airplane, we're going to New Orleans to Uglesich's. And probably from there it started taking off and before we knew it we started seeing more so-called celebrities, you know movie stars, and especially over the years when they started filming--

00:35:51

GU: And it was all by--all by word of mouth.

00:35:52

AU: Word of mouth, yeah.

00:35:53

GU: We never advertised.

00:35:54

AU: Yeah; and then you start getting a lot of nice--some of them are really, really nice and some of them are like turkeys. They've got to have body guards and all that stuff.

00:36:02

GU: Turkeys is what he calls them. *[Laughs]*

00:36:04

SR: Did they have to wait in line with everyone else?

00:36:09

GU: Some of them did; some of them did not.

00:36:11

AU: Yeah, yeah.

00:36:11

GU: It depends if they call up early enough like when Roseanne Barr came they--they called-- well somebody--Anthony said that you know she wants--wants to come in but we knew how to do it, okay. *[Laughs]*

00:36:28

AU: Yeah.

00:36:29

GU: John I should say knew how to do it.

00:36:32

SR: Yeah.

00:36:32

GU: And that was another one who just you know really loved the place.

00:36:35

SR: Roseanne Barr huh?

00:36:37

GU: Yeah, right and she--

00:36:39

AU: And she had--

00:36:40

GU: She had books and we had you know had her autograph them because she liked one thing in particular and that was the Barbecued Oysters which is off the Barbecued Shrimp--the same thing. My favorite is still Robert Wagner and Jill St. John--that's still my favorite.

00:37:00

AU: They come in a lot.

00:37:01

SR: Oh really?

00:37:02

AU: But I mean recently--like recently right before we were closing, Vince Vaughn, whenever he'd be in town he'd come in a lot you know and I mean I can remember like *The Times Picayune* going --they're saying Vince Vaughn is eating over there right now; is he there? And I'd say no, he's not, because he doesn't want to be bothered, you know. **[Laughs]**

00:37:19

SR: But he really was?

00:37:19

AU: Yeah, yeah; right but I mean a lot of--you know a lot of stars over the years we would have come in there and you'd get your sports celebrities and all that kind of stuff.

00:37:31

SR: Uh-hm; what--

00:37:35

AU: Who are over-paid.

00:37:37

SR: Right.

00:37:38

AU: I was telling John yesterday--when I read the paper and I see these guys making--signing contracts for \$50 million, \$80 million, something like that I say this is disgusting. They're not worth that kind of money man; they're out there playing and having fun and everything. God no one is worth that kind of money.

00:37:54

SR: Especially when you--when you're somebody who is working as hard as ya'll have.

00:37:59

AU: Well it's the thing too when they showed the--the ball players on TV the other day and they had--he had a diamond bracelet as big as his hand, you know what I mean. I mean why--you know do something with your money you know--help out people that want to get an education or something you know--God. It's disgusting, I mean all this--they've got to have 10 houses and 50 cars and [*Laughs*]; it's disgusting.

00:38:27

SR: I agree. Well other than famous people, I was going to ask you to describe your clientele but I'm not sure that there--is there a generalization of what kind of people eat at the restaurant?

00:38:41

AU: You have the average Joe--.

00:38:45

GU: A lot of business people--lawyers, doctors--

00:38:47

AU: Yeah; it's hard to say. We had--over the years--

00:38:50

GU: It was a mixture.

00:38:52

AU: --a mixture, yeah--doctors, lawyers, and then the regular guy off the street, you know. It was a combination of everything--both. I mean we--we were priced where you know--you know the average guy could afford to come in and eat something, you know; so--.

00:39:08

SR: And you could come in and get a Po' Boy?

00:39:12

AU: Yeah.

00:39:12

SR: Yeah.

00:39:13

AU: And you could get a short one for \$5-bucks. I mean where are you going to get a lunch for \$5-bucks you know because I kept the short Po' Boy for \$5 all those years--never, never changed the price and it enabled someone to come in and if they wanted to come in and get a--they could eat for \$7 for a drink and a sandwich. I mean that's not--that's not expensive; so yeah. You had a wide range.

00:39:37

SR: If someone--

00:39:38

AU: You could come in there and spend \$7 or you could come in and spend \$20.

00:39:43

SR: Or more if you took advantage of the Bloody Mary(s) or beer?

00:39:46

AU: Yeah; or if you started doing all that yeah.

