

**ASHLEY & GERARD HANSEN**  
**Hansen's Sno-Bliz – New Orleans, LA**

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

**[Begin Hansen's]**

00:00:02

**Sara Roahen:** This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance; it's Monday August 7<sup>th</sup> 2006 and I'm on Tchoupitoulas Street next to Hanson's Sno-Bliz. So could—could I get you guys both to say your name, your date of birth and how you make your living?

00:00:20

**Gerard Hansen:** Okay, I'm Gerry Hansen. I was born February 9<sup>th</sup> 1939 and my primary occupation is a Judge in the Criminal section in the Federal Court—Judges Magistrate Section and that's how I make my living.

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**Ashley Hansen:** My name is Ashley Hansen and I am 33. I was born in August of—22<sup>nd</sup> 1973 and I make my living by running our family sno-ball stand.

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**SR:** Can you tell me the name of the stand—how you say it?

00:01:02

**Ashley:** It's called Hansen's Snow-Bliz.

00:01:06

**SR:** And describe your relationship—how you're related?

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**Gerard:** Well Ashley is my daughter. I have two daughters; they are twins—Allison who doesn't—puts some time to the stand but not as much as Ashley does—when she's in town. And they are the only two children I have.

00:01:27

**SR:** And where does Allison live?

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**Ashley:** She lives in between New Orleans and DC.

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**SR:** Okay, and I guess why don't we start for the record by describing—tell me what—what a sno-ball is.

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**Ashley:** A sno-ball is a cup of finely—finely shaved ice with a simple syrup on top that's flavored with all kinds of different flavors, like chocolate or strawberry.

00:02:05

**SR:** Okay. What—is there a difference in your mind between a sno-ball and a snow cone which is what us Northerners grew up on?

00:02:14

**Gerard:** Well a snow cone is a little more coarse than—it's a difference between a sno-ball, a snow cone, and a Sno-Bliz. The snow cone is very coarse; the syrup will go right through to the bottom instead of to the top.

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**Ashley:** Like a slushy.

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**Gerard:** Right, a sno-ball is basically the same thing as a snow cone, but a Snow-Bliz is a finely shaved, almost hollow type of ice-shavings where the syrup does not go all the way through. You actually put the syrup on in layers to get consistency throughout the body of the sno-ball. So therefore, the flavor stays with you throughout the process of eating it.

00:02:57

**SR:** That's a good one.

00:03:00

**Ashley:** All right, good.

00:03:01

**SR:** And well that's a good introduction to how the Snow-Bliz came to be. So can you—you know either one of you—both of you—talk about the beginning of the business—the family business?

00:03:23

**Ashley:** Sure; I—the—the beginning of the family business was when my grandfather had his first son, my Uncle Ernie, and Uncle Ernie wanted a sno-ball and at the time all they had was big blocks of ice that a man in a cart would come around and you'd pick your flavor and he would shave the ice with his hand with a shaver almost similar to a kitchen door planer. And it would get real dirty because of your hands and the sweat and the atmosphere, and my grandfather said, *I want to make something for my children that is not touched by a hand.* And so he got to work in 1933 and in 1934 he came up with his first ice-shaving machine.

00:04:24

**SR:** Hmm. So it was kind of like—so that—would that have been when you were growing up? Do you remember those hand-shaved—?

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**Gerard:** I remember the hand-shaved machines—the hand-shavers; we found—you would find that in Mexico. I found that in that area of the country. By the time I—I was born and started to grow up there were sno-ball machines. My father's was the first motor driven machine and that's why he was able to get the patent on that machine. But the—we always—we never wanted to go

elsewhere for a sno-ball because we had the best, so we always ate from the Snow-Bliz machine you know and in contests they would give us the best and no one would—no one in the family would get sick of the ice and hands touching the ice. My mother saw—saw the potential in this and said, *well it's so good why don't we just share it with the rest of the city?* And so then she started—she started the actual business. And she actually started the business in 1936.

00:05:38

**SR:** Oh, so for three years you had the Snow-Bliz machine — or your family had the Snow-Bliz machine — to itself?

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**Gerard:** We— just about for two years probably because it was really made for just the family. Mother liked the idea; they would open a small—they opened—probably opened in '36 and then mother was having babies then so she would open it or close and then it would be open again. In 1939, the year I was born, they opened and stayed open continuously for the next 67 years.

00:06:11

**SR:** Did it—did the original machine look like the machine now?

00:06:14

**Ashley:** It does except smaller. The original smaller is named after my Uncle Ernie and the machine we use now, since it was made the same year my dad was born, is named after him—

Gerry Hanson, and the original machine got flooded in Katrina under eight-feet of water so it has some rust on it but we're going—we're going to salvage it.

00:06:41

**SR:** Well I—I didn't know about the original machine. So and what do you call it—Ernie?

00:06:48

**Gerard:** Louie. [*Laughs*] The original machine is called Snow-Bliz, the name—the trademark. As a matter of fact it didn't start as Snow-Bliz; there's a doctor who is close to my family and the first time he came—they invited him over for a Snow-Bliz and he said, *this is so good it's like a snow blizzard*. And—and so they said oh yeah, okay; so they thought about it and they shortened the name from Snow Blizzard to Snow-Bliz and—and that's the name of the trademark.

00:07:21

**SR:** What kind of flavors did you have when you were growing up?

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**Gerard:** Well we—she always had some special flavor like chocolate and cream, and that was our signature flavor for the whole 60-some odd years. But we had basic flavors like strawberry and spearmint and what else—?

00:07:44

**Ashley:** I don't know; I wasn't there.

00:07:45

**Gerard:** You didn't have as many flavors. You may have had maybe 10 flavors and then most of them were your basic flavors: blueberry, grape, or you know things like that, and she started adding some special flavors like chocolate, pineapple, cream of nectar. And then as time went on, whenever we would travel, Mother would come up with an idea like cream of coconut when we were in Florida and she had to drink coconut milk out of a coconut and she said, *oh this is wonderful; I'm going to go back and develop a coconut flavor*. And—and did, and then she decided to make it a cream of coconut. And then so she would pick up ideas when she traveled and then she would only work with flavors that she felt was good enough for the public. She—a lot of flavors were just discarded because she didn't feel they could meet the quality she wanted. And—and after a time we included some of the flavors we have today and I don't remember—Ashley could tell you—.

00:08:50

**Ashley:** I think we have maybe 22—22 flavors.

00:08:53

**Gerard:** And why we don't have a much larger number—because she didn't believe—she believed in making flavors fresh every day. So if you had a flavor that was leftover it got either turned to icebergs or thrown away. She would not save that flavor for the next day, and so she wanted to keep the numbers down so she wouldn't waste a lot of flavors.



00:09:18

**Ashley:** And so even now today I make enough for one day and I do still make icebergs and—  
and we don't have a whole lot of waste.

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**SR:** What's an iceberg?

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**Ashley:** Icebergs are little Dixie Cups filled with simple syrup and a little bit of water and  
they're frozen solid and you just squeeze the bottom of the Dixie Cup and you can sort of lick it  
like a Popsicle.

00:09:47

**SR:** And do you sell them?

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**Ashley:** We do, for like 75-cents, and sometimes I just give them away to the kids.

00:09:56

**SR:** So every—so on the weekend you're open—this summer—are you open on Thursdays or  
just Friday, Saturday, Sunday? Do you remake the syrups all the next day?

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**Ashley:** Uh-hm. Yeah, when we sell out, like after Sunday. I mean I can show you the icebox like there's barely any flavors in there now.

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**SR:** And what's left will be turned into icebergs or thrown away but—

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**Ashley:** I mean literally, we make enough for one day. [*Laughs*]

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**SR:** How long does that take you to re—?

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**Ashley:** It takes about two hours. [*Laughs*]

00:10:36

**SR:** Wow.

00:10:36

**Gerard:** It's labor-intensive but Ashley is the labor. [*Laughs*]

00:10:42

**Ashley:** We go through maybe—maybe over 500-pounds of sugar a weekend and 1,200-pounds of ice a weekend.

00:10:51

**SR:** Wow, and that ice gets delivered weekly or—?

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**Ashley:** Yes.

00:10:56

**SR:** Wow, and is it the same—so is the ice sold in these blocks?

00:11:00

**Ashley:** Three hundred-pound blocks.

00:11:03

**SR:** Three hundred-pound blocks and then you have—

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**Ashley:** What we used to do every Saturday—my grandparents used to close the sno-ball stand and they would go pick out the ice because you'd have to go early to beat the shrimpers to get the good ice and—and every Saturday even at the end I started helping them with my dad and Otis and a few other people. We would chop the ice up with an ice pick.

00:11:33

**SR:** Really?

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**Gerard:** The process would take about five hours; now we do it in about 45-minutes but—

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**Ashley:** A man delivers it and uses and electric chain saw.

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**SR:** Here—when he gets here?

00:11:42

**Ashley:** Uh-hm.

00:11:44

**Gerard:** Yeah, and he cuts it into little blocks that you see.

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**Ashley:** His name is Mike Duplantier.

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**SR:** Oh how do you spell that?

00:11:51

**Ashley:** D-u-p-l-a-n-t-i-e-r.

00:11:57

**Gerard:** Mother would go—and actually to go into the icehouse and she would go in and handpick her ice. There wasn't no people—but they wanted to just pull ice and give her what they had there and she said no. She'd walk in and say that one has too much air in it; that one is not clean; and she'd handpick her ice and then they would put it in a Jeep—old Jeep Cherokee—

00:12:19

**Ashley:** With a metal pan.

00:12:21

**Gerard:** And they'd load it up and they'd drive it to the store and then the ice would then be washed down to make sure there was no impurities on it and then it was brought in and it was covered—brought it in—in 100-pound squares and then it was cut in half and then cut again and cut again and that's why it took five hours, you know and then put away and made sure it was clean and put away and that went on every single week you know and they would operate from March through Halloween.

00:12:54

**Ashley:** And then about eight or nine years ago when I started helping them I said no way. I am too young and too weak to—to pick up all this ice and considering I had a bicycle at the time, you know. So that's when I started looking for someone to deliver to the ice.

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**SR:** So they were going to get it even up until then?

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**Ashley:** Yes.

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**Gerard:** Yes.

00:13:20

**SR:** And how old were they at that point?

00:13:22

**Gerard:** They were in their—probably in their 80s.

00:13:25

**Ashley:** Eighty-seven.

00:13:26

**Gerard:** I would come and drive—we would borrow a truck or we—I would come and drive the vehicle and my mother would ride with me and we'd go up to the place and then I'd sit there while she did her little episode and she'd come back out and—and they'd deliver the ice for us on the truck and we would drive back and—and Otis who is now helping us and was working for me for 20 years and Otis would come over and help my dad and they would help—work with the ice and we had a—a black gentleman who worked with us named Joe and Joe was like—he's a member of the family, and Joe had been with Mom and Dad like 30 years. As a matter of fact, Mama and Daddy was in their '90s and Joe is in his '80s, but he would come—.

00:14:15

**Ashley:** And he couldn't hear and neither could they.

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**Gerard:** And he'd come and he'd help—he'd help with the ice too—help carry it in. Joe is strong as a bull; he is getting up in years and he would carry the ice in and help put it away for them and so we went through the process forever until Ashley got—you know, when Mom and Dad couldn't do it anymore and they got to realize that when Ashley came up and said I can't do it either. We're going to try a new method. And as a matter of fact—

00:14:42

**Ashley:** That was like pulling teeth.

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**Gerard:** Well Mr. Duplantier said he stopped by the business many times before Ashley was running it and talked to my parents about delivering ice and they said, *no, we don't need it; we don't need you to do anything, yeah.*

00:14:56

**Ashley:** And his father was also an ice-man, so his—his business is generational as well.

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**Gerard:** And his father tried to talk my parents into it, and they wouldn't do it and you know, well, this is all mother's philosophy — there's no short-cuts to quality — and she took, you know sometimes even if it's—it's more difficult than it had to be, but she wanted to make sure the ice was perfect. That's why she never kept the flavors over and the flavors had to be fresh. If you kept the flavor over, that was a short-cut, and you can't take short-cuts over quality.

00:15:31

**Ashley:** She didn't want to give her customers anything that she wouldn't have wanted to eat, so she took the best care in producing something.

00:15:41

**Gerard:** So every night—tell her about the story—the little side tips I don't remember now, but you know she would—we would spend an hour and a half cleaning everything up before we left because she never wanted any ants or roaches, etcetera, and she would always say a famous saying: *make sure it's not sticky-sticky-sticky.*



00:16:00

**Ashley:** *Don't leave anything sticky-sticky-sticky.*

00:16:01

**Gerard:** [*Laughs*] *Don't leave anything sticky-sticky-sticky*—it was always three times she would say it. *Don't leave anything sticky-sticky-sticky*, huh, and we would clean up and we'd close the shop. Back then we were closing the shop as late as nine o'clock and going home at eleven because she had to have it spotless before she left.

