Gregg Meyer and Betty Meyer

Meyer's Sausage Company—Elgin, Texas

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Southern Foodways Alliance
&
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Group Member:
Marvin Bendele

[BEGIN INTERVIEW] **00:00:00**

Marvin Bendele: OK. Hello, this is Marvin Bendele. I'm here in Elgin, Texas at Meyer's Sausage Plant. Is that correct?

Gregg Meyer: Yes.

MB: I want to make sure I get the name right.

GM: Meyer's Sausage Company.

MB: Meyer's Sausage Company. Right, OK. Um, today is July 24, Tuesday, 2007. I'm here with Betty Meyer and Gregg Meyer. And Gregg, if I could get you just to say your name, spell it, and give your date of birth, I'll check the levels on your voice then we'll do the same with Betty.

Gregg Meyer: Gregg Meyer. G-r-e-g-g M-e-y-e-r. I was born September 8, 1956.

MB: OK, thank you. And Betty can you do the same?

Betty Meyer: Betty Meyer. B-e-t-t-y M-e-y-e-r. April 1, 1936.

MB: OK, great. Hopefully, I won't have to monitor that too closely now. Well, let's just get started. The—one of the first questions I really wanted to ask was how did you guys get started in the sausage business here in Elgin? And either one of you can go first, it doesn't matter.

BM: My—my father-in-law began making the sausage in small batches in the grocery store that they had. And the neighbors liked the sausage so—and the recipe so—and they told him he should start selling, so we began making it and taking it to Austin.

MB: What was his name?

BM: Rudolph Meyer.

MB: And the—the small grocery store was here in Elgin?

BM: It's our—where we began inspection with initially with the sausage company. It's located at the corner of our property now.

MB: Ah, OK. Oh then, so this little building right out here. Oh, wow. I'll get some photos of that later. And I'm sorry, I know you said this. What year was that—did y'all get started doing this.

BM: Actually producing and selling—I believe 1949. Is that right Gregg?

GM: That's when they formed the company. He was making the sausage—

BM: Prior to—

GM: Probably late thirties, early forties at the Rockfront Grocery is what it was.

MB: That's the name of it—was Rockfront Grocery?

GM: Yes.

MB: Well, and so this was your father-in-law. Did pretty much everybody in the family work in it? And I guess your husband later did?

BM: Well, they were children when they began. My husband was a child then, but when they grew up he was in service—he was a telegrapher for the railroad—and when he came back from the army, he began with his dad in the sausage company. And that would be in 1955.

MB: How old was he then?

BM: Oh, you're going to have to ask me—he was—***[Laughs]—***he was twenty-three.

MB: Wow. And so he did that pretty much all of his life?

BM: Yes. He died at fifty-six.

MB: Well, um, so go back a little bit before that. How did the Meyers—the Meyer family get to Elgin—if you know?

BM: The Meyers—they were all from Brenham. And they came to Elgin and had a restaurant down on Southside. And then they purchased this, uh, Rockfront Grocery and from there is where the sausage began.

MB: Has your family been here for a really long time as well?

BM: My family has been here since 1832, the second group with Stephen F. Austin.

MB: Well, what's your maiden name? What was the name of the family?

BM: The Standafers—Elizabeth Standafer came and she had a land grant and three sons had land grants.

MB: Wow, wow. Well, so—Meyer's Sausage began in the forties. And, uh, what did—how did—I guess, how did it evolve? I guess you started doing—they started doing—just selling it right out of the building. When did they start processing and packaging and things like that?

GM: Well, they were, um—basically, he was selling it out of the back of his car. He was taking it to local groceries. They started getting out in—a little into the central Texas area like Taylor, Cameron, Rockdale, places like that. And then I think it was, what, the late fifties, early sixties when they went into Austin? Isn't that right?

BM: No, we'd been selling in Austin for quite a long while. But we received a letter from Austin, you know, we had inspection under Austin's health officer. But they told us if weren't state inspected then we could not sell in Austin. This was in November and they—we had until January. So, we went under the voluntary program and they gave us temporary inspection in our old building until this plant was built.

MB: And once you got that you, were able to package and produce and send it wherever you wanted?

BM: Right. In the state of Texas.

00:04:58

MB: OK. Well, let me grab my notes. Well, one question a colleague of mine had was, you know, obviously you guys produce and distribute all over Texas, or in a lot of sections of Texas, and one of the things she wanted to ask was, um, how has the production process changed over the years to accommodate the growing numbers? I'm sure it's changed from selling it out of the back of a car to today, obviously.