00:39:48

SR: But you had--I should say that too, you had an interesting selection I think of beer and wine.

00:39:54

AU: Uh-hm.

00:39:55

SR: When did that start?

00:40:00

AU: Not that I'm a big drinker but I--I started putting in the better products--I never carried the cheap brand beers nor you know hard liquor. I always used the better things and that's the same thing when we cook; I never went after the cheap brands. I always bought the better product and

it's the same way I bought seafood. I never, never, never used import seafood, like 90-percent of your restaurants do; it's a shame, and I always bought fresh and I always bought Louisiana and there's not many of us left doing that here 'cause everybody is so price conscious and that's why you see signs *Buy Louisiana Shrimp* all the time all over because I mean today everybody is cost conscious and they're able to get crawfish for you know a third of the price; you can get shrimp for a third of the price than from buying Louisiana and I never would do that--never. I always bought quality; I always bought fresh and for the most part I bought it right from the source--the guys that did it for a living.

00:41:15

SR: For example, where did you get your catfish?

00:41:19

AU: I get that from the Des Allemandes, Louisiana.

00:41:23

GU: That's the best.

00:41:24

AU: It's really good--

00:41:26

GU: That's my--one of my favorite--.

00:41:27

AU: He's--he--he and his wife, I got--I buy soft shell crabs from a lot of people from Des Allemandes--from everywhere. They even have soft shells, one of my favorites; it's not as big as crab but the quality of that meat in that crab is the best.

00:41:42

SR: Des Allemandes?

00:41:43

AU: Des Allemandes, yeah; it's one of my favorites.

00:41:45

SR: And the oysters you got from where?

00:41:47

AU: I got that from P&J all those years.

00:41:53

SR: Uh-hm; what about shrimp? Did you get it from the shrimpers or--?

00:41:56

AU: I would buy that--my main source was a guy named Bobby and he'd go to the--the docks--the different docks. He had all the connections with the boats and he had direct contact with them--when the boat was coming in and how much shrimp they had, what size, and I bought from him for oh--for a lot of years, but this guy was just incredible. I mean he had access to a lot of boats and I'd buy from him almost on a daily basis. I was one of his better customers, I know.

00:42:31

SR: So he was kind of the--the middle man or he was a wholesaler or what was he?

00:42:34

AU: He was the guy that picked it off the boat directly because I mean you just can't--you've got to have--you've got to know when it's going to come in, what they've got; he had all that down to a science and then he'd call me and he'd call all the other people he'd sell to in the city and you know take it from there. He--I know I--I bought a lot of shrimp from him, and now we don't know what happened to him. Ever since the storm, I think--I think he's been lost, yeah--can't find--everybody I've checked has said the same thing.

00:43:10

GU: They can't find him.

00:43:10

AU: They think he died.

00:43:12

GU: He was from St. Bernard.

00:43:13

AU: Yeah; we think he probably stayed behind.

00:43:18

GU: We don't know 'cause he would call and check on Anthony.

00:43:20

AU: I tried and tried and tried.

00:43:22

GU: All the time--even after you know the business closed, he would call and check on Anthony and see how he was doing on a weekly basis and you know he was going to take Anthony fishing and so forth.

00:43:36

AU: He was going to take me to go buy shrimp, which I would have loved to you know to see how it--how it all worked out.

00:43:40

GU: Right; and we--we cannot you know--we--

00:43:42

AU: And I was telling him I was trying to hold off 'cause I said let me get caught up with all the work we've got to do around the house, because you know you put off things all these years in business and I said we're trying to do a few things and I said you know as soon as I get caught up I'm going--I'm going to go out with you. And--and well it never happened.

00:43:59

SR: Oh.

00:44:00

AU: Because I'd love to go to the boats and see--you know the seafood comes right off the boat and so on--[inaudible] what they do. But he buys from a lot of people--from Vietnamese, as well as you know Americans.

00:44:14

SR: The whole shrimping industry took a big hit.

00:44:17

AU: Boy it took a big hit. If I was to go back that would be the one problem I would have. I still have contacts with everybody else but the shrimp--the shrimpers I don't. You know I--I don't know if I could find a reliable source right now. I mean they have taken a beating. There's a lot

of people doing it on the side, you know part-time you know something like that but boy did they take a beating. That's a problem.

00:44:43

SR: So do you--you said that a couple times if you were to go back--is that something ya'll think about?