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**SR:** Do you say that now?

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**Gerard:** No.

00:16:17

**Ashley:** No, only in jest. [*Laughs*]

00:16:21

**Gerard:** We still do the work but we're just fast. They was old; they wasn't moving as fast, you know, and so but I—I would go and I've been helping them for the last 30 years or so and I'd go and they wouldn't let me do nothing but clean up. That was all the—

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**Ashley:** And you were the bouncer.

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**Gerard:** But I was a bouncer and I was a—

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**Ashley:** A security guard.

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**Gerard:** —security guard to make sure they got out safely. But I had to be the clean-up man; I said, *well I can make sno-balls. No, your daddy is going to make the sno-balls.* Daddy would grind and I would pour and—and the two of them did what now is taking four of us to do.

00:16:55

**Ashley:** Well also what I like to say is they always felt that they wanted their sons to do something better than a sno-ball stand, so my uncle became a doctor and my dad became a judge, and even a few years ago my cousin who is a doctor—an emergency room surgeon — and he's like, *you guys need help; let me help you.* And so he got up to the machine to help—to help run the place, and my grandfather put him out. He's like, *you're a doctor you know.* He did not—he wanted people—he wanted—he was very proud of everyone and he didn't want to mess up anyone's fingers or, you know, he wanted—he didn't want people to be sno-ball people. He

wanted to be—he wanted people—his children to have titles, and so did my grandmother. They were—they were very—that was very important to her.

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**SR:** And so what was—what was the reaction when you came in and wanted to help?

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**Ashley:** I don't know, I was more of the pet. I kind of snuck in I think.

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**Gerard:** Well she came in to help basically because they—not that—they love both of my children, but they've always were sort of partial to Ashley though—

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**Ashley:** And I was around in the summers.

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**Gerard:** —and they love having her hang around you know and so I think they really brought her there to help out basically just because they wanted her around, and my mother loved having her there.

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**Ashley:** So I would wash bottles.

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**Gerard:** And then the time came that they actually got—needed her and so out of necessity they saw—and then they—they was afraid that the business would not survive; there was no one else—they already made—they were sure my brother and I would not run the business, so now it was up to someone else and they felt that as time went on that she was the heir apparent, and then they worked with her and she worked with them.

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**Ashley:** Beautifully—it was one of the best parts of my life. In 1995 I graduated from Loyola here in town and I spent a winter in Chicago—just one winter. That’s all it took and I came back to town and that summer I said, *come on, aren’t we going to do the sno-ball stand?* And I thought at that point they may have been ready to give it to me or hand—hand it over in some sort of old-fashioned rigor and oh no—no. In fact, my enthusiasm was so contagious that they were ready to go the very next day to go get all our sugar and supplies, and that couldn’t have been better for me or for them. For the next maybe four years we did it—all the three of us.

00:19:33

**Gerard:** Yeah, but they—they did it—well when my dad it until he couldn’t stand anymore so—.

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**Ashley:** Yeah, but what, I mean, like...we didn't have to like really count on *you* as much for like the next four years.

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**Gerard:** No, I still came in as the security guard. That's all I did—make sure they got out safely because you know the neighborhood changed several times and you wanted to make sure nothing happened to them, so I would still show up and I'd still clean up. Yeah, clean-up—it wasn't until recently—this is sort of a cute story—it wasn't until recently when I started running the machine because Daddy couldn't do it anymore, and it was never anyone that worked that wasn't family. It would be family or nobody and so I would run the machine and finally I was getting tired. I mean I was working in court four to five days a week, working at the sno-ball shop four days a week, after—after court, and on the weekends. I had no free time. So one day I looked at my daddy and I said, *Daddy, you've been doing this all your life so I wouldn't have to. You made me go to law school. I became a judge so that I wouldn't have to do this.* I said, *why am I doing this?* He said, *you help us out—you're helping me, you're helping your mother and I, so shut up and go back to work.* **[Laughs]** He goes—my dad—my dad believed—he used to work 20 hours a day—

00:20:44

**Ashley:** And he thought everyone else should to.

00:20:45

**Gerard:** He thought everyone else should too—work 20 hours a day; there was no—my dad during World War II literally, in addition to running the sno-ball shop—and plus the business wasn't what it is today but just—in addition to running the sno-ball shop he was a machinist—that was his trade; that's why he was able to build the machine he built and he used to help my grandparents who had a—a—a—I guess it was a barroom in the Irish Channel during the days of the War. So he would actually go to work at six in the morning, come to the sno-ball shop at six in the evening, leave there at ten o'clock, work at my grandmother's bar until three in the morning, go home and sleep for two hours and go back to work. And he did that for five years. And so my dad didn't believe that—and you know he believed that if you do work less than 20 hours you were pretty lazy. **[Laughs]** So everyone had—he—he would say, *don't say you can't do this. If you say you can't do it, it means you don't want to do it. There is nothing you can't do*, all right. And that's true; I mean he was right you know. And so he expected everybody to work those kind of hours and—and of course again I was allowed to work there but only when they couldn't do it anymore or if I just cleaned up. I wasn't allowed to do anything to that point, you know. Ashley was probably—Ashley got more responsibility and really did more at a younger age than I—you know because at that point they needed—they needed her and they wanted to see her do the business you know. And Ashley—Ashley did a lot of the stuff she learned—Mama passed some of the—our secrets down, but a lot she learned by just watching and she picked it up by observing because my mother always felt that there was two things that—that she—she thought. First is that you know if she told anybody how to do things then she wasn't needed anymore, and she wanted to be needed; and she never wanted anybody to know her age. She used to say, *don't tell people my age; they'll think I'm getting old and can't work*, you know. And—and so she wouldn't tell her age, you know. She would always be—she was 75 until my

brother turned 70 and then she realized she couldn't—she realized she couldn't—she couldn't have a child at five [*Laughs*] so then she had to go to 80. But anyway—because she was afraid that people would say that she couldn't do her business and that's all she wanted. They lived in that business. I'd say, *Mama, why—why do you go—why do you work so hard*, you know? I said, *it's going to kill you*. And she said, *if I died in my business I'd be the happiest person in the world. I don't want to leave this business*. Yeah, and she almost literally did—it came very close because she went right—she was there the week before she went to the hospital. She still came; she was sick but she still came. My daddy came the day before. He was down on 26<sup>th</sup> and then Mother went to the hospital and then he—and then the 28<sup>th</sup> was his birthday and he went to the hospital to be with her and then the storm came and all that happened, you know. But they were there as long as they could make it—as long as they could make it.

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**SR:** So they—for the record, they didn't make it back to New Orleans after the storm?

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**Gerard:** No.

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**Ashley:** They're still not here.

00:24:08

**SR:** Right; oh really?

00:24:09

**Gerard:** No, we had to—what happened, they left—they left to—well, Mother was airlifted to on a plane—Pineville—.

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**Ashley:** Pineville.

00:24:21

**Gerard:** Pineville, Louisiana. Dad was—Dad was almost left at Touro because he wasn't a patient. He wasn't admitted and they were not going to take care of him and thank God they let the two sitters we had stay with him, and they got him out. They got somebody to carry him down eight flights of steps, because he was in a wheelchair. And they put him in a van and he ended up in Alexandria; the first time they had been separated for 30 years and—I mean literally separated and never had been separated before that. And he was panicking and wanted to know where she was and—and thank God she actually was literally only 10 blocks away. We didn't know that at the time but she was only 10 blocks away from him. And so when we found them he actually would go and sneak up to the hospital. We'd take him over to the hospital at night—day and he would spend the day with her. She was like in a coma then but he—he would go sit there and then we would bring him back to the hospital at night and until he—until his condition got to the point where he could be moved and we finally moved him—my brother lives in Thibodaux and after Mother died you couldn't come back to New Orleans and bury her—.



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**Ashley:** It was only two weeks after the storm hit.

00:25:28

**Gerard:** It was September 8<sup>th</sup> when she—

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**Ashley:** When she passed away.

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**Gerard:** Less than two weeks, yeah; so mother died—

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**Ashley:** Yeah, less than two weeks.

00:25:36

**Gerard:** So Mother—Mother died and so my brother who had a—got a tomb in Thibodaux said, *well you know we'll bury Mama here*, so they buried her there and then he stayed there because he didn't want to be far away from her. You know he hadn't been away from her for 30 years, so I mean he didn't want to be far away.

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**Ashley:** Didn't even go to K&B apart.

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**SR:** They didn't?

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**Gerard:** No, no; they never—

00:25:58

**Ashley:** They didn't get—

00:26:01

**Gerard:** I mean after he retired, and he retired from the machine shop, you know it was the shop and then that's all it was and—. So anyway, so we—after he—he was sick and he said, *you know I'd like this city; it's a beautiful city.* He knew nothing about Thibodaux, but it's a beautiful—he said, *I love this city. Look at how clean the serving tray is,* and he said, *I want to stay with Mary.* And I said, *well we can take you both—if something happens to you, we can take you both and bury you in—in Greenwood.* They had this grave and he said, *that's in the ground. I don't want Mary in the ground.* He said—he's in a vault, you know. And it's—it's a different type of vault; I've never seen this before. You bury one in front and one behind, so they're actually on the same level and—and so when he died we buried him in the same vault and they will always be there. You can't—you can't remove that body, so my brother now has to go buy two—. But they asked to stay together; yeah and my brother—on the grave—put “Ernest C. Hansen, Sr., inventor

of the famous Hansen's Sno-Bliz machine." He wanted people to know my dad. And the amazing thing and I know we're off the subject—totally off the subject—

00:27:24

**SR:** No; we're not. This is the subject.

00:27:25

**Gerard:** Well the amazing thing is my mother—my dad always put my mother upfront, you know, when people would come in the door: *don't talk to me; talk to Mary. It's her business—it's her business*, 'cause he would never acknowledge—it's his machine that made the business function. It was his input that made all these weird looking sno-balls—the Atomic Bliz, the Duper, etcetera, and so but he was always, *talk to Mary. She—she's the one who knows—talk to Mary*. And when she died he was really upset because he said the customers are not going to know. They're not going to know what happened to her, you know, and he was very sad and then—

00:27:59

**Ashley:** We're still getting cards from customers.

00:28:01

**Gerard:** Yeah, and then we came back and—and then Ashley will tell you about the article. The paper called—.

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**Ashley:** Oh yeah. Angus Lind, who is a *Times-Picayune* journalist, called and he was all choked up and he said that he wanted to do an article on Mary, and we had no idea that it would be the front-page of the *Living* section. **[Laughs]** And we showed that to my grandfather and he was thrilled. He was so proud of that.

**Gerard:** But—but the key—the point I was making is that he didn't realize how much people thought of him. And he—he—as far as he was concerned it was Mary's business. It was Mary who did this; Mary developed it; Mary kept it going, you know, and when he died I think we got a bigger response than we did with my mother 'cause they did a beautiful article on him in the paper and his article went statewide. We were getting calls from all over—

00:29:04

**Ashley:** And we're still getting calls from all over the nation. And people left—it was so sad and beautiful that people left flowers and pictures of kids eating sno-balls and all kinds of things out in front of the sno-ball stand in remembrance.

00:29:22

**Gerard:** And if you saw the cup that—that Ashley had designed this year with the little poem that was found outside of the stand that we put on the cups—a little 10 year-old girl wrote the poem for them, you know, and it was so beautiful that we decided to put it on the cup and Ashley did the cup to celebrate their life—not to remember their death but celebrate their life you know

and so it—it's really important to us that she has had people remember them because it—you know—

00:29:56

**Ashley:** We've lost so much in New Orleans and we lost a generation of people and—and it's just nice to be able to hold onto a few things that haven't changed, you know, so we wanted to keep the sno-ball stand going at least this year for that reason.

00:30:17

**Gerard:** Well I'm going to go back again when they first opened and I'll tell the story Mary always told and it was that sno-balls, when they first opened they were actually operating their sno-ball machine under a Chinaball tree, and that's a tree that was on the sidewalk out of my grandmother's house—

00:30:35

**Ashley:** On Saint Ann Street.

00:30:36

**SR:** What's the kind of tree?

00:30:38

**Gerard:** We called it a Chinaball—it made little balls and in New Orleans you’d take them and fill up your sleeves and—or you’d put them in a little blow gun and blow them at each other

*[Laughs].*

00:30:48

**Ashley:** You don’t—you don’t see them around much anymore.

00:30:50

**Gerard:** And so anyway—so they actually put the machine on a table and they run a cord through the window so they could have electricity and they would operate the machine, ice in the ice-chest, you know and of course they—and they would charge you two-cents and it was in—it was in a scoop, a little scoop—

00:31:10

**Ashley:** Little cardboard tray.

00:31:13

**Hansen:** We have one at the shop; you can probably see one. And—and they would actually—they would actually make the scoop. You got no straw, no spoon, and you ate it like a puppy dog.