GM: The—the basic process of actually making the sausage is very similar. It's just the equipment has gotten much larger. The grinding, the—the particles—the diameter of the meat particles is exactly the same as that—as what my grandfather used. The stuffers are a lot different, where they used to use essentially what was a piston stuffer that would press the meat up and through the stuffing horn. It now, uh, goes into what's called a vacuum stuffer that pulls all of the air out and it's, uh, it's worked much less than what it was previously. The

smokehouses that you used to build a small fire outside in a little block house and then put sawdust over it, then had one little fan that would pull the smoke in to the smokehouse and let it smoke overnight. We now have, you know, processing ovens that we can put, you know, four or five thousand pounds of sausage in there. The air flow changes in the smokehouse, uh, about fifteen times a—fifteen times a minute, if I'm not mistaken. And the processing is done in about three, three-and-a-half hours.

MB: Where as before, how long did it take?

GM: It would be all night.

MB: So, the piston stuffer you were talking about—is that the one that is sitting in the—the restaurant right now, right when you walk in the door?

GM: Yes. We had a picture of it when we originally got it in. And my brother's son painted it back to its original look.

MB: That's pretty—pretty amazing. Well, you kind of covered the technological advances. I do have a question though about—you guys seal them in packages now? Before, how did you distribute it? Was it just wrapped up in like white paper, things like that?

GM: No, actually it was a, um, little paper tape band that was put around it. That was the label that went on the sausage. And then they were just packed in cardboard boxes.

MB: The individual sausages—were they wrapped in butcher paper or something like that?

GM: No.

BM: No. The sausages were tied individual with string. And each one was banded as to the flavor. We had three flavors and they were all packed in one box and it was up to the market to wrap them and put them out for display.

MB: Oh, wow. And now you wrap them all in separate plastic and I guess—does that? I guess they're sealed somehow with another machine.

GM: It's, um, it's called a vacuum package machine. Whereas the old style were put in the trays just like you see all of your steaks and fresh meats in the grocery stores and just had a plastic wrap over it. These are put into a, um, it's a little depression in a sheet of film, um, it runs another sheet over it, it seals it, and then pulls all of the air out of it. So, it gives—it extends the shelf life greatly on the product.

MB: Huh, it's pretty—so the—I guess, I'm just trying to get a picture of this. The—the—when you did this before, it was put into the boxes with just one band around it just—was it labeled or just a color?

BM: Each sausage had a band on it. You had to label it. Red meant garlic, yellow meant sage, and white was plain. Those were our three original flavors, and now we have many more.

MB: How many do you have now?

GM: Well, six—six that we've got in production of actual smoked sausage. We've got a couple of other ones that we're working on. We have several summer sausage then other smoked meats—jerky, things like that.

MB: OK. Can you give me the difference between summer sausage and your regular packaged sausage?

GM: Well, the summer sausage is a much larger diameter, um—you know, it's probably about, what, I guess two-and-a-half-inch diameter, three-inch diameter. It's a fully cooked product. You basically slice it off and eat it. It's—it's like a snack meat. Some people put it on biscuits, just have it with cheese and crackers, things like that.

MB: Is it similar to dried sausage at all?

GM: No, not really. Dried sausage is—is a type of smoked sausage that you basically hang. You know, we hang ours about three weeks to let the moisture, you know, be able to be pulled out of the product. And then it's re-smoked. So, it's a much drier product, than, say, the summer sausage is.

00:10:16

MB: Is the dried sausage also fully cooked—when you serve—after its served—because the reason I ask is because, um, in the little Alsace of Texas in Castroville pretty much everybody in that town makes their own sausage. They have their own recipe, and when they dry it, a lot of times, you know—obviously, they're not inspected by any agency—a lot of times they just dry it in a smokehouse, no—no heat at all—usually in the winter.

GM: Well, when my father used to make the dried sausage—that's—it wasn't for a commercial purpose. It was basically for our own personal use. That's exactly how he did it. He would hang the fresh sausage in a—a little smokehouse. It looked like an old outhouse, is basically what it was. And, they would smoke it for, you know, three or four, five days until it got what they thought was the right color. Then they would let it hang and dry. The way we do it now is we run it through the smokehouse. It's basically fully cooked and then it's held in the cooler, uh, for the drying process—like I said for about three weeks or so. Then it's run back through the smokehouse. It's basically run up to a—a cooking temperature again, and put an extra, um, dash of smoke on it.