00:44:52

AU: Like it's not going to happen but you never know. I might be back in some form or another; I don't say that it would be the restaurant business--maybe the packaged products, and then again I--I don't know. I mean someone is always asking me about doing something with them and I keep telling them I would never want to go back and have to do what we once did. It's just too hard and I'm 67 now; there's just no way I could do it. It's just too hard for someone my age. Will I--will I ever do something again? I don't know; I really don't know. If--if I had someone to do all the dirty work [*Laughs*]--yeah maybe.

00:45:32

SR: It's hard though when you have the expectations--

00:45:34

AU: I miss--yeah, oh yeah.

00:45:35

SR: --when you have standards like yours, it's hard to--

00:45:38

AU: I miss the customers.

00:45:40

GU: You see that's what we both miss is the customers, but--

00:45:42

AU: I really do.

00:45:42

GU: --you know we were on our legs from the time we got up and standing until the time we went to bed. I mean you know we--your body takes a beating.

00:45:53

AU: And I was the type of person that I never missed work. I mean I'm there every day from the time I opened up 'til the time I closed and I'm there every day.

00:46:03

GU: He's only missed two days in his life.

00:46:06

AU: Two days I missed.

00:46:08

GU: And that was because they were scoping his knee.

00:46:11

AU: Yeah; both times and then back to work--

00:46:13

GU: He was a nervous wreck because I was there running the place.

00:46:14

AU: Yeah; and I'd be right back to work.

00:46:19

GU: *[Laughs]* I had to take him on crutches and he was like scoped on a Friday which was the busiest day. But well I--it didn't bother me but I had to take him there Monday, go--bring him to work *[Laughs]*, with--on the crutches now you know so he could--

00:46:36

SR: He couldn't stay away. Well what--I mean before the hurricane which I know must have just screwed everything up because it screwed everything up what were you doing with your retirement--relaxing or--?

00:46:53

GU: Well I had--what were we doing? I had to have surgery; well we knew that, so we nipped that one in the bud.

00:47:04

AU: She had hand surgery and knee surgery.

00:47:06

GU: And knee surgery.

00:47:07

SR: Really?

00:47:08

AU: Yeah; both at the same time.

00:47:08

GU: At the same time. I wanted to get it over.

00:47:11

AU: Yeah; you do it all at one time.

00:47:13

SR: Like Carpal Tunnel?

00:47:15

GU: I had a bone removed because I was in an accident--disturbed the arthritis so they removed the bone, but--

00:47:25

SR: Looks like the recovery happened?

00:47:28

GU: Yeah [*Laughs*]; so and then the hurricane came and like I said we were not--I was never--I was never going to leave and neither Anthony because we've never left for a hurricane. I've been in Betsy before and we stayed. But you know when they said it was a five we knew well--you know he even called me from his mother's house 'cause he was going to go get his mother to bring her back here to stay with us and he said Gail what we're going to do--we'll check into a hotel? I said I think we better get out of here. [*Laughs*]

00:48:10

AU: Didn't even go to a hotel.

00:48:12

GU: Right; so we left you know--we didn't leave 'til that--that Sunday 'til around 10:30, 11 o'clock and we--we were going to go to Houston and then we didn't and my niece called up and said you've got to come here. Well we said okay; well it took us so long just to get to Jackson. We tried to check in; there was no place available. It was another three-hour drive and we were--you know we were following one another. Anthony and my daughter, we took all the pets, the turtle--we found a turtle. **[Laughs]** And I--then my son was driving with his fiancée and I was in the back with Anthony's mother. And we were just following one another, falling asleep at the wheel. But we got there--

00:49:02

SR: You got--where did you wind up?

00:49:04

GU: We wound up in Cordova, Tennessee; it took us 15 hours to get there. **[Laughs]** I thought we were going to get caught in the hurricane to be honest with you. At one point we were at a standstill, nobody was moving.

00:49:17

SR: That's terrifying.

00:49:18

GU: But we finally made it.

00:49:21

SR: And so since the hurricane you've stayed there a little bit it sounds like or have you--when did you come back and what's your--?

00:49:31

GU: Well we couldn't get back until the--

00:49:33

AU: Well to tell you the truth; what happened is it didn't look good back home when you started hearing about you know--you wouldn't be back for months and months and months and we still have pictures of the Dome and I said oh my place is under water. We didn't get good reviews about this area because they said Commander's Palace had taken serious damage you know from the storm--.