00:31:22

**Ashley:** You just had to lap it up.

**Gerard:** Yeah, and they charged two-cents and remember this is 1936 in the middle of the Depression, all right, and so people would come and say, *are you crazy? I mean you paid two-cents for ice and syrup?* Everybody else—the hand-shaved things were only a penny, and Daddy said, *I have something better and it's going to be two-cents.* And Mother said people would come with their children and they would say, *oh hi Mrs. Hansen; we just came to visit, you know, we don't want a sno-ball today.* And she knew they didn't have any money. So she'd say, *oh but today is treat day for children* and she'd give them free sno-balls because she—you know I think that's why she did well because she was also very charitable. And so she'd give them free sno-balls and then this was a free day for them. And you know she probably gave more away the first five years than she sold, you know. And—and the other thing I'm proud of is that you know that was the years that—of segregation, but at Hansen's there was never a separate window; there was never a moment when a person of any color couldn't walk in and get a sno-ball. They—she—I mean you walked in and we had a time when people thought they were crazy, you know. *You're going to serve those people?* She said, *they're people; they're human beings. We serve everybody.* And she made more friends you know by doing that and people didn't forget. A couple years ago—many years ago there was a bill in the legislature to put judges in districts and one of the districts they wanted to put me in was a district that I probably wouldn't have gotten reelected in. And a black legislator, who is a very powerful female black legislator, she fought to the death to save me from going in that district. And I said, *why are you doing this for me?* She said, *when I was young your mama took care of me and I'm not going to let you get hurt now.* And it was just—people thought of—thought of them like that, you know. It's just—they were

so good to everybody else. The story about the man with the frying pan—my dad wanted to get—he invented several things. He patented several and he invented several, and one of the things he invented was a burner to—to cook crawfish on in big pots.

00:33:49

**Ashley:** I'll have to interject this, but he made everything.

00:33:51

**SR:** He did?

00:33:51

**Ashley:** He made everything out of cast iron or stainless steel and everything weighed a ton.

00:33:59

**Gerard:** Well he—that was his—I mean he made me a barbeque pit. I love it, but I can't move it. *[Laughs]* But anyway, it's a stainless steel top and the inside bottom and I can't move it but it's great. But anyway, but—but—

00:34:14

**Ashley:** So he made a burner.

00:34:14

**Gerard:** He made a burner and—and—



00:34:17

**SR:** Like a propane burner?

00:34:19

**Hansen:** Yeah, and he wanted my nephew to have one you know.

00:34:22

**Ashley:** He did a lot of fishing.

00:34:26

**Gerard:** He did a lot of fishing, right, but he wanted him to have one of these big old black frying pans and it's hard to find those now days—the big, big ones, you know. So when he—when he had the business, behind the business was his machine shop where he made his machines and all and he gave all that up years ago because he was losing his eyesight and he had to get the money to fix his eyes, so he sold everything off to get the money. Well they—they never were wealthy from this business; they worked hard but they were never wealthy. Anyway so—so while he had the machine shop he used to take—all the kids would come by on their little motorcycles and he would fix their things for nothing; he would take care of all the kids in the neighborhood. Mother would have them come inside the store so they would be off the streets. I mean we had comments like the Neville brothers used to hang out there; people would come in and say, *if it wasn't Mrs. Hansen we'd be in jail, you know. She kept us off the street.* She became the Ann Landers of Tchoupitoulas Street. **[Laughs]** And talk to them about their love life

and you know how they're doing with this date this day and how is this new boy—you know, and she would just do things to keep them busy so they wouldn't go in the street and get in trouble. So they all remember that and so Dad—Dad wanted this frying pan and he called me up and he said, *I found a hardware store that sells them and it's way out in St. Bernard. Would you send someone to get one for me?* And I did; I sent somebody from my office and when the man got there the man said, *I wanted to get this frying pan. How much does it cost?* And he said, *who wants the frying pan?* He said, *oh this is for Mr. Hansen.* And he guy said, *Mr. Hansen of Hansen's Snow Bliz?* He said, *yes.* He said, *it's on me.* And the man said, *why?* He says, *'cause 40 years ago he took care of my—my motor scooter and never charged me; I want to do something for him.* So he came back and brought the frying pan. And he started crying. He couldn't believe people remembered him, you know, all those years. But that's nothing to do with the sno-ball machine but that's a story of dad—

00:36:30

**Ashley:** But it was a story—it's a story of the place, you know, and like this weekend—this was craziness. I'm serving this black lady at the counter and she's just like, *you know your grandmother would say to me after school —'cause she went to Thomas Jefferson right across the street—and she would say, were you a good girl in class today?* And of course she would answer yes, and my grandmother would give her extra syrup on her sno-ball. And—and all of the sudden another huge black lady comes busting into the place and comes right up to the counter and says, *I need a chocolate sno-ball. This is the only place I'm going to get my chocolate sno-ball 'cause Miss Mary made the best and this is what she gave to me.* And I mean there's a line out the door and this lady wants a sno-ball and they're both telling me how much they loved my

grandmother and of course I'm going to serve her, you know. And then she goes, *everyone else—everyone else behind me, the sno-ball is on me!* So she gave me like a \$20 bill, or maybe it was more than that, and the next person had a cream of nectar and sure enough we wouldn't take her money and then—and then it got towards sort of the end of the line and the end of the money and people started paying for other people behind them and it was like pay-it-forward or pay-it-backward day at Hansen's, and it was—it was crazy. Like things like that happen—

00:38:05

**SR:** And that's because of your grandma?

00:38:07

**Ashley:** Yeah.

00:38:08

**Gerard:** Well I had—I had someone who was in the media and—and he said after he heard about their death, and he said, *you know it's not just sno-balls.*

00:38:19

**Ashley:** It's not just the sno-balls, right.

00:38:20

**Gerard:** It's not just the machine; he said it was the overall experience.

00:38:23

**Ashley:** Experience yeah.

00:38:25

**Gerard:** Talking to Mary, watching Ernest back there doing his thing; Mary seldom said anything but when she said something they paid attention, you know. I mean it was like—and he said, *that was the whole experience. It wasn't just coming in and getting a sno-ball. I can get a sno-ball anyplace. I can't get a Hansen's [sno-ball]anyplace but I also couldn't get what—what I found here.*

00:38:47

**Ashley:** People would say to me well, you know, *this sno-ball place has already opened. Why haven't you opened?* And, *this sno-ball place stays open 'til whenever,* and I would say, *that sno-ball place doesn't have Mary and Ernest Hansen.* **[Laughs]**

00:39:05

**Gerard:** And every article written about them said summer didn't start 'til the Hansen's opened, and you know people would be making business and other stands hated when we opened, because that took it right away, you know—it was great. And—but they—it was that type of experience. And mother would stand there and talk to everyone—before she got sick, or up in years, but before that she would stand there and talk to every customer. Of course she even did that now, right before her death, but she would talk to every customer. And I remember one time when a customer came in and the lady stood in line for about 45 minutes and got to the

counter—and she was a new customer—and she said, *Ma'am if you didn't talk to everybody I wouldn't have to wait 45 minutes.* And mother looked at her very seriously and said, *these are my friends; and you know there are other sno-ball stands. If you don't want to wait you don't have to stay here.* **[Laughs]** And she was very feisty you know. And so she said—I will always talk to my friends, you know. And that was it. We now have the fourth generation of people showing up—people who started in the '30s and have brought their children and grandchildren, and now their great-grandchildren.

00:40:11

**Ashley:** And one guy came in last year and was like, *why do you do this and why do you do that,* and was kind of bossing me around and dad—my dad goes, *what stand do you usually eat at?* And he said some place out in Metairie and dad said, *do us a favor and go back there.*

00:40:28

**Gerard:** That's my baby you know.

00:40:30

**Ashley:** I almost died. **[Laughs]**

00:40:33

**SR:** What did he say?

00:40:35

**Gerard:** He just walked out.

00:40:36

**Ashley:** No, no; I mean I think he—he was like you know—he said something about enjoying the sno-ball. It was okay. He got a sno-ball and so he was happy.

00:40:46

**Gerard:** Mother was so particular about her bottles and all that one of her best customers came in, and while she was serving him he touched the bottle. She threw him out and she told him, *don't you come back and get out of my business!*

00:40:59

**SR:** I touched a bottle once and it was a problem.

00:41:02

**Gerard:** Oh don't ever touch a bottle. Oh gosh, you touched a bottle and—

00:41:06

**Ashley:** She would throw you out.

00:41:08

**Gerard:** Yeah, in two seconds, and not only did he touch it but he picked it up and tried to smell it. That was it; he was out there. He came back—he died since then but he came back—he came

and they still remained good friends and came back in, you know, and they laughed about it after a while. But you didn't touch things; you didn't mess things up.

00:41:26

**SR:** Because they're sterilized those bottles or—?

00:41:29

**Ashley:** Well she just didn't want anyone else's hands because she would touch the bottles and—and then touch a spoon or a straw. You know, she didn't want anyone to have to interfere with that system.

00:41:40

**Gerard:** And also, you know, if you would knock a bottle over that closes down—you can't—.

00:41:44

**Ashley:** Right; the glass, the syrup is everywhere—.

00:41:45

**Gerard:** Yeah, we would have to close the whole place down and clean it up you know and she didn't want that happen, plus she didn't know where your hands were you know. We don't know if you've got a disease or you had them someplace where it hadn't been cleaned, you know, and she was very tough on that issue.

00:42:02

**Ashley:** Very feisty.

00:42:05

**Gerard:** That's right.

00:42:05

**SR:** And those bottles, they're old liquor bottles they're in?

00:42:08

**Ashley:** Uh-hm.

00:42:10

**Gerard:** Yeah, my Aunt Thelma, which is my mother's—

00:42:15

**Ashley:** Cousin Thelma.

00:42:16

**Gerard:** Well we call her—Cousin Thelma, she was my daddy's first cousin and—and they were very close. I mean Daddy was an only child so his cousin became his—his sister basically, you know, and she and her husband who loved to drink.



00:42:30

**Ashley:** Frank.

00:42:31

**Gerard:** Yeah, Cousin Frank, so he would kill a case of liquor in a week. I mean he—he loved to drink and they would save the bottles, you know. **[Laughs]** So we don't get any new bottles 'cause we don't drink like that, but—

00:42:47

**Ashley:** And also they're really cool special bottles because they're thicker than most liquor bottles are today and they have my grandfather's writing on them, which I really value.

00:42:57

**SR:** What is it written with?

00:42:59

**Ashley:** White paint and it was probably lead based. It doesn't come off. **[Laughs]**

00:43:06

**Gerard:** Well he'd go find a Marks-A-Lot, but it was paint. It wasn't actually a Marks-A-Lot. And he would write on the bottle. When Ashley took over you know we didn't know what was

in the bottle. Ashley had job security: she'd put a flavor in and it might say "cream of coconut," but be pink, you know. And we'd say, *what's that?* **[Laughs]**

00:43:28

**Ashley:** Well we—the business started getting busier and busier and we needed—and I needed—more like, say, nectar bottles than I did coconut.

00:43:38

**Gerard:** Like I said, we couldn't get it off the bottle. We had to leave it on and go with it you know. **[Laughs]**

00:43:44

**SR:** Well one thing I was going to ask you about, which relates to handwriting on the bottles, is that there's such a distinct look of the place. Can you sort of describe what it looks like for people who will be listening to this?

00:43:59

**Ashley:** **[Sighs]** Well you walk in and you don't know quite where to look first. There is stuff everywhere—pictures line the wall; there's drawings; there's hangings; there's signs that say *read this sign first*; there's signs that say—that advertise our special Bliz(es); there's all kinds of different prices signs; there's signs that say *don't run*; *don't lean on the glass counter*; *don't smoke*; *no pets*; and there's pictures everywhere—pictures from the '50s, from the '40s, there's pictures from the '70s and '80s and all of our customers with big buckets, and the floor has been

painted 67 times 'cause we've painted every year, so it's 67 different shades of red and a yellow line that directs you into the counter.