MB: Well, before you get to the drying process or smoking, can you give me a little bit about, um, you know, without giving away any secret recipes or anything, what goes into the sausage? And you know, how it's ground—things like that?

GM: Well, we make a—the majority of our sausage is all pork. Of course, we use some different cuts of pork to go into that. We have a beef sausage. And then we have a pork and beef mix,

which is called our hot. The sausage basically is—it's ground through two different kinds of grinds. It's a coarse grind and then it's run through a finer grind, where the spices and all of the ingredients are added. Were we talking about, what? Just the entire process?

MB: You just—just the—I guess, the technology. Maybe you can give me the technology that's evolved in the grinding process as well. And you mentioned the stuffers earlier. Did they hand grind it before, whereas now it's several—?

GM: Actually, if you can look at some of the old pictures, you know, back in the—even when my grandfather was doing it. What they would do is they had two grinders mounted one on top of the other, where you would have the coarse grind, which would grind directly into the second grinder. What they would do is they would mix the seasonings in by hand, before the meat was actually put in the first grinder. The way it's done now is the meat is ground through the first coarse grind, which is the same diameter they used to grind it. It's put into a mixer grinder and that's where all of the ingredients are added and mixed. And then its ground into the second final grind. The equipment is—it's just much larger, but it basically does the same, same job.

MB: OK, OK. And then, one last question from my colleague here. With the changes—well, first off, how long have you been involved in the business?

GM: I've been here seventeen years full-time.

MB: And I'm sure technology has probably evolved a little bit since then. But, because of that, have you guys changed your marketing strategies? Do you go online now? What—how does—what has kind of changed since you've started, at least?

GM: Well, the technology is—is very different. When we came back, uh, we we're still using the piston suffer. It's the one that I learned how to stuff on when I was—what, eight or nine years old. That's been—that's been a while back. Yeah, we do a—the web is becoming a larger presence in our business. We're, you know—we can ship sausage to, you know, we have people come on and say, "Hey I moved from Texas, and I'm stuck up here in New York or Washington or whatever, and I can't find anything like your sausage." And, you know, we can send it to them now. We're—we're getting a lot more because of the prominence of our restaurant—getting into the smoked meats, the briskets. We're working on the ribs. We're starting to ship a lot of brisket nationwide also.

MB: You mentioned before you came back—did you do something else before you got back into the business?

00:14:48

GM: I worked for, uh, for IBM in Austin for—for ten years before I came back here.

MB: Is sausage making a little bit more exciting than working for IBM?

GM: It's—it's definitely a different animal. Um, don't—don't know exactly how to explain it, but, you know, you're, um—there's a lot more creativity that I'm able—that's my area. I do the

research and development on the products and that's something that I've always enjoyed. If I could spend all my time in the test kitchen, I would be there.

MB: So you have a test—what do you do there? I mean, do you just mix up some different things, just test it out?

GM: Well, since we've gotten the—the kitchen expanded on the restaurant that's kind of where my test kitchen is for a lot of non-meat products. You know, here, um, our test kitchen is the grinder, and the tumb—the vacuum tumbler, and the smokehouse, things like that, where we test products.

MB: OK. Well, Betty, um, did you start in the business as soon as you got married? Kind of give me your history with how you got into it and then what you did all the years that you were working here.

BM: No, actually I worked at the health department for the veterinary division, who administered state inspection. And when my father-in-law became ill, I came back and worked with my husband. And actually those that were our inspectors had been men I had worked with in Austin. And we were able to get our inspection, uh, then, you know, but I knew the rules when I came back. I used to type the manuals for inspection, so it gave me a little insight into what I was getting into.

GM: Well, now, did you meet your husband because you were working in the inspection office and he was—

BM: Oh, no. We were married before he went to service. We were—we were early marriage, and we, uh, got to live together a long time until his death at 56. But I came back and then we both worked when my father-in-law died in 1959. We both worked. And my mother-in-law worked in there until her death too.

MB: And I'm not sure we mentioned your husband and your father's name. What's his name?

BM: Farrell Buddy Meyer was my—was my husband. And Rudolph Meyer, R.G. Meyer was the father-in-law.

MB: Yeah, I think I saw last week some photos of—of uh—your husband barbecuing.