00:49:55

GU: And I was worried to death about the house.

00:49:57

AU: So I told Gail--I said Gail, I think--I had my mama with me--that we understood; she had lost her house in the lakefront. I said I think we better start looking for a place right here, you know. It's close enough that we can go back and forth you know--

00:50:13

GU: We didn't do it right away in other words.

00:50:14

AU: Yeah, right--right.

00:50:15

GU: We took our time in other words, but Anthony would come back to the City--I think it was--they wouldn't let us back in 'til around five weeks but I--

00:50:23

AU: Six weeks.

00:50:23

GU: --he wanted me to stay there. He didn't want me to come see 'cause I was afraid that the house got looted. Now that--the water, it didn't bother me; it was the looting that really you know, but thank God you know we did not--we didn't have--we had a lot of minor damage, but the--the major damage that we had is that we had a freezer upstairs--

00:50:49

SR: Oh?

00:50:51

GU: --full of seafood.

00:50:53

AU: Big freezer.

00:50:54

GU: And of course now I have no freezer upstairs.

00:50:57

AU: Never again.

00:50:58

GU: I have a little bitty freezer right out there; I learned my lesson for that one. I couldn't get it to come back on; they couldn't get it to come back on to refreeze the thing, so we could take it out physically you know. Well they had to take this thing down the steps. It damaged my steps; it leaked all over. We just--we just got the--

00:51:19

AU: It took six men to bring it down here.

00:51:21

GU: Right--the steps, six--just the--the brand new steps and now Jonathon had of course painted the inside of the house and so forth but it took all that time and you know he would come back--would come back to Tennessee and we would--and you know we were going back and forth and

you know and--and we just decided--it's in Germantown that we bought a house that's--in case another hurricane comes. *[Laughs]*

00:51:53

AU: We want something to fall back on; I never want to go through that again. We'll--I slept on the floor for seven weeks. I had enough. *[Laughs]*

00:52:00

GU: Right.

00:52:01

SR: That is enough. So then your son is living in Germantown right?

00:52:02

AU: Well no; he lives in--he's in--

00:52:05

GU: Cordova.

00:52:07

AU: --in Cordova, yeah.

00:52:07

GU: Cordova; he stayed there in Cordova but he does work--in other words, like all the--the-- they had all the calls transferred from the company to Cordova. He takes care of all the calls and so forth and he comes in once a month for a week and--

00:52:26

SR: To New Orleans?

00:52:28

GU: --helps out.

00:52:28

SR: So now you have a hurricane home?

00:52:29

AU: Yeah; we've got something to fall back in and--and Germantown is really nice.

00:52:33

SR: Oh that's good.

00:52:35

AU: It's quiet; it's--it's really, really a nice area of Tennessee--pretty and it's close enough to New Orleans that we can get back and forth.

00:52:43

GU: Right; it wouldn't--in other words, it takes--it takes you seven hours--seven and a half hours.

00:52:48

AU: About seven and a half hours.

00:52:49

GU: To get there, but it's--in other words, it's not a bad drive at all in other words.

00:52:55

SR: Right; if you're not in the--

00:52:56

GU: Right; we usually split up the driving and so it's not bad at all but if they would say a storm--

00:53:02

AU: They've got quite a few people from this area going up there.

00:53:05

SR: Oh really?

00:53:05

GU: Yes; if they said a--a hurricane is going--is entering the Gulf but they don't know where it's going I'm going to Germantown. **[Laughs]** I don't want that again; I just don't want you know to be on that road, you know with taking that long to get there and--

00:53:23

SR: It's nice to have the peace of mind of knowing--

00:53:25

AU: We've got something to fall back on.

00:53:27

GU: Right.

00:53:28

SR: Yeah; what--so we were talking about--talking about it before I started recording but what is the state of the restaurant building? Did it flood?

00:53:37

AU: No; that I can actually--I can actually--we were never flooded. I've got damaged which I'm going to start working on it very shortly you know as far as the roof; start with the roof first, and-

-

00:53:53

GU: And usually Baronne Street floods, so we can not figure this out. Now the--the--the neighbor across the street, the one who built--fixed up that beautiful house--she fixed up the house?

00:54:06

SR: Uh-hm.

00:54:08

GU: She said there was no more than what--six inches of water or something to that effect, but let me put it this way, but I think the reason could have been is that Anthony sand-bagged the inside of the place.