00:44:58

**Gerard:** And the sign that says *follow the yellow line*. You follow the yellow brick—he loved that slogan from the *Wizard of Oz* and you know it's amazing. People will walk in—even when there's nobody in the place and we're just opening up, they immediately go to follow the lines. They'll walk the line because of the color; they could walk clear across and walk right up to the counter and they don't; they walk the line and they've been trained so long where they had to do that they do it automatically you know. And—and people do follow the yellow brick line. And he loved that slogan and he made sure that—every year they did the same type of service. They would paint the floors, paint the counters, draw the lines—

00:45:44

**Ashley:** And when they say *they*—. [*Laughs*]

00:45:47

**Gerard:** It was Ashley, but that—

00:45:48

**Ashley:** Yeah, let's refocus on that! Because—because I was an art major I was allowed to paint the number on the side of the building every year.

00:45:56

**SR:** Yeah.

00:45:56

**Gerard:** That was it, you always knew when Hansen's was going to open because the new number would change, you know, and they had to wait on Ashley to do it.

00:46:03

**Ashley:** I was the artist. [*Laughs*]

00:46:06

**SR:** And what—like at what age did you get to start doing that?

00:46:10

**Ashley:** It was 19—it was like 1985 or '86 when I started because Jim—Mr. Jim had painted the sno-ball stand and he had changed the number maybe one or two years, and then after that I started.

00:46:32

**Gerard:** But Ashley was doing a lot of work when she was like—

00:46:34

**Ashley:** This was like when I was in seventh grade maybe.

00:46:40

**Gerard:** Ashley—you know Ashley was always talented in that area, so they loved her talent and it gave them more excitement to see Ashley change the number than anybody else, so it was like—.

00:46:55

**Ashley:** And they would make me design different cups and, even growing up, Allison and I always did the signs, drew the signs for them and different stuff like that. It was a lot of fun; they always made it fun.

00:47:14

**SR:** It must have been. I mean, at what point did either of you realize that—I mean did you always know that the—a big part of the city was focused on your family?

00:47:29

**Ashley:** Yes [*Laughs*] because we would walk maybe a couple blocks and whenever we'd go in a restaurant and the first 10 tables, every—my grandparents would stop to talk to them, and my sister and I would be with my dad and we'd go someplace else and the first 10 tables would stop to talk to my dad. And I realized, *oh my gosh, they're famous; they're legendary*. And now I'm starting to talk to everyone too. [*Laughs*]

00:48:02

**SR:** Yeah.

00:48:03

**Gerard:** She's becoming legendary. All the articles and all the stuff this past—since we reopened—the articles—and that would make my parents so proud.

00:48:15

**Ashley:** Yeah, and I was always the shyest kid in the class. I was always very timid and my grandparents really helped me to talk to people, and they taught me how to talk to people, and you know, and I think they'd be very proud too.

00:48:31

**Hansen:** Oh yes; as a matter of fact they really did—the business really wasn't a booming thing until the '70s or the late '60s, because in the '40's people didn't really have money and all and sno-balls were not a big then. You know they—but they stuck with it and it's a matter of endurance. You know a lot of people—because there were days they made \$5, you know, and—and in the '40s and '50s they made \$5 and the busiest day they ever had one time was they—they always talked about that—on VD Day or something like that they made like \$45 and that was the biggest day and they were so excited.

00:49:06

**Ashley:** Oh my God; I think it was V-J Day. **[Laughs]**

00:49:08

**Hansen:** V-J Day, whatever it was, they were excited about it. But the whole point was it was they were thrilled to death that the business started to take off, and it started taking off and they started—they started first by getting the universities coming to buy buckets and stuff like this. And people continue to go—we had one customer who is deceased now, but when Mom and Dad were celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary—and he was very wealthy—and he came to my office and he said, *are ya'll doing anything for your parents 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary?* And I said, *yeah, my brother and I are going to give them a party.* He said, *your brother—your brother, you, and I are going to give them a party.* And I said, *no, Sam; you don't have to do that.* I said, *it's our parents.* He said, *no; we—they're our parents.* And so we gave the party, and I didn't call him when the bill came. He came back to my office and said, *I want to see the bill,* and gave me a check for one-third of the bill. He said, *I will always—they will always be part of my parents.* And the reason that he did this is because he—when he played football at Tulane he got hurt and they would send him a sno-ball and—and he never forgot that you know. And his son now—well he used to come visit my parents even until—

00:50:29

**Ashley:** And they would go visit him when he was in college.

00:50:32

**Gerard:** Yeah, they'd go to Colorado and visit him.

00:50:33

**SR:** And he's just—he was a customer?

00:50:35

**Gerard:** He's a customer, who became a good friend. And I ran—when I ran for judge he gave me a substantial contribution and it wasn't me; it was because of my parents. As a matter of fact, when I ran for judge I was the decisive underdog and I was doing very poorly in the first primary. But after the first primary we were trying to pull out every stop we could think to make up the lost...I was only 500 votes from being defeated in the first primary. My opponent was like 4500 votes ahead of me or something, and so we put my mom and dad on the radio and said—and they came on and they said, *this is our son*, you know and *please—please vote for him*. Well the phone calls started coming in and said, *we don't know you but if you're their son, you know we're going to vote for you*. I said, *well, why?*

00:51:23

**Ashley:** I was four at the time.

00:51:23

**Gerard:** *They believed that there's no shortcuts to quality; so you must be quality*, okay. Well I gained 9,000 votes in the second primary. My opponent gained 500; I beat the heck out of him, you know, because—and I expect a good bit of that is because of my mother and dad, you know, because they really turned votes around and because people had such a high opinion of them.

00:51:47



**SR:** It seems like I've heard or read that they—that your mom was sort of politically active.

00:51:53

**Gerard:** Yeah, she was always taking care of this and putting signs on the shop you know and was very successful.

00:51:59

**Ashley:** She was always a Democrat. She always believed in—in helping people, and she also ran the polls in her basement of her house, so even though she was a Democrat she would put all that aside and say okay, this is—we're going to host the polls here, and it was one of the biggest thrills of my life was to go visit her at the polls and the smell of the basement and the—the voting polls, and to hear those sounds and—and we would sit together at night after the polls would close and we'd spend the night maybe at my grandparent's house, which I grew up across the street from and—and we'd watch the returns come in. And I still do that; that's one of my favorite things to do every election is to watch the returns come in. So yeah, she was very politically involved.

00:53:00

**Gerard:** And Allison—I practiced law with Moon Landrieu and Justice Calogero, and out of my law firm we ended up with four judges and one DA in Saint Charles Parish, you know, and so it was a very political firm. And she would always want to be involved in anything to do with my life and my brother's life; she wanted to be involved. And when we were growing up she was always the mother—the mother who went down and worked in the cafeteria at the schools just to

be with her kids you know and so she was always part of our lives and loved the political aspect of our lives. And so she would get involved in that you know and they'd open the polls at 5:30 in the morning and sit there 'til 8 o'clock at night and then stay there until the returns came in, and it was getting harder on them in the later years, you know but they still would do it. They wanted to be part of something you know. And as Ashley—well they lived across the street from us.

00:54:01

**SR:** And where was that?

00:54:02

**Gerard:** On South Roman off of Napoleon Avenue—the Broadmoor area—

00:54:05

**SR:** South Roman and Napoleon.

00:54:07

**Gerard:** Two blocks on the other side of Claiborne.

00:54:09

**Ashley:** Yeah, behind that Shell station.

00:54:11

**Hansen:** Yeah; around the corner where Moon Landrieu lives, Sal Mulé lives, and you know so they would—that was their neighborhood for years, and aside from being flooded out it's still a good neighborhood. But they—they—Allison and Ashley they were always there at their house because we lived across the street, you know. [*Phone Rings*] We joked—we joked that—excuse me. We joked at some point we were going to build a walkway across the street because they were living across the street. My mother was worried they were going to get hit by a car.

00:54:45

**Ashley:** My mom was a horrible cook, so if we didn't like what mom had for us we'd call our grandmother and be like, *Gammy, do you have anything for dinner?*

00:54:58

**SR:** I was going to ask you about—if your grandmother, yeah, was a good cook other than the syrups.

00:55:03

**Ashley:** Oh God—phenomenal Italian cook. And so you could smell the garlic cooking in the red gravy from across the street. Her heritage was Italian; she was a Gemelli.

00:55:15

**SR:** How do you spell that?

00:55:18

**Ashley:** G-e-m-e-l-l-i.

00:55:19

**Gerard:** She was Italian—

00:55:20

**Ashley:** Which means twin in Italian—Gemelli.

00:55:26

**Gerard:** Oh does it? She cooked the best meatballs and nobody has ever matched her meatballs.

She was fantastic. We would have a Thanksgiving dinner with all the family and the kids—

everybody—

00:55:35

**Ashley:** A feast—all our cousins.

00:55:35

**Gerard:** Yeah, cousins, grandparents; everybody else would come, and she would cook so much

because the Italians believe in doing that. And I can remember my grandmother, she would cook

when she lived in the Irish Channel, she would cook and if you walked in, you could be the

mailman, you could be the—the guy delivering food, you had to sit down and eat; I don't care

who you were, you know. As a matter of fact, I just bought a house and one of the things I'm

putting up on the wall is from my mother's, it says “mangiare”—“mangiare” in Italian means

“eat,” and my grandmother’s famous words were, *sit down, mangiare-mangiare!* And you know I’ll never forget those words so I’m going to put it on the wall so I’ll never forget it myself. But mother was the same way. So my law firm, which was CALLIGARO, Landrieu, and HOUGANE, they would look forward to going the day after Thanksgiving and eating the leftovers and—and recently [**Phone Rings**—excuse me. And so—so even today Justice Calogero met the lady I’m going to marry and he said to her, *you know you look like Miss Mary.* He said HER smile and everything, but she was the best cook in the world. And he was talking about—we haven’t done this in 30 years; he said, *and I always looked forward to the day after Thanksgiving to go to her house and eat.* And they’re still talking about it because she was good. She—she was an excellent chef; I mean she did everything well when it came to the kitchen. I think that’s why Ashley has this talent in the kitchen.

00:57:12

**Ashley:** Well my grandmother would pull everyone together because of her food and I always thought that was—that was what you had to do to keep family together or to keep—or to be the matriarch or to relate to someone else was to eat or to cook. And I would spend more time in the kitchen with her and my grandfather than anyone else.

00:57:38

**SR:** And you also do that for—for a profession?

00:57:41

**Ashley:** Yes, I have; for 10 years I was a professional cook.

00:57:46

**Gerard:** Even my father got into the act. He used to make an apple pie. He never ate a pie in his life but he's always make an apple pie and then he would make a drink that we called Witches Brew.

00:57:58

**Ashley:** Which was a root beer extract extravaganza and it was delicious. It was so thick and we would eat that—we would drink that with our spaghetti or whatever we were having, bruccialone or—.

00:58:13

**SR:** Did that—is that the flavor that's at the sno-ball stand—the root beer?

00:58:16

**Ashley:** Yes.

00:58:17

**Gerard:** See we had—

00:58:18

**Ashley:** But it's good.

00:58:19

**Gerard:** We had Mary's Own, which mother came across a flavor, the Sno-Bliz flavor that was—maybe she came across by accident, but she liked it and we call that Mary's Own 'cause she developed it.

00:58:31

**Ashley:** I think Allison actually put that on a sign.

00:58:34

**Gerard:** Yeah, my other daughter said you know we're going to put Mary's Own on this so she did. And she wanted something that was hers, and so she put it on [**Laughs**] and Ashley said *hey, I remember this—the root beer; we're going to make a root beer for—for—and they called my dad Boyfriend. My daddy didn't want to be old, so he always said, I'm not your grandfather; I'm your boyfriend. I don't want ya'll to have boyfriend. I'm your boyfriend, all right.* And so even the nuns would call him Boyfriend.

00:59:03

**Ashley:** And when they'd pick us up on Monday, and the nuns would say, *Bye, Boyfriend!* he would laugh for two blocks straight 'cause the nuns called him Boyfriend.

00:59:10

**Gerard:** My mother would say, *dammit, they're going to think you're my boyfriend and not my husband; they're going to think I'm living with you!* And she'd get—she would always tease with him and—but he loved—

00:59:20

**Ashley:** He loved it—he loved it.

00:59:22

**Gerard:** He loved the fact that everybody—

00:59:22

**Ashley:** It was so interesting, like so many of my friend's moms were like, *when I get to be a grandfather or a grandmother, you know, I want to be called something cool like Boyfriend.*

**[Laughs]**

00:59:35

**Gerard:** Yeah, it was an exciting time.

00:59:38

**Ashley:** There was no maw-maw or paw-paw. **[Laughs]**

00:59:40

**SR:** What did you call your grandmother?



00:59:43

**Ashley:** We called her a variation of Grammy or Gammy.

00:59:48

**SR:** What is that—what is this Sno-Bliz flavor?

00:59:50

**Ashley:** Sno-Bliz is a tart flavor. It's sort of a Sweet Tart flavor, sort of grapefruity; there's some acid in it—strawberry, grapefruity.