BM: Oh, me ***[Laughs]***. He loved to barbecue. Meat was definitely—he loved that. As I said before, he was a telegrapher by—by training for the railroad. And he chose to come back and help his father, and so that's how the company really grew. And it was a blessing because we were—he was here four years before his dad died. And he made many changes then. Of course, Gregg and Gary have made a lot more changes, uh, since they've been on board. Things were very—we're now federally inspected. We were—when we began, we were voluntary inspection. And only the plants that chose to do that, you paid for the inspection. And then it became mandatory that the state of Texas—and then you—then everyone had to do that.

MB: Do you remember when it became mandatory?

BM: I believe in, uh, I'm not sure mandatory—probably in the middle sixties. I'd have to look on the calendar. I can't remember mandatory. And I don't know, Gregg what is the date for federal inspection now?

GM: 2001?

BM: Yeah, we've been—federally inspected allows you to do—to go anywhere—

GM: Ship across state lines.

BM: Ship across state lines, yeah. State couldn't do that.

MB: OK. This voluntary—voluntary inspection is pretty intriguing. So, you guys were—decided you were going to get inspected ahead of time, before it was ever a law. Did that help your business or—

BM: Oh, yes. We were able to go anywhere in Texas with that. Where a lot of companies couldn't go into cities, you know. When it was voluntary, we did it, you know, they—it was administered by the veterinary public health division.

MB: Do you think that the people that bought your sausage—people that purchased, maybe vendors you sold to—were they more apt to buy your sausage because it had been inspected?

BM: When they saw that state label on there, with that number eighty-six, Gregg? ***[Laughs]*** I can't remember, but I think it's number eighty-six that had the Texas outline—the Texas—it had Texas inspected on every—every label that went on the sausage, I would think so.

MB: Did the—well, I guess, did the number of sales increase pretty quickly after you started doing that or do you remember?

00:19:45

BM: We've always been very blessed with our—with our customers. We've kept them for a lifetime, most of them. Once we get them, we keep them.

MB: Right. Well, I've got a question about the—what you did before the restaurant. Well, actually, let's get back to what did you—so you came from the inspection, uh, the inspection—?

BM: The veterinary public health. Yes, I was a secretary at veterinary public health, and I came back and I did all of the book work here. I did the bookkeeping here at the sausage company, and I also worked in the production of it.

MB: What—

BM: I tied many a sausage ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Well—

BM: Eighty-four, sorry on that number.

MB: So that's—that's the number of the certificate or—

BM: That's what was stamped on our—on—every sausage label had that. Every piece of tape that went on the sausage had—had the legend, with the outline of Texas, with the number, and it—who had produced—and it had our name on it.

MB: And eighty-four was specifically to Meyer's?

BM: Yeah. It was our number. That was what was assigned to us in the state of Texas.

MB: So, what—what parts of the production did you do in the sausage? I mean, did you pretty much have your hand in pretty much everything, or—?

BM: I was able to do everything even in this plant when my husband was sick, but I never learned to bone out the Boston butts that you made the sausage. I tried everything, but that was one thing I never learned to do. Yes, because he had quite a bit of illness and so we had to keep operating when he was in the hospital. So, I learned that piston stuffer that Gregg talked—talked about. I had to learn how to do that so I didn't blow it through the ceiling ***[Laughs]***, when he was

in the hospital. So yes, we all, you know, our whole—most of our whole—now we're divided and we're not allowed to cross different lines. Gregg will explain that to you, but we could work in any section at that time. And we could do, you know, the processing, the packaging, and we went from one area to the other. Now it's required differently. Gregg, you can tell them how that works.

GM: You basically have to, um, to separate your, um, your raw and your finished products. They wear different color smocks. If you're changing to go from one area to the other, you have to take off, you know, the smocks from that area. Um—do like a boot dip, sanitize your hands, things like that.

MB: That's just to contain, uh—well, keep cross-contamination and contamination of the—the cooked meats? Uh—

GM: Right. There's a possibility of contamination when you're coming from the raw—raw side, products that haven't been cooked and haven't, uh, killed some of the bacteria like *Listeria*. Some other ones like that. *Listeria* is one of the biggest concerns. And you don't want to bring that into a finished product area.

MB: Approximately when did you guys have to start sectioning off the—the production process like that?

GM: That's been within the last ten years. I can't tell you exactly when that happened.