00:54:21

AU: Because I'm right in the street.

00:54:23

GU: Because he's on the street.

00:54:24

SR: Right; there's no--it's not raised at all?

00:54:26

AU: No; it's not raised.

00:54:26

GU: No.

00:54:27

AU: Right on the street, right on the sidewalk; that's it.

00:54:29

GU: Right; so he sand-bagged all the doors.

00:54:32

AU: So I thought for sure we had serious flooding when I started doing it.

00:54:33

GU: I did too; I did too.

00:54:35

AU: I said oh my God; we've got five--six feet of water in the place.

00:54:38

GU: Right; because Erato Street floods more so than Baronne Street. And it would come in from the Erato Street side, but I think it's--I--that's the only thing we're thinking.

00:54:50

AU: I can't figure it out.

00:54:51

SR: That is so interesting. Well and so you had some--you got some roof damage; was that it?

00:55:00

AU: Uh-hm.

00:55:01

GU: And he got--

00:55:01

AU: Ceiling damage--things like that.

00:55:02

GU: He's got ceiling damage, roof damage, the floor is damaged in the ladies bathroom--it all came in from there.

00:55:11

SR: But so far no plans for that building huh? You're not planning to sell it or--?

00:55:17

AU: We don't know.

00:55:18

SR: You don't know?

00:55:18

AU: I don't know.

00:55:21

SR: I'm sure you get asked that question all the time.

00:55:23

AU: Yeah; and I don't know. I mean we ate out last night and that's what everybody is asking us--what you going to do? I said I don't know yet; it's--it's wait and see, you know what--what happens with the City, you know. I don't even know what to expect for next year and it might be--it might be tougher next year than this year; I don't know. I wonder you know. I don't know; but I don't see a quick recovery. I really don't. So I mean the--this--this can really come out good if they do things the right way but they've got to start making improvements, do something with the school systems--like right now, I see in the paper this morning, they don't even have teachers for the schools here. You've got to do something with the hospitals. I mean like the person we saw last night eating out, he told me his mama broke her shoulder and they sent her to the

hospital and they patched it up; they couldn't even accept her at the hospital. They had no place to put her you know. It's--it's things like that--

00:56:24

SR: They don't have a place to put people who get arrested for sort of minor things.

00:56:28

AU: That's what I'm saying. It's things like that; there's no place--the doctors next door to us--

00:56:35

GU: She couldn't find a job.

00:56:35

AU: Yeah; I mean they don't have enough--enough people here to--to--

00:56:39

GU: Working long hours.

00:56:40

AU: They're going to go to Long Island and he's in research and she's going with him. We lost one lawyer across the street; we lost--we'll lose another one on the corner here. They've got their house for sale. He's into oil and she used to teach architecture at Tulane. Well they gave up--they gave up architecture at Tulane. His company is moving to Houston so they're going to relocate

in Houston. So I mean you've got all these things--and they're all you hear and like everybody in my family is just about gone from here now 'cause my sisters are all 80ish and they're too old to start all over again. They lost their houses and we got one in Florida and one going to Texas; my nieces and nephews--almost everybody lost their--their houses that they lived in so they're all gone all--all over you know. It makes a difference.

00:57:35

SR: Yeah.

00:57:36

AU: It's going to come back provided we don't have another hurricane to come through here.

00:57:40

GU: Yeah, right. *[Laughs]*

00:57:41

AU: And it will probably come back better than ever I hope, but right now it is tough.

00:57:47

SR: I agree.

00:57:48

AU: The restaurants are doing good--those that's open 'cause it's not a lot of them open. But--

00:57:54

SR: And it sure makes you think twice to see so many people leaving.

00:57:57

AU: That's what bothers me, yeah.

00:58:00

SR: Yeah.

00:58:02

AU: And I--when we talk to a lot of people right now when I see--you know I ask them what they're going to do they--a lot of people are living with somebody else or they--they went across the Lake or some other part, and really they don't know what to do you know. They don't want to take--they're scared about taking their chances about what to do with their house or if they've got to raise it up higher or whatever. It's tough and then they're still fighting insurance companies and I know how that goes.

00:58:29

SR: Who would have thought that this is where we would be almost a year later?

00:58:32

AU: I know; it's--it's kind of slow you know.