01:00:07

**SR:** And she invented that one, huh?

01:00:08

**Ashley:** Yes.

01:00:09

**SR:** What are—so you—I don't really get the designer sno-ball; what—

01:00:18

**Ashley:** Junior Atomic?

01:00:19

**SR:** Yeah, you were talking about this earlier. Can you tell me about it?

01:00:22

**Ashley:** Well we have—first you have a sundae, and that’s ice, syrup, cream, crushed pineapple, and a—and a cherry. And then after the sundae you have a Duper, and from a Duper you’ve got a Baby Duper and a Super Duper, and the—the difference between the Baby Duper and the Super Duper is the size of the cup. But on the top you have on both ice, syrup, cream, crushed pineapple, marshmallow and a cherry. And marshmallow is this thick, goopy, creamy stuff that is so good, and when it’s on the cold sno-ball it gets extra chewy and it sticks to everything and it’s so—so much fun. It’s so awesome. And—and that mixed with the cream and the crushed pineapple—oh it’s decadent. And then—and then on the Atomic you have a Junior Atomic and then a Senior Atomic and the—the Junior and Senior both have ice, syrup, cream, crushed pineapple, marshmallow and a scoop of ice-cream and then a cherry. And this was designed to look like the atomic bomb. That’s what it was named after.

01:01:40

**SR:** Who did that?

01:01:41

**Ashley:** My grandfather. And then you have Hot Rods, which is a sno-ball that has ice-cream in the middle, and today I think some people call them stuffed sno-balls but we call them Hot Rods.

01:01:54

**SR:** And when you say cream what do you mean by cream?

01:01:57

**Ashley:** Oh, canned cream—should I tell you more about that?

01:02:02

**SR:** Sure.

01:02:03

**Ashley:** Canned cream is evaporated milk and it's just a whole—whole milk can and what's interesting about that fact is that it's a wartime—because you have to think that this is a wartime treat. My grandmother had to trade her meat stamps for sugar stamps to keep the business going. So—and she was okay with that because they always had chickens. And so to keep her business going she would always have an accumulation of sugar stamps, and you couldn't get a lot of fresh dairy so you had to buy canned milk, which is what we still use because it's thicker and it stays on the shelf obviously a lot longer. But also the flavors that we use are important because this was where all the sailors shipped out of what was the Port of Orleans and there was a huge industry of making meals taste better on the ships. So all the flavors—like flavoring things—became a big industry here in New Orleans, and so that's why a lot of flavors in New Orleans are better than anywhere else, because this is an old competitive market of not only fruit flavors but other kinds of flavors as well.

01:03:26

**SR:** I didn't know that—you're talking sno-ball flavors?

01:03:29

**Ashley:** Yeah, and then other flavors that they would flavor, like for the sailors' foods—packaging them out. That's why every sailor had a bottle of Tabasco or every Marine had a bottle of Tabasco in with their—their GI pack or whatever.

01:03:47

**SR:** So you ate a lot of chicken growing up?

01:03:50

**Gerard:** Well I ate a lot of Italian foods—either chicken or veal, meatballs, and her meatballs were not just regular meatballs. You know Mother would—did you tell her this yet—Mother would—Mother—the meatballs were like she'd go to the market and two things they had to do—first they had to run meat through the grinder and we'd have to stay and they'd clean the grinder out, right. And she—you don't buy any out of the case; she had the guy at Dorignac's, who was an Italian guy, and she got to know him and he did all this for her. He'd clean out the grinder and then she'd use two pounds of beef, a pound of veal, a pound of pork, and that's the way she'd mix the meatballs. She'd put all the—put them together; it wasn't like you didn't just get veal meatballs or you didn't just get beef meatballs; you had to blend the three together. And then you ground it twice—not once, and you had to make the meat fine so it would be very soft.

Sometimes when she'd fix them she'd put all the seasoning in and fry them before you put them in the gravy—

01:04:53

**Ashley:** Oh my God it was good.

01:04:55

**Gerard:** I used to like to just eat them fried. [*Laughs*]

01:04:57

**Ashley:** Me too, me too.

01:04:56

**Gerard:** Just eat them fried. [*Laughs*]

01:04:57

**SR:** She used to what?

01:04:58

**Gerard:** Just take them fried before she put them in the gravy and eat them like that.

01:05:00

**Ashley:** Oh it was so good.

01:05:02

**Gerard:** It was like a delicious flavored hamburger. You know it was delicious. It was so moist, yeah.

01:05:08

**SR:** Did you get that recipe or technique?

01:05:12

**Ashley:** Oh the—yeah, I follow that recipe definitely when I cook my meatballs.

01:05:18

**SR:** I wanted you to tell me, I think when I came over when you were first opening [post-Katrina] and people were helping you clean up you told me about how your grandpa taught you how to sharpen knives, I think. Can you tell me about that?

01:05:34

**Ashley:** Well when I started cooking I showed him my knives and he—and I would go over and cook for him a lot, and for my grandmother a lot, after they were getting older, and sometimes for my dad's birthdays we would do a big meal, and at that point they couldn't—they couldn't do as much. So I'd have my little knife roll from the kitchen or whatever and bring it over there and my grandfather was so impressed and he would be like, *you're like a carpenter; you're carrying your tools*, you know and—and he was like, *don't let anyone else use your—your tools*. And I'm

like, *I don't*. And he was like, *and you don't use anyone else's because you have to keep yours sharp*; and he was like, *you won't cut yourself if—if you keep your own knives sharp*. And that's what I did. And he showed me how to sharpen my knives and—'cause he was a machinist and he worked with blades and all kinds of things, and he was very—he was very interested in that. It was something we could talk about, and different stones, like you know—.

01:06:38

**Gerard:** Oh; he—the customers would come in the shop and say, *you know what I need? I need this oil stone—*

01:06:43

**Ashley:** Wet stone.

01:06:45

**Gerard:** Which is really hard to find; and he'd say—

01:06:47

**Ashley:** It wasn't hard to find; it was just expensive and he didn't want to—he didn't want to shell out the dough. [*Laughs*]

01:06:54

**Gerard:** He'd get—he'd get it for Ashley and he did.

01:06:56

**Ashley:** So I could sharpen my knives.

01:06:59

**Gerard:** And the customers would bring him anything he wanted and they wouldn't charge him anything because they loved him.

01:07:04

**Ashley:** They thought it was for him.

01:07:05

**Gerard:** They'd bring him the stone and all, you know, and one time he believed that there was nothing you couldn't do and if you didn't—. He had two famous sayings that I always will remember. One is that, *if you say you can't do it, it means you don't want to do it*, all right; and one time he had these glasses that were 50-some odd years-old—cataract glasses that he had from the '50s, and they broke. And I said, *Daddy, we need to get you new glasses*. He said, *no, I want these fixed*. I said, *Daddy, they're 50 years-old*. He said, *we'll get them fixed*. So I went to three places and they said, *how are you going to fix these; they're 50 years-old? They don't make parts like that anymore*. I came back and said, *Daddy, they didn't have the parts. They can't fix them for you*. He said, *come with me*. He said, *take me*—he was in a wheelchair then—*take me*. I take him and put him in the wheelchair and he went to the place where he first bought them and he said, *fix these*. And they fixed them all right. And he looked at me and said, *don't ever say you can't do something; you just didn't want them to fix them for me*. I thought it was impossible; I



mean three people said—you know and that was his philosophy. And the second philosophy—the second thing he said that I always will remember—he always said, you know people say, *well I don't have time to do this right*. He said, you—*if you don't have time to do it right the first time when do you find the time to do it over*, you know? That's a very great statement when you think about that, you know. And—and—

01:08:30

**Ashley:** He had a lot of quotes.

01:08:32

**SR:** Yeah.

01:08:31

**Gerard:** Oh a quote; that's a quote.

01:08:34

**Ashley:** He had a lot of quotes.

01:08:35

**SR:** You told me the one about if you can't get a red-bird a blue-bird will do.

01:08:41

**Gerard:** Well he would do that when he finally realized—

01:08:42

**Ashley:** Have you ever heard that?

01:08:43

**SR:** No.

01:08:45

**Gerard:** He would use that quote when he finally realized he could not get what he wanted, all right. If it was something he could not find.

01:08:52

**Ashley:** Like for example when—when they bought the Jeep, they really wanted a red Jeep but they couldn't find a red Jeep, so they got a blue Jeep. He said, *if you can't get a red-bird, a blue-bird will do*. And so he would start—he would start writing things with this, you know. Like I dated—well this one story, he—he said, *roses are red, violets are blue; you got rid of the Frenchman, I guess that Jew will do*. But in his words that was if you can't get a red-bird, a blue-bird will do. And he would rhyme things with all those things you know; it was really funny. He always had something clever to say.

01:09:40

**Gerard:** He would accept his—that saying was a way of accepting an alternative. **[Laughs]**

01:09:47

**Ashley:** Right.

01:09:47

**Gerard:** He didn't want to say he couldn't get what he wanted, but he thought of it as a way of accepting the alternative.

01:09:53

**Ashley:** So this was a phrase we all heard all of our lives and when I was dating Jason, a Jewish boy, I said Jason, haven't you ever heard, *if you can't get a red-bird, a blue-bird will do?* And he said no. I said, *you're kidding me.* And so we started asking all of our friends and no one had heard this phrase and I just couldn't believe it and so I called my sister in DC and I said, *haven't you heard the phrase if you can't get a red-bird, a blue-bird will do?* And Allison started asking all her friends if they had heard the statement, and she couldn't believe that no one we knew ever heard this phrase before. So this was a true Ernest Hansen—.

01:10:37

**Gerard:** Well they grew up with it; they thought it was second nature and everybody knew this.

01:10:41

**Ashley:** We thought everyone knew *if you can't get a red-bird, a blue-bird will do.* **[Laughs]**

We've been saying this our entire lives you know. **[Laughs]**

01:10:49

**Gerard:** And he believed in—everything he wanted to say he'd start off with, *roses are red, violets are blue*, and then he'd rhyme it, you know like *roses are red*—on my birthday—*roses are red, violets are blue; I couldn't find a better son than you*—and stuff like that. You know, I mean he would always rhyme something together and—and so now that became part of his—his legend with the *roses are red, violets are blue* thing you know. And it just—and also he had a very—an uncanny way of—he said—and I know we're way off the subject—.

01:11:21

**SR:** No, we're not.

01:11:23

**Gerard:** But he always said he was born with a veil, and that meant that there's—when you're born and sometimes in the olden days the afterbirth or whatever was wrapped around the head and they would take it off and they called them a veil. It was a caul—I forget the technical name they had.

01:11:40

**Ashley:** A caul—c-a-u-l I think.

01:11:44

**Gerard:** So anyway—so he had this doctor research all this for him and—

01:11:50

**Ashley:** Doctor Robichaux.

01:11:52

**Gerard:** He had Barbara, our friend, go look up—look up and find a book and he had to write to New York to get a book for him on caul. Anyway, so he always said he knew things ahead of time and I always thought he was just saying that, but so many things came up that were so uncanny like you would wonder, you know.

01:12:10

**Ashley:** That he would know, yeah.

01:12:12

**Gerard:** I can tell you that my grandmother—his mother, who used to live in this house before—I mean in the old house—

01:12:17

**SR:** In this house or—?

01:12:14

**Gerard:** They lived in the old house and now it's totally changed and Ashley renovated it, but it was the old house where my grandparents lived. And so when she died in 1969 he—he went—he and my mother went on a trip and they were in Dallas and they only traveled in the fall because

they had the sno-ball business. And they were in Dallas, and I called them and said, *you better come home; grandma is not doing too well*. And then she died before he got here. So I even called the priest friend of mine and said, you know, *how am I going to tell my daddy?* I mean this is his mother; he's the only child. He was as close to her as anybody. I said, *how am I going to tell him?* And he walked in the door and he said, *Grandma died at 1:30 today*. And I said yeah, and I said to Mother, *how does he know that?* She said at 1:30 he started shaking and throwing up. And—and he said, *my mama is dead*. And—and I thought yeah it was very uncanny that this hit him like that. And so Barbara, who—the lady I'm going to marry, we were at the nursing home on March 19<sup>th</sup> and her mother was in another nursing home and you know her mother got—took sick on the 19<sup>th</sup> and on the 20<sup>th</sup> she died. And we didn't want to tell my daddy because he was—you know he liked her, he used to go to—.

01:13:44

**Ashley:** It was his friend.

01:13:46

**SR:** Yeah, it was his friend and—and you know—. So we didn't tell him; we just said, *oh she's sick but she'll be better*. And I walked in—Barbara came back to visit him a couple days before he died and he looked at her and said, *your mother is dead, huh?* And she said yes.