BM: I'll tell you how our production went. In the afternoon, we cut the meat and ground it. The next morning, with the spices, it was—went into the stuffer. It was hand—every link was hand-tied, put in the smokehouse, and it came out, uh, the next morning. It was packaged that afternoon, after it cooled, and went out the next day. So, you had two days from the time the meat was cut until it was in the grocery stores.

MB: And—and you're talking—that was throughout the sixties—fifties and sixties?

BM: Yeah.

MB: Well, I've got a question about—I knew you guys started the restaurant in '98 or '99. I've got that on the other tape.

GM: Yeah, '98.

MB: OK. Did you—and go back to when this opened and even the grocery store—did you produce barbecue and sell it here as well? Or barbecue some of the—did you cook some of the meat that you sold, cooked the sausage, things like that? Or did that just start with the restaurant?

GM: No. We—we didn't cook any of the—any of the barbecue meats here. That was strictly at the restaurant.

MB: It was?

GM: Yes.

MB: So, I mean, even—even ahead of—before you even opened the restaurant, you all didn't do anything like that? OK.

BM: Many customers ask us, "When are y'all ever going to start cooking these products, so I can come and buy it?" And so they answered that challenge when they—you know, people would say, "Why can't we buy it cooked?" We don't have a restaurant. And, uh, so, they answered that.

MB: Now, did these same people—had they tasted your husband's barbecue before, and was that the reason they wanted it cooked?

BM: Oh, yes. Oh, well, yes, because they were our customers and they knew how good—but they had to go home and cook it themselves—barbecue it, you know. And so now, they can go down and purchase it from Gregg and them already cooked.

MB: Now, your father, uh, I think, Gary was telling me that he always barbecued. He'd be in the backyard with the—fork in one hand and a beer in the other. And, uh, I was wondering how—we didn't get into that as much because we were talking more about the restaurant. But I was wondering how often he did that? And how famous he was around the town for that?

00:24:59

BM: I'll answer that one. He had the first large, rolling barbecue pit, mobile barbecue pit in Elgin. He had it built. And so he cooked always for any fundraisers or anything. He—Buddy was the lead cook. Buddy also traveled a lot to judge barbecue cook-offs, St. Thomas, all over Texas. So, Buddy was probably the premier barbecuer in Elgin, and he did judging in a lot of places.

MB: Now would he cook the sausages that he made? And then also, just, what else did—the brisket, chicken, things like that?

BM: Oh, yes. Sausage always, chicken was a real good thing, and he even did—well, of course, he did beef. And then I had an uncle that he learned to do mutton from, so. So, all the meats were covered.

MB: Wow. Well, Gary hinted at this the other day. I was wondering if the same recipes that—that your—that Buddy used is what—is that what you guys use? Obviously the sausage, but in the restaurant as well, when you're cooking?

GM: Yeah. The rub, the brisket rub is essentially his recipe. The bean seasoning is also his. That was how he made his beans. It, uh, was a little bit modified because of a commercial process that we had to do. Where he would use the huge cast-iron cooking pots, couldn't really use that in a restaurant application. But basically the seasoning was essentially the same.

MB: Did he learn this stuff from his father?

BM: He—Mr. Meyer did do cooking, but Buddy probably developed it himself because he was a people person and he loved to cook for weddings and things. So, that's how he really started, you know, cooking our—we had a good product to cook, so he was always proud to cook it and serve it.

MB: Well, going further back than Buddy's father—

BM: His father—the recipe actually is from Mr. Meyer's father.

MB: OK.

BM: Yeah. Rudolph's father.

MB: Rudolph's father. So, that would have been Buddy's grandfather?

BM: Uh-huh.

MB: Right? OK. Now I know it didn't get started—you really didn't start producing this sausage until the little grocery store next door here—

BM: Right.

MB: But has sausage-making, has it gone back since the Meyer family has been here?

BM: I'm sorry, I didn't understand—

MB: Has the sausage-making—did you guys produce sausage, um, I guess, not for sale, just on your own, just for the family back way before that?

BM: Oh, yes. Every—you know, every good German had a good recipe ***[Laughs]***, had thought their sausage was better than anybody else's. You know that is, if you grew up in Castroville, everybody thought theirs was the best.

MB: That's exactly what, uh, Mr. Dziuk [Marvin Dziuk of Dziuk's Meat Market in Castroville, Texas] said to me when I was interviewing him. He has—the biggest trouble he has is competing with all the local families. So—

BM: Right.