00:58:37

SR: Yeah; well it just--yeah it sounds like you're where everyone else is--trying to--

00:58:43

AU: You just don't know; it's a wait and see thing.

00:58:45

SR: Wait and see yeah.

00:58:45

AU: If they can start spreading this money I suppose it would get--you know it would probably help, but it takes time.

00:58:50

GU: It's sad you know to see when you drive around and you really got to see it for yourself.
You cannot describe it to anybody.

00:59:02

AU: Yeah; it's rough.

00:59:03

GU: How these houses--

00:59:04

AU: I hate going down to Lakeview 'cause that's where my family lived. My mama lived in Lakeshore. Her house has to be torn--torn down; would you ever have thought--and she didn't have flood insurance, you know. I mean that's--that's the killer; a lot of people didn't have flood insurance, so--.

00:59:21

GU: And when we think about how his mother--she locked herself in the bedroom and Anthony had to go pick the lock to get her out of the bedroom.

00:59:29

SR: Oh really; she didn't want--?

00:59:30

GU: She didn't want to go; see that was her security was that--her house and I said Anthony--

00:59:36

AU: She was 99.

00:59:37

GU: Right; and she took care of herself.

00:59:39

AU: She made 100 but then after 100 she didn't last long. She died right after that.

00:59:43

GU: Right; she wanted to go home. She said that in her dying day. Anthony said ma I've come to take you home, and that's what she wanted to hear. But see that was--it just--it really did something to her; in other words, because she was taken from her security.

01:00:02

AU: A lot of people--

01:00:05

SR: They'll never be able to count all those deaths and people who died because they were taken out of their homes.

01:00:10

AU: Oh God; I remember like John and I were saying the other day. We went to the shopping center and you know I run across a lot of customers and so on and we met two ladies and they--they tell me that--that they you know lost their homes and I don't know if they're with somebody or something or other, but one of them was going to I think Virginia, I told you and another one was going to some part of Tennessee. They're moving you know and they just broke down crying; it makes you feel so bad for them and not that they want to go but they--they lost

everything--to start all over you know. And they said their husbands just said that they'll go some--a lot of people are going near to their children or things like that, you know.

01:00:53

GU: Right, right.

01:00:53

AU: I don't know; I hope something good comes from all of this.

01:00:56

GU: I do too.

01:00:58

AU: But it's going to take time and I just hope that they'll build and you know do things the right way with the money that they're going to get and so on.

01:01:07

GU: Right, right.

01:01:09

AU: But I worry because it looks to me like a lot of people are gone.

01:01:13

SR: I worry that the people--that there won't be people here that know how to spend the money.

01:01:18

AU: That's right. It's tough. And I'm glad they did get the National Guard in here because around here was not good. I mean we--we started hearing about all the trouble they were having around here with people breaking in and robbing you on the streets and everything and I said holy mackerel, you know. I mean even before the hurricane, my wife and my daughter, they were held up here on the corner.

01:01:49

SR: Really?

01:01:50

AU: Yeah.

01:01:51

GU: Walking the dog.

01:01:52

AU: Walking the dog, yeah; put a gun to her.

01:01:54

GU: Put a gun to me.

01:01:55

SR: [*Gasps*] Before like--shortly before the hurricane?

01:01:59

GU: We were walking; it was 8:30 at night, in other words my dog--we used to walk the little dog around the block and bring our little bag to put her doo and he told me to drop it. I stood in front--I stood--he first put the gun on my daughter and then I stepped around and got in front of my daughter and he told me to drop it. I said that's poo-poo. And I dropped it.

01:02:24

SR: But take it.

01:02:26

GU: Yeah; but what saved us was that a car saw it all and it was driving very slow and he saw the car and he took off. He put his undershirt like over his face, so you couldn't see his face and they asked us if we're all right, you know and [*Laughs*] we ran to the house. I mean this was just in the--not the next door but the one right in the corner; so--.

01:02:52

SR: Were you able to ever identify--?

01:02:55

GU: We--you know we called the police and all but they couldn't do anything.

01:03:00

AU: But it was bad around here.

01:03:02

GU: But it was bad.

01:03:03

AU: The hurricane--you know what I'm saying; as a matter of fact they were breaking in left and right around here. Oh my Lord.

01:03:10

GU: And we don't walk the dog anymore.

01:03:12

AU: No.