01:14:03

**Ashley:** Well even before he said, *don't—don't stay here; you need to go to your mother*.

01:14:06

**Gerard:** Yeah, yeah; we were sitting there with him and he said—now we didn't know she was that sick. She passed suddenly of a heart attack, but she wasn't feeling well the day before, and that was the last day I got my dad out of the house. He went to a Saint Joseph altar and all, and that's what he wanted to do, and he never left his bed after that. But—and he—he lived 10 more days but he never left his bed. But—so anyway, so we were sitting there at my brother's house and we were all talking and he said, *Barbara; go—go see your mother*. And Barbara said, *well Mama will be all right*. He said, *just go; ya'll go see her mother*. And so we got in the car and we left, you know, and the next morning they called at 6:30 in the morning and I said, *oh God my dad must have died*, and he was really sick then. And she answered the phone and her mother had died. And he had told us—so the night—the night that he died—that is—this is the other uncanny thing, I mean this is what made me believe that maybe he had some vision or knew something. The night he died, I was there on Tuesday with him and we were playing with him—I brought Otis and some of the people from my office. He always loved the people I worked with you know.

01:15:15

**SR:** Otis—oh okay.

01:15:16

**Gerard:** He's the guy that helps me with the machines. He loved Otis; he loved his sister-in-law—who was my secretary, Darlene, so we decided to take a ride over and see him. It was the Tuesday before, so you know I kissed him on Tuesday and said, *Daddy, I will be back here*

*Thursday*. You know this is Tuesday—you know this is two days later; I will be back on Thursday. I've got court tomorrow, but I will be back on Thursday. All right—all right; so I left. That night—Wednesday night my brother called me and said, *you know he's not looking too good* but—you know, *well should I come in now?* He said, *no, no; he'll be here the weekend at least* you know. Don't—*don't worry about rushing*; he said *no, he's just—he doesn't look so good but I think he—he's talking and all*. He says so I wouldn't rush. The lady who took care of him—this lady who took care of both of them for a year, and when she heard he was getting real sick she came back to the nursing home and stayed that week in there with him. She wouldn't leave him and she wouldn't charge us. She said he—she said, *I'm not leaving the boss*, you know. And she was 70 years-old and she said I'm not leaving the boss. It was a nice lady; her name was Ginny. She said I'm not leaving the boss and she stayed with him the whole time until he died. But anyway, she said about—about 11 o'clock—about 10 o'clock he said to her—he said to her—. About 10 o'clock he said to her—to her, *where's the Judge?* And she said, *the Judge will be here tomorrow morning*. This is Wednesday night you know; she said, *Boss, the Judge will be here Thursday morning*. He said, *it will be too late*. And she said, *no, Mr. Hansen*. He said, *well call my other son*. And he was home and he only lived like two blocks away. So she called Ernie and he came over and said, *what do you want Daddy?* He said, *this is my last day*, and Ernie said, *Daddy I'm the doctor*, right. *This is not your last day*, you know. He said—so he said, *go get me something*, and she went out front desk to get something for him and came back and he said to my brother, *you don't understand; this is my last day*. And then he said, *you don't understand; I'm the doctor. This is not your last day*. He said, *okay, I'm telling you it's my last day*. That was 11:30 at night; he went to sleep at 12 o'clock and died at 1 o'clock in the morning. It was his last day. He called it; he called it to the second almost, you know. And I—I



started to believe that I mean there was some truth to these people born with the veils. He said his mother always told him that; you were born with a veil. You will know things that nobody else will know.

01:17:41

**SR:** Is that some kind of known thing?

01:17:44

**Gerard:** I don't know; I mean if you read about it.

01:17:48

**Ashley:** I think it was like a Cajun, maybe Creole, you know myth or—. And they have it in other cultures too. I mean it's named different things.

01:18:00

**SR:** That is uncanny.

01:18:02

**Gerard:** Oh it is; I mean—yeah. Anyway that—that's his story and he was always—you know he missed my mother tremendously after she died. He just couldn't understand why and he would say, *all these damn doctors in the family and ya'll can't do nothing.*

01:18:17

**Ashley:** She—she was 95.

01:18:19

**Gerard:** She was 95; she had—she had—she got stuck in Touro [Hospital] for three or four days without water.

01:18:26

**Ashley:** Without heat and without air.

01:18:27

**Gerard:** She went into a coma, you know, and so we couldn't save her but he couldn't understand why.

01:18:32

**SR:** And was she in Touro for a specific ailment or she—?

01:18:35

**Gerard:** She had stopped—yeah; she had stopped eating and we couldn't figure out why.

01:18:40

**Ashley:** So they—she went into the hospital and she was sort of doing better at first when she was there but she was 95, you know.

01:18:49

**SR:** What—it's interesting to me that he wanted to go to Saint Joseph's altar. Is that something that—?

01:18:57

**Gerard:** That's a New Orleans tradition, you know. Saint Joseph altar was something my mother would always—my mother was very sick as a child and my grandfather promised that if she would live that they would do a Saint Joseph altar at their—have you ever been to a Saint Joseph altar? They would do a Saint Joseph altar at their—my mother was Italian and so they did it after she recovered and—so mother every year would go to the Saint Joseph altar somewhere and, you know, there was one out—the nuns had one out in—in Mirabeau and my daddy couldn't understand why people had to pay for a Saint Joseph candle. So he wanted—and he was going to pay \$5 every—every Wednesday and Saturday to win the Power Ball because he wanted to give them free candles. He wanted—he said, *if I win that Power Ball nobody is going to pay for a candle at Saint Joseph's altar*, yeah. And then when the nuns stopped the Saint Joseph's altar—the people were getting older and they were not doing it that much anymore—he was just devastated that they could stop that altar, you know, and—and so in Thibodaux they still had the altar at the church and he wanted to go to the altar. And when he was there—and I remember that was on the 19<sup>th</sup>; Barbara's mother died on the 20<sup>th</sup>—he bought her a—they had what they called lucky bean. It's a type of bean that lasts; and a medal and a card with Saint Joseph. He—he went and got one—well you don't buy—you give a donation—but he went and got several packs—one for Barbara, one for me, one to bring to Ernest and one to bring to her mother. You had to have a Saint Joseph—and he thought that would help, you know, and he

knew she was sick but he didn't know how sick she was. Kind of he did know; we didn't know he knew anything.

01:20:40

**Ashley:** Yeah; he knew.

01:20:43

**Gerard:** Yeah; and so he wanted to buy that and that was the last day. I knew he was—he was failing then because I really had to literally pick him up and put him in the wheelchair, and my dad always had strong arms and strong legs, and he couldn't lift himself anymore. And after that he went straight to his bed and never left. He couldn't get up anymore. And but he—you know he died a very happy person; I mean you know he—he talked to the end and until he went to sleep, and you know it wasn't a case of he was suffering. He suffered for three days. And I thank God he didn't suffer. And he was like—he always—he always said you know, *gratitude; the number one virtue in life is gratitude*. You've got to always go back and say thank you and—and the people—he didn't know he had cancer. He just thought he had a tumor growing in his esophagus and they couldn't operate on him and they couldn't give him chemotherapy; he was too weak. So he did really age, you know. And we were taking him to the cancer center to do the radiation and he got—you know he always loved all the people there and he talked to them and they loved him. They'd all come play with him, you know, and they loved him and he would want to always say thank you. So after the radiation was over—he got like 10 weeks of radiation or something, and the idea was just to shrink it so he could still swallow and we knew we couldn't save him. Anyway, so after it was over with he made sure that he set up a luncheon for

everybody at the thing and took them all out to lunch—took them all out to lunch. You know he—

01:22:17

**SR:** After he had died?

01:22:18

**Gerard:** No; this was before he died—he took them all to lunch. He lived—you know he lived four months after he found out about the cancer, but he'd make sure my brother—I was supposed to meet them but I got tied up in court and couldn't make it, but he took everybody there for lunch. He wanted to show them his appreciation. If he went somewhere and—he went—. Oh I've got to tell you this story. He was in the nursing home and mother was there for two days and she passed away. She wasn't even aware that she was there, you know. He was in the nursing home and so he got—he got to taking care of everybody. So he met a lady who was at the table and she wasn't eating. She was 101, so he'd feed her. Every day he'd feed her and say, *you've got to eat. If you don't eat you're going to die; you understand?* So he'd feed her. And she eventually died. And then there was a lady called Cinderella. Cinderella—he gave everybody a name—everybody in there; and so Cinderella was a lady he got to know and he felt sorry for her and he would sit at the table and talk to her. And one day she went to the hospital.

01:23:21

**Ashley:** Well he called her Cinderella because he saw her high school picture and she was so beautiful, he said.

01:23:28

**Gerard:** Yeah, so she was Cinderella. So she went to the hospital and he wanted to go see her. So he said to you know—he rolled up in his wheelchair and went to the lady behind the desk, one of the nurses behind the desk, and the lady was on the phone. And she was a black lady with dreadlocks, you know, and so he said, *I want to go see Cinderella*. And she said, *okay, I'll get somebody take you there*, and she just kept talking. So he waited about five minutes and said, *hey, mop head [Laughs]*—she had dreadlocks. *Hey mop head, I want to go see Cinderella*. She said, *I'll get somebody as soon as I finish my conversation*.

01:24:04

**Ashley:** That wasn't good enough.

01:24:04

**Gerard:** My niece at that time was working at the nursing home—his granddaughter.

01:24:09

**SR:** Was working at the nursing home where he was?

01:24:12

**Gerard:** Yeah, she just got a job the day we brought him there. She didn't stay long, but she was there—she got the job that day.

01:24:16

**Ashley:** She got him in there.

01:24:18

**Gerard:** And she's a little mouthy; so—so anyway, so he—so she said—she's sitting her office and somebody comes in and says, *one of your patients it out on the highway with a wheelchair*, and she jumped up and the hospital was like across the highway. It was only like from here to that house [a shirt distance]. So he was rolling himself—

01:24:42

**Ashley:** But the highway was a major highway.

01:24:43

**Gerard:** He rolled himself to see Cinderella.

01:24:46

**SR:** Across the highway?

01:24:48

**Ashley:** Across the highway.

01:24:48

**Gerard:** Yeah, so they came back and they—they brought him back and they said look—

01:24:51

**Ashley:** And if you'd know him, like he always had a different lingo. So he would say—he would call his wheelchair a Cadillac, so he would say, *I got in my Cadillac and I'm going to see Cinderella*, and you know on first glance, someone would think he was absolutely nuts. And my cousin would be like, *you know Grandpa, you can't talk like that because people are going to think you're insane and they're going to put a band on your ankle so you can't get out.* **[Laughs]** And he didn't understand why people didn't understand his vocabulary. **[Laughs]**

01:25:28

**Gerard:** Barbara and I got there and finally took him to see Cinderella. He went into the gift shop and bought these plastic roses that they sell and brought her some roses. And he always said, *you see—the Blessed Mother wouldn't—Blessed Mother must be here because see the roses wouldn't die.* The roses weren't going to die because they were plastic, but he didn't know they were plastic, anyway—but—. So—so I get there with Barbara, and **[Dog Barking]** it was afternoon after he had made his little episode, and when I get there he told Barbara, *I'm in trouble.* **[Laughs]** She said, *why are you in trouble? Well I got in my Cadillac to go see Cinderella and they're mad at me; I'm in trouble and he's going to find out about it.* **[Laughs]** And that's when my niece called me and she said, *come in; I've got to talk about him. They're going to put a band on him so he can't get out the door.* So I went in and scolded him. The other thing he wanted—and this sort of funny too—he was very devoted to the Blessed Mother.

01:26:26



**Ashley:** Yeah, he had to have her.

01:26:28

**Hansen:** He was given—when I was born I wasn't suppose to live and he gave me a big statute of the Blessed Mother at Saint Ann's on Ursulines in honor—as thanksgiving for my living. And he—

01:26:40

**Ashley:** They had two—two children that had passed away, not—not long after birth. So when my dad was born, the last one, they were like—I think my grandfather was—my dad was like two pounds and my grandpa would say, *don't die small fry*. [**Phone Rings**]

01:27:02

**Gerard:** Yeah, but—so anyway, so—so he decided he wanted a six-foot statute of the Blessed Mother in front of the nursing home—in front of the nursing home, not in back but in front of the nursing home.

01:27:23

**SR:** Where he was in Thibodaux

01:27:24

**Gerard:** Yeah, in Thibodaux, and he wanted it colored—he wanted it painted with a blue veil.

01:27:30

**Ashley:** We kept telling him no, no; this is a—this is an ecumenical nursing home and they're not—they want, you know, symbols of faith that are more general than the Blessed Virgin. And he would not listen to that at all.

01:27:46

**Gerard:** So he started—he was going to buy it and put it there.

01:27:49

**Ashley:** So he asked the owner, *why can't we have the Blessed Virgin in front?* And the owner was taken back by his, like ,wit and charm and pushiness [**Laughs**] and said okay, have a—go get it. And—and so—so Dad and I and Barbara and my grandfather, we went to look at the statute, and he's like, *okay let's go buy it.* And we're like, *we can't buy it until we have you know the—the President's okay on it.* And he said, *oh I've got the okay.* And we didn't believe him. [**Laughs**] So when we got back to the nursing home and we talked to my cousin and she's like, *oh yeah, they okayed it.* [**Laughs**]

01:28:33

**Gerard:** Yeah, and he said—

01:28:32

**Ashley:** We could not believe it.

01:28:34

**Gerard:** Well he would always tell those stories every now and then. He—he—

01:28:37

**SR:** Yeah; I've heard a few.

01:28:39

**Ashley:** Yeah.

01:28:39

**Gerard:** So he would tell the story, so he said—he said—I said, *Daddy, you can't buy it until we're sure you can have it.* [Ernest talking] *They said it's okay.* I said, *Daddy I want to find out.* So we go back and he said to Barbara, *he's going to screw things up. He's going to screw things up. I know what he's going to do; he's going to screw things up.* So I go in there and say, *look, you know he wants to buy this thing—and it was like \$800—it was not like it was two-cents, you know and I said, he wants to buy it and I said, but I told him he has to have approval. And my niece said, they gave him the approval. I said, they gave him the approval? She said yeah. So to this day the statue—they put the statute—now he wanted it right in the middle of the walkway, but they put it over on the side with the roses around it and it had a light on it and it sits there, and they were going to put a sign on it, you know, donated by him and in memory of him. And he was going to put a sign on it donated by him in memory of my mother. So I don't know if they ever bought the sign; we could get a sign for it—a little plaque that says what it's for. But he got what he wanted and that's it. So you can't—. So one day—one day he—he goes into the*

rec room and there is a lady playing the piano and all the old people are sitting there listening to the beautiful music. Finally he goes over to her and says, *honey, these people—the way you're playing they're in comas already. When you get finished they're going to be dead.* He said, *now why don't you play some music that gives them some life*, and before it was over they were all clapping their hands and she was playing jazz and something else, you know, and really brought them out of their—their shell and they loved it because he would do that. And if you had a birthday, I mean the little black lady across the hall—

01:30:17

**Ashley:** It didn't matter if you were diabetic or not, you would get a box of candy.

01:30:20

**Gerard:** Oh we put—we put more women—we put more of those poor people in comas doing it—they all got candy and they got candy for every birthday. So and so is having a birthday, and then the lady that he called “mop head,” she was pregnant. So we had to buy a present for her baby when it was born, and we had to buy a present and bring it to her when her baby was born, you know. He had to take care of everybody.

01:30:44

**SR:** I didn't envision that everything was so active at—during that period.

01:30:49

**Ashley:** As he got older and my grandmother sort of receded he took advantage of that and became more and more demanding. *[Laughs]* And more and more vocal about what he wanted and, you know, had your opinion; you know he always had an opinion, which is great.

01:31:09

**Gerard:** But he took control of the situation because he had to and then after she died then he was free to do whatever he wanted, and so he became into himself, you know. I mean he had—early in the morning he had women bringing him coffee. All the old people would bring him coffee and all. I mean he—he told one lady—

01:31:25

**Ashley:** He was a character.

01:31:26

**Gerard:** —*you know I'd marry you but you talk too damn much*, you know, and he was always saying stories like that to women and they loved him. So they would joke with them and he would laugh with them and he would show compassion to every single one who was there; and he said to me, *the trouble with this place—too damn many people die*. He said, *every night I hear people coming here* and he said he didn't know if he would be one of those they were taking away.

01:31:54

**SR:** Did he talk about the sno-ball stand during that phase?

01:31:58

**Hansen:** They read about things, and when my mother's article came out he made sure that everybody saw it. He was so proud of it.

01:32:05

**Ashley:** He had favorite places to go, like Sid-Mar's to go get gumbo, and he couldn't understand that it was gone, and he knew Bucktown really well so I told him it was gone. And he said, gone? And I said, gone. And he had his favorite place like to get stuffed crabs on the Coast, and he would ask me about that place and I was like—gone. He's like, gone? Gone, and every place he loved to go was gone; and Venezia's—gone. **[Laughs]** Brocato's is gone. **[Laughs]**

01:32:39

**Gerard:** Brocato's is back.

01:32:41

**Ashley:** Have they opened?

01:32:42

**Gerard:** I heard an advertisement.

01:32:44

**SR:** They're almost open I think.

01:32:46

**Gerard:** Well the other thing was he didn't want to come to the city. He heard about all the damage, but then near the end he wanted—when we were getting ready to open the shop he wanted us to build a room for him in the back of the shop so he could come and help—

01:32:58

**Ashley:** And stay there.

01:32:59

**Gerard:** —so he could help Ashley.

01:32:59

**Ashley:** And he could have—he wanted an air-conditioner, a microwave, and a shotgun; that's what he wanted.

01:33:07

**SR:** Because his—their house flooded? Did they still live in—?

01:33:09

**Gerard:** They didn't—the second floor didn't flood; the first floor flooded and they had roof damage on the second.

01:33:14

**Ashley:** It was a raised cottage.

01:33:16

**Hansen:** The first floor—the first floor was always an apartment where I lived with the girls for years before I bought the house across the street, and all that was gone.

01:33:25

**Ashley:** And that's where his machine shop was.

01:33:27

**Gerard:** He lost a lot of equipment and all; he lost all of his equipment.

01:33:33

**Ashley:** He was really sad about that.

01:33:35

**SR:** Yeah; what about—I know that ya'll—was this the first year that you disassembled and reassembled the [Sno-Bliz] machine yourself?

01:33:43

**Gerard:** Yeah.



01:33:45

**Ashley:** Well, for the evacuation it took me about 20 minutes. I was in panic and I didn't want it to get looted, so I disassembled it by myself in 20 minutes and hid the parts in different places just in case.

01:33:58

**Gerard:** The first time we put it back together by ourselves it was—it was scary. *[Laughs]*

01:34:03

**Ashley:** Yeah. *[Laughs]*

01:34:03

**SR:** Because he disassembled it every year, right?

01:34:05

**Ashley:** We would help him.

01:34:07

**SR:** Okay.

01:34:06

**Gerard:** He would take it down two or three times a year just to—

01:34:10

**Ashley:** Clean it and clean the blades.

01:34:13

**Gerard:** And so he would always take it down for the winter so nobody would come in and steal the machine, and Ashley watched him so often and I watched him so often that we practically knew how to do it, but when we had to do it ourselves it was nerve-racking.

01:34:26

**Ashley:** Yeah, it was—*does this go right or left?*

01:34:28

**Gerard:** If something would go wrong we wouldn't know what was wrong; we wouldn't know why. You know, he would know but we wouldn't know why and—but it works fine. We took it out twice now and it works fine; so we're fine. Ashley made a master of it; she's now a mechanic, she now's a machinist, she's a sno-ball [lady], a chef, and an artist—on top of it she's an artist. [Ashley shakes her head, no.] But I would disagree. She's an artist; I've got beautiful work in my office. Anyway, there's always someone who wants to buy the work but I won't sell anything. I—I had a luncheon—a dinner date at 6 o'clock, so I'm going to have to run but let me tell you something I haven't covered quickly.

01:35:11

**SR:** Well let me ask you just some facts—which I was wondering—if you knew the birth dates of your parents?

01:35:17

**Gerard:** Yes; my dad was born on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1911; my mother was born on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1910, and why we know the 22<sup>nd</sup> that was Washington's Birthday and every year he made something with a hatchet—

01:35:35

**Ashley:** The symbol of a hatchet.

01:35:37

**Gerard:** Yeah, a symbol of a hatchet or some representation of Washington's Birthday and he'd always put—*I cannot tell a lie; I love you.*

01:35:43

**Ashley:** *Sweetheart.*

01:35:46

**Gerard:** Yeah.

01:35:49

**SR:** And so his name was Ernest?

01:35:51

**Gerard:** Ernest Charles Hansen; he was a senior. My brother is a junior and his son is the third. My grandfather was also an Ernest, but he was Ernest Paul Hansen, you know, so my daddy was Ernest Charles; he was named after his father and his uncle who was named Charles. And then my brother is named after him, and then my brother named his son after him.

01:36:18

**SR:** And what about your mom's name?

01:36:22

**Gerard:** My mother was Mary Victoria Gemelli—G-e-m-e-l-l-i, which is a very well known Italian name and she—it was something, if you want to go back and look at the archives, if you're interested, but their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and right—do you still have it at the shop?

01:36:46

**Ashley:** Uh-hm.

01:36:47

**Gerard:** You ask Ashley to look at it. *Dixie* magazine wrote an article declaring their wedding the wedding of the century.

01:36:57

**Ashley:** *Dixie* was a free periodical that was like *Lagniappe* in the paper.

01:37:02

**SR:** Uh-huh.

01:37:02

**Gerard:** And they did an article and they did—they had churches and the former mayor and other people. Well my grandfather, who was Italian, and she was their only daughter—so he sent her to New York for her wedding dress. To tell you how they met, my dad had a lot of—more nerve—and they used to call him “brass” because he had more nerve than he had sense sometimes, you know. He was a great guy but he had a lot of nerve.

01:37:27

**Ashley:** On their first date my grandmother said, *you have more nerve than a brass-ass monkey.*

01:37:32

**Gerard:** And she was always calling him “brass” and she would always say, *I could have married gold and I married brass.* He said, *yeah, but all the gold is dead and I’m still here,* you know. But he came along and she lived in Irish Channel and he lived downtown, and he came along to see her brother and her brother sold cars or something, and he wanted to see him about a car. And he pulled up in front of the house and saw my mother sitting on the steps and my mother was Absolutely beautiful. And he—he got out of the car and said, *I’m going to marry you.* And my mother said, *get the hell out of here before I call my daddy; my daddy will shoot*

*you*. They were very strict about who she could date. So about two weeks later Louie Prima had a birthday party and Louie Prima was a musician and singer; so—. And my dad happened to know him and so my dad came in the house and said, *I want to take you to Louie Prima's birthday party*. And my uncle said to my grandmother, *Ma, let her go. Louie Prima's Italian; let her go*. And he let her go. And that was their first date.

01:38:31

**Ashley:** And they were also musicians so they knew that it was going to be a good time.

01:38:34

**Gerard:** Yeah, they all were musicians around; and nine months later they got married, you know, and he didn't waste any time getting her married. He didn't want anybody else to get her, you know, and my grandparents just loved him because he was always so good to them and helped them. And he helped them when their own children wouldn't help. You know, and so my mother was always there, but my uncle—he would be there, you know. So but he didn't waste any time and he told her from the beginning, *I'm going to marry you. I'm going to marry you*. And you know he—he was right, and so he—he always knew what he wanted and—and was nervy enough to go get it. But the—the birthday thing was important to him and he always made sure—he used to have gold earrings made out of hatchets for her, you know, and different things. And in the end when he couldn't do it anymore—even did it her last birthday—he'd cut it out of paper—a hatchet and put on there, *I love you*.

01:39:34

**Ashley:** He used to make stainless steel, like, whatever he could for her—a hatchet.

01:39:39

**Gerard:** Anything he could make for her.

01:39:40

**Ashley:** So we have this whole like—we have a whole case full of like—

01:39:47

**Gerard:** But anyway, so—

01:39:49

**SR:** He's a romantic.

01:39:49

**Ashley:** Yes.

01:39:49

**Gerard:** Tremendous.

01:39:51

**Ashley:** Tremendous.

01:39:53

**Hansen:** He always would say if you don't hold hands then there's a problem, and when Barbara and I would go pick him up Barbara and I would hold hands all the time. You hold hands, and one day we had a fight and I wouldn't hold her hand and he said, *something is wrong*. I mean he—you know he—you've got to hold hands. Okay; you've got to hold hands. And he always believed that if you keep them laughing it was fine. As long as you keep them laughing, they're happy and everything is fine. And he would tell—he would joke all the time, you know, to keep my mother laughing. But you know my mother was married—so my mother was coming from a very—more affluent family—Italian family, but a little more affluent, and they gave her away at Saint Alfonso's Church in the Irish Channel and there were thousands of people. And where the Radisson Hotel is now used to be the Jung and they had a reception at nighttime on the roof of the Jung, and then it was Prohibition.