01:03:12

SR: That's terrible; that's terrible to live like that. Well I do think that I agree--restaurants are the one area that seems to be, I don't know, pretty much continually hopeful. Are there other places where ya'll eat or where you like to eat since your retirement or you cook at home mostly?

01:03:34

AU: Gail is cooking more at home now.

01:03:37

GU: I am.

01:03:37

AU: And I think that's because we've been busy trying to give my daughter a hand and we've been doing work here all--we had a lot of facial work done outside with people working here, working two or three hours a day, working--you know their other jobs here, and John started to painting things and--

01:03:58

GU: And we're still looking to have you know the bathroom repaired and the--and the kitchen remodeled.

01:04:03

AU: Yeah; we still want to do like two bathrooms and--

01:04:04

GU: And I can't find anybody.

01:04:04

AU: --the kitchen. Yeah; we're having a hard time finding somebody to do work. That's the problem.

01:04:08

SR: I know.

01:04:09

GU: I know, so you know and I'm not going to--you know just say--you know accept any contractor that--I'm just not going to do that you know. I want someone who's been in business, has a good reputation, you know but you just--it's just so--I've left my number so many times and they don't even return the calls.

01:04:29

AU: Nobody calls you back.

01:04:30

GU: And I--I'm getting discouraged now. [*Laughs*]

01:04:35

SR: You start to feel like a failure even though all you're doing is leaving your number.

01:04:39

AU: Yeah; oh it's terrible.

01:04:41

GU: Right; it was just like--

01:04:42

AU: And everybody is in the same boat; it's everybody you talk to.

01:04:43

SR: I know.

01:04:45

GU: Right; well when we came back, when I did finally come back--

01:04:46

SR: It's a broken record.

01:04:48

GU: --and of course we had to get rid of all the refrigerators and the freezers.

01:04:51

AU: I got rid of nine freezers.

01:04:54

GU: Nine freezers altogether.

01:04:55

SR: Between here and the restaurant?

01:04:56

GU: Between here and the restaurant and--

01:04:59

AU: And I even had them on Tchoupitoulas Street.

01:05:01

GU: And he also had it at my daughter's business place. It was nine freezers we had to get rid of but and--and the refrigerator and so we had to go out you know and we were living out of an ice chest, so I said oh God, Anthony; we--I just can't live out of this ice chest anymore. So you know to--to actually get a--I have a special cabinet like you can put a refrigerator--well you have to really order it and they told me it wouldn't come in 'til December. I said to myself--Anthony, we've got to get something now.

01:05:35

AU: We had the--

01:05:35

GU: Boy did I make a mistake. [*Laughs*]

01:05:38

SR: Oh because you made an impulse buy?

01:05:40

AU: Well we--we bought you know refrigerators--

01:05:43

GU: But they stick out; you know they don't fit in.

01:05:44

AU: Yeah; but for the time-being you've just got to do it.

01:05:47

GU: And when you bend over you're hitting your head coming up. [*Laughs*]

01:05:49

AU: Oh yeah, but you've got to get something.

01:05:53

GU: But we had to get something 'cause I mean that's all--we needed something, so--but I--I'm hoping to get me either the kitchen remodeled one day when I--we can find somebody but I think after--maybe after this hurricane season--.

01:06:13

SR: I know; that's the refrain.

01:06:15

AU: Yeah; I wonder--yeah; let--

01:06:17

GU: That's what everybody--

01:06:17

AU: If we can get by this year at least I'll feel a little bit better--

01:06:20

GU: I do too.

01:06:20

SR: I know.

01:06:21

AU: --and I'm hoping and then everybody will be in a better frame of mind you know 'cause everybody you talk to, I mean has got serious damage to their property--I mean eight or nine or ten--they just don't know what to do; they just don't know what to do and they say they don't know what to do.

01:06:35

SR: And even people--I mean I have friends who didn't get damaged who are renters and they don't know what to do either. They don't know if it's--if they should stay or--

01:06:45

AU: Well you've got a lot of problems. The insurance is--the rates of insurance is going to kill people.

01:06:51

GU: I mean it--it's really--

01:06:54

AU: The rents will never be the same here; you know people--how--how are you going to afford--?

01:06:59

GU: See, my son didn't come back 'cause there was no place--

01:07:00

AU: They lost their place.

01:07:01

GU: Right; there was no place to--to move to. Where was he going to move to? And you know they tried but the cost of living over there is so much cheaper than the cost of living here.