01:40:49

**Ashley:** It was the coldest day of the year.

01:40:52

**Gerard:** It was prohibition so my grandfather—when you came in you got a little gift and the gift was a fifth of liquor. And they weren't allowed to serve liquor, you see, so you got your own fifth of liquor to take and there were hundreds of people there, I mean everybody in the world knew my grandfather. And so but *Dixie* magazine did the—did the story on them and they declared—they declared it was the wedding of the century and if you read the article—.



01:41:20

**SR:** It's in the shop, huh?

01:41:21

**Gerard:** Yeah; it's hanging up there—.

01:41:22

**SR:** Oh I will; I bet that was an amazing wedding.

01:41:24

**Gerard:** Yeah, but it was a great article, I mean, and they were very proud. I mean but they were married—if they had lived up to November of last year they would have been married 73 years, and they made 72 and they almost made 73. They were two months shy of 73.

01:41:44

**SR:** I can't believe there's an article in there I haven't read.

01:41:47

**Ashley:** It's in the back.

01:41:48

**SR:** Oh okay, yeah. Well I just have two more questions but Ashley can answer them.

01:41:54

**Gerard:** Well ask them and then I—

01:41:54

**SR:** Well they're for—okay; well my first—I don't want to leave before I find out about nectar.

01:41:59

**Gerard:** There's nothing to find out. We have secrets we don't give.

01:42:03

**SR:** Well what I'm—I mean it's such a classic New Orleans flavor.

01:42:08

**Gerard:** Yes.

01:42:10

**SR:** And I was wondering—I mean did you grow up with that flavor?

01:42:14

**Gerard:** Yes; the—the actual recipe for it was actually—the formula was actually developed for them.

01:42:22

**SR:** Was developed for your parents?

01:42:22

**Gerard:** My mother, yeah.

01:42:24

**SR:** So like the K&B [drugstore] nectar?

01:42:26

**Gerard:** That was a nectar that's comparable but it wasn't their nectar.

01:42:29

**SR:** Was that—did that—did the K&B nectar come after or before your parents?

01:42:34

**Gerard:** I can't tell you that 'cause that nectar is actually a formula that was created for them and then the lady who made it—one lady used to make it every year and—and she—she's—she made sure they had a copy of the formula. It's still being made but the original copy—.

01:42:54

**SR:** And so does somebody make it for you or do you make it?

01:42:58

**Ashley:** No, we have it made for us.

01:43:01

**SR:** Okay; I lied—there was three questions. So—but the second one is quick: what is the current most popular flavor?

01:43:07

**Ashley:** Nectar cream.

01:43:09

**SR:** It is?

01:43:10

**Ashley:** We make—let's see, it's one of the only flavors I have to make by the gallon 'cause we sell that much of it.

01:43:15

**SR:** How many gallons a weekend?

01:43:17

**Ashley:** I would say three gallons a day.

01:43:22

**SR:** Wow. Well that's my flavor. I mean that's not my—that's the flavor—that's the first flavor I ever had.

01:43:30

**Ashley:** That's the flavor that when you grow up in New Orleans, that's the flavor that makes it all real. That's the flavor that makes you remember your childhood, you know. It's—it's delicious, it's fluffy, it's pink.

01:43:45

**SR:** Right, exactly. And then I just wanted to ask Ashley how you feel about—is it—do you feel pressure that this is what—not just your family but the community wants of you and that it would—?

01:44:07

**Ashley:** I think I've felt that pressure at times in my life. And you know having 90-some odd year-old grandparents to take care of too and help with that responsibility was pressure, and always trying to live up to their standards. But I think that's also part of being part of a family and a family tradition, like as much as it was hard on you there were too many benefits, you know. And I kind of feel about that now like, although there is some pressure to reopen and to keep going there are too many benefits, there are too many memories, there are too many smells and scents that I couldn't live without in the place you know. There's too many friends we've made, there's too many customers, there's too many kids growing up that I can't wait to see every day you know. No, I don't have any regrets about opening, and it's what I've always

wanted to do you know and—and I never really wanted two jobs. I always just wanted one job, you know. Cooking was sort of like—*okay, how do I pay my bills now after a whole sno-ball season?* So I love cooking but it was more of, *how do I sustain myself until summertime?* you know? And then I can go work back with my grandparents. And to me it's a very, very special place and I think there is some pressure but nothing that I wouldn't take on if I didn't want to. I don't know if that answers your question.

01:45:52

**Gerard:** Let me conclude by saying one more thing if you don't mind.

01:45:54

**SR:** No; please do.

01:45:55

**Gerard:** Ashley yesterday called me in tears because one lady who would come in, and she would bring us fish in exchange for sno-balls, and we hadn't seen her all—all—since the beginning of the storm, and she came in yesterday.

01:46:09

**Ashley:** Well her birthday was also August 28<sup>th</sup>—Ernest's birthday—and so she would always bring him fish and I would cook him the fish, you know, and everyone else would have some too but it was his fish. And yesterday she brought me the fish.

01:46:26

**Gerard:** Yeah, she brought the fish to Ashley to cook. I want to say that you know—if you look at the recent articles and you look at you know what has happened since we reopened, you can tell that this is Ashley’s business. I mean, you know, Ashley is making her own name. She’s making some changes, yes; change is always good. And the rules have changed; they’re not tough changes; they’re changes by having—

01:46:54

**Ashley:** By necessity. [*Laughs*]

01:46:57

**Gerard:** But these people that are coming in [to work] that are not family, and things of that nature, she has—she’s made her own reputation, and although people might say, *she looks like your mama and she smiles like your mama*, she has you know—Ashley is Sno-Bliz now and Ashley is handling it—not me and my brother; it’s Ashley and she has stepped into the tradition so easily and it’s become—it’s going to become her tradition, and it has. People come in and ask for Ashley, you know. They know mom and dad is gone; and they don’t come in and say, *hey where is the Judge?* They say, *where’s Ashley?*

01:47:38

**Ashley:** We had one experience I had this weekend—or maybe it was last weekend—but this little boy who I’ve seen grow up on Tchoupitoulas Street, obviously is dirt poor—is dirty half the time I see him. And he never would talk to me, never would smile, never; you know, barely

knew how to order something. And he came in two weeks ago and looked at me and said, *you want to see my new bike?* with a big grin. And I was like, *of course*. **[Laughs]** And of course I treated him to a sno-ball too and anything else he wanted ‘cause he was so cute. **[Laughs]**

01:48:21

**Gerard:** But the tradition goes on.

01:48:23

**Ashley:** That’s—that’s what I mean, you know, like **[Sighs]**.

01:48:26

**Gerard:** But the tradition goes on and I can say we haven’t missed a beat. As a matter of fact, Ashley literally has been running the business for seven years now and no one has noticed the change. And one thing I’m very proud of her about—my mother would come out and say hello to the customers even up to her last year. *I’ve been in the back making my flavors* **[imitating Mary]** you know and my mother hadn’t made flavors in ten years or seven years, and Ashley has made the flavors and Ashley would say, *yes, she’s back there doing her flavors* and never would say something to contradict.

01:49:01

**Ashley:** To contradict—never.

01:49:02



**Gerard:** And that—that shows you tremendous love for her grandmother. You know to the end my mother really felt this was her business, you know, but it really wasn't the last—I mean it was in name but not in—not in actually running it the last five, six, seven years, and yet Ashley never contradicted her. And every time my mother would get upset and say, *you're not doing this the way I—this is my business; you can't do this, this is my business*, you know, and she [Ashley] would say, *yeah, it's your business*, and she would just go ahead and do what she had to do, you know. **[Laughs]** But—but you know it just shows the tremendous love she had for her grandparents.

01:49:41

**Ashley:** I mean they kept me going at that point in my life and I feel like I helped to keep them going.

01:49:46

**Gerard:** But in the end—in the end to this day—

01:49:47

**Ashley:** I sustained them with that business, like they—they lived another five years because of it.

01:49:54

**Gerard:** Oh more than that. I often said if it wasn't for my children my parents would have died 20 years ago. They—they gave my parents a reason to live and—and they gave them—Ashley a

reason to want to succeed because they gave Ashley so many different, I guess, traditions that she can carry on with, you know.

01:50:13

**Ashley:** I think they taught me so much about living.

01:50:17

**Gerard:** Anyway, but thank you.

01:50:19

**Ashley:** Thanks.

01:50:20

**SR:** Thank you.

01:50:21

**Gerard:** I'll talk to you later.

01:50:22

**Ashley:** Okay, Dad.

01:50:32

**SR:** So you were saying that your grandpa bought you this fireplace [in Ashley's house, beside the sno-ball stand]?

01:50:36

**Ashley:** Yeah, because he wanted me to have a smokestack and this is—this was his—his—well my grandparents, the Gemelli(s), bought this house and let my grandfather's [Ernest's] parents live here 'cause they were dirt poor.

01:50:53

**SR:** With them?

01:50:53

**Ashley:** No, no; they just bought the house as an investment and they would make them pay something nominal so they wouldn't feel like they were a charity case. So my grandparents on the Hansen side actually lived here.

01:51:08

**SR:** Oh.

01:51:09

**Ashley:** And my grandfather—great-grandfather—was a train engineer, so he would set his watch by the sound of the trains going by and the story has it that he would actually—that he actually died on the sidewalk outside. And he would—he was an alcoholic—and he drank beer

down at F&M, and he fell off the bar stool and the doctor told him that if he had one more beer that he would die, and he went cold turkey and never drink after that at all.

01:51:48

**SR:** Really?

01:51:48

**Ashley:** And—yeah; but this was a man who when he wasn't drinking alcohol would brew his own. So with my grandpa I would actually brew beer with him in the wintertime so we would have something to do that wasn't sno-balls, that we could do at home.

01:52:05

**SR:** With Ernest?

01:52:06

**Ashley:** Uh-huh, and so the nickname of the beer was his—his father's nickname. It was called Jingles—Jingles Brew or Jingles Beer—and his father's nickname was Jingles because he would keep change in his pockets and jingle and throw the change down for the kids to scramble and get. And my grandfather's—one of his many nicknames was Little Jingles, and he had a ton of nicknames but—anyway; so they lived in this house. And if you would have seen it; I have no idea how they lived here. They had a wood-burning stove, one—

01:52:49

**SR:** Until when?

01:52:50

**Ashley:** I'd have to ask Dad for sure but I would say probably until the '50s or '60s, and at one point I know the grand—the great-grandfather died, and then the great-grandmother went to live on South Roman Street and she was going a little senile, so—and I think she was also a diabetic and they had to put her in a nursing home and that was a harsh—harsh reality for my grandparents. And so they were always afraid of going into nursing homes, so they lived in their own house for as long as they possibly could. Yeah, so I would say that she lived her for a long, long time until my dad was probably a teenager or maybe older than that.

01:53:40

**SR:** Huh, well I'd like to see the other things in your house. First there is another really factual thing I just realized I didn't ask you guys, which is that—so in the beginning Ernest and Mary—or Mary—made the sno-balls under the tree outside?

01:54:01

**Ashley:** Uh-hm.

01:54:01

**SR:** Then at—did they come to Tchoupitoulas Street from that or was there ever another sno-ball stand?

01:54:09

**Ashley:** No, there was—actually a plethora of sno-ball stands. [*Laughs*]

01:54:15

**SR:** Oh really?

01:54:17

**Ashley:** My grandmother grew up on Saint Mary's and Hastings Place, which is right around the corner from Saint Alfonso's.

01:54:24

**SR:** Okay, yeah.

01:54:26

**Ashley:** And—and so at one point they had it out front there, and at one point they had it like on General Pershing and Magazine. Before they moved it on Tchoupitoulas Street they were on Valmont Street, and the kids from Blessed Sacrament would always come over and buy sno-balls, and that's when they realized that they were going to hit it big because they were charging nickels for a sno-ball and I think they came home with like \$5 one day or \$20, and they were like, *okay, there is no stopping now*. And at—they were renting a storefront from my grandmother's aunt on Valmont between Constance and Annunciation. The building is still there. And—and then that's when I think in '48—no, yeah—yeah; maybe it was like in '47 or '48 the Gemelli(s) bought the sno-ball stand and this house for my grandparents 'cause she didn't think

they should rent anymore—that she should own a business. And so it was actually Grandma Gemelli who was also a business lady—she basically ran the bar; she ran the fruit stand or whatever they had and—and sort of passed that onto her daughter, and Mary became the businesswoman in the family.

01:55:57

**SR:** And do you know what was in the building next to—the current building before?

**Ashley:** I've heard it was a bakery, but I don't really know. I think there were a lot of corner bakeries at the time, so it could have been—who knows.

**[End Hansen's]**