01:07:19

SR: It's a quandary. Well I see that you have the *Guardians of the Tradition* hanging up behind you. What--what does--what does that mean to you--to be a *Guardian of the Tradition*?

01:07:32

AU: It's nice to be though of you know.

01:07:35

GU: Right; and with all your hard work and--and I think that it is a great honor you know--the recognition is unbelievable you know. I think people know that--

01:07:50

AU: We got a lot of nice press all over the country. Some--in fact I just brought some of them up to Tennessee 'cause we got a lot--a lot of them you know over the years, you know customers give it to you or whatever, or some articles--the people out there that do the publication, they'll send you copies framed or something; so it's nice. But I mean--I mean the *New York Times*, *USA*

Today, I don't know so many of them written--you know written up really, really nice. And the *New York Times*, they wrote us up like in the front section of their--of their paper. I mean it's just incredible.

01:08:24

SR: Yeah; it is incredible. Well I can tell you that a lot of the people who--I mean pretty much everyone who was at that dinner last summer and the whole weekend, you know you--you and the other people who were at that dinner were the people they were thinking of when the hurricane hit. I had a lot of people tell me that.

01:08:43

GU: What I like about Anthony is that he gets very teary-eyed, you know because I know he works, you know he works very hard and--and it's nice to be recognized.

01:08:58

AU: It is; it is and we do--

01:09:02

GU: I--I think Anthony and I are the type of people that we really cared about the product we put out and it wasn't--it wasn't just to make money. But I think it was to let people appreciate good food and we wanted to put out good food--or at least we thought it was good food.

01:09:30

SR: A lot of other people did too. *[Laughs]*

01:09:32

GU: You know it was--it was--I just--we just didn't--wouldn't throw anything together and say hey this is--I don't know, let's just say Shrimp Uggie. We wanted to make sure it was--it was something that we liked and we used the products that we liked you know. In other words, we'd have customers come in--Gail did you make that Oyster Brie Soup? Yes; or no, I didn't make it today? What? *[Laughs]*

01:10:03

SR: Little did they know you were waking up at 4:30 a.m. to make that.

01:10:07

GU: Right; so you know--

01:10:09

AU: She stayed in bed 'til 6:30 this morning.

01:10:11

GU: Exactly.

01:10:11

SR: I was going to ask you how late you stayed in bed now.

01:10:14

GU: Yeah; I like that one--6:30.

01:10:15

AU: Breaking all kind of records.

01:10:16

SR: To me that--

01:10:18

GU: Yeah; I'm breaking--I'm breaking records. [*Laughs*] In fact, one morning--in fact, it was my birthday, I [*Laughs*]--it was 7:30.

01:10:29

SR: [*Gasps*] Good for you.

01:10:30

GU: And I--and he came up--and he came up--

01:10:34

AU: She gets naps now.

01:10:35

GU: Yeah; and he says Donna I'm going to go--go see if mama's all right. [*Laughs*] So he came and he touched me; he wanted to see if I was cold. [*Laughs*] I just--I don't know; I slept late that day.

01:10:53

SR: To me that's not exactly late but that's good.

01:10:57

GU: [*Laughs*]

01:10:58

AU: We're getting there.

01:10:58

GU: We're getting there.

01:11:00

AU: I don't think I've ever been able to stay late after all those years.

01:11:03

GU: No; uh-uh, I can go to bed--and now--

01:11:04

AU: Can't do it.

01:11:06

GU: --we go to bed early. [*Laughs*]

01:11:07

SR: Yeah; you still do?

01:11:10

GU: Well we go to bed early and--

01:11:11

AU: I'll last 'til 10 o'clock.

01:11:13

GU: Yeah; 10 o'clock is Anthony's--

01:11:15

AU: I'm asking my friends what does that mean; am I all right? [*Laughs*]

01:11:20

SR: You're almost normal--not quite.

01:11:22

GU: Right; and we take afternoon naps. What are we talking about? [*Laughs*]

01:11:25

AU: Sometimes, yeah.

01:11:27

SR: Good; I'm glad to hear it. Well I want to thank you for spending time with me.

01:11:32

AU: Oh we're glad to have you Sara.

01:11:34

GU: Would you like something to drink?

01:11:35

AU: Yeah; how about water or a little tea, water; I've got tea, I've got regular--.

[End Anthony & Gail Uglesich]