MB: All right, let's see here. Oh, in—this may be the same as the restaurant. I asked this question to Gary as well, but, um, where do you guys get your meats to, um, make your sausage?

GM: Different places. Most of it comes—is going to come from out of state, um, from Colorado. I think some comes from Iowa. Just different, different—yeah, it's all federally inspected from some of the large meat processors in different parts of the country.

MB: Are there processors in Texas that—because I've been finding this a lot with most of the places I've gone—it all comes from out of state, it seems like.

GM: All of the—the pork is—the big processing plants are out of state. They do have some beef plants here in Texas, but all the pork comes from elsewhere.

MB: Is it cheaper to get it from out of state than? I have no idea. Is it more expensive to do it in state than—?

BM: ***[Indiscernible]***.

GM: They just—they just don't have any of the large plants here anymore. I guess they—

BM: They did in years past.

GM: Probably was too hard on the animals. I don't know for whatever reason all the big packing plants are in different parts of the country.

MB: I guess Texas has a lot of feedlots and things like that, and, uh, I guess they ship them up there—ship the cows up there.

GM: Well, like I said, they've got beef—beef packing plants here in the state of Texas, and we buy from some of them, but all of the pork is from outside of Texas.

MB: Well, can you kind of give me a—you don't have to get into numbers of anything—give me some of the areas that you actually send your product to now, today? And I don't know, maybe you could somehow compare it to what it was before. I know it has obviously gone from ***[Laughs]*** selling it out of the trunk of the car to—do you ship it across the country now? Just kind of talk about that a little.

00:30:08

GM: The bulk of our business is here in Texas. We still do a lot on our own trucks in the—in the central Texas area. Our trucks run from—anywhere from Dallas, Waco, down to San Antonio, through the central Texas area. We distribute through HEB's distribution warehouse [a regional grocery chain] that takes it all over the state of Texas. We just started doing some business with some food service companies outside the state of Texas that are taking it to some customers in Colorado and different places. And we ship, uh, quite a bit to individual customers and even to restaurants all over the United States.

MB: Are your biggest competitors in Texas or is it—do you compete mostly with people from out of state?

GM: You have—you have both. I mean, you have some of the large—large companies: Eckridge, Hillshire Farms that are nationwide. But if you go in and look at the—the shelf space on the grocery—grocery stores, most of your competition—or a good portion of it is the—the local Texas manufacturers.

MB: I'm sure especially here in central Texas and Austin HEBs and things like that. I think I've seen five or six different, uh, places in the Texas area that are—you see their products including yours all together.

BM: Everybody has decided sausage making should be their vocation. Used to there were very few, and now, everybody wants a slice of the pie.

MB: Well, getting back to cooking, um, do you have a specific way you prefer to prepare your sausages?

GM: Do you mean for myself personally?

MB: Yeah. Or do you recommend—is there a—can you give us a recommendation how we should cook it?

GM: Well, usually when that question is asked, and which sausage I like best, I say, "Well, usually whichever way I'm cooking it or whichever way I'm eating it at the time." I like all of them, um, cooking it on the pit is indirect—indirect heat. Putting some smoke on the meat is usually the best—my favorite way.

MB: What other ways are there to do it—that you've seen people cook them?

BM: Well, for most housewives we usually cooked it and we recommended cooking it in just an inch of water and—and cook the link. Then it was just the link in water, and it really turns out good when you don't have a barbecue pit. It really is very good.

MB: Do you put that on the pot or in a frying pan?

BM: Anything that you can put the water in and you can turn the link over in there. I mean, that's the old-timey way when we didn't have barbecue pits. It turned out so good.

MB: I've seen—I've seen sausage boiled before, I mean, in—submerged in the water.

BM: A lot of people do that. I've never boiled a sausage, and I just put it in a small amount of water and then turn it one time, and the fat comes out, it browns nicely like it had been on a pit.

MB: Does it—it keeps the juice, the flavor in it?

BM: Yes it does.

MB: Well—we've covered a lot of stuff here. Um—oh—what's your biggest seller, product-wise?

GM: The all-pork garlic sausage, by far. That's our biggest seller in the grocery stores.

MB: Yeah. When did you start producing that?

BM: Originally [***Laughs***], it was one of the original flavors, yeah. Garlic has always been the best seller, as long as we—I mean, I think that's the original sausage he made to sell.

GM: What was the guy's name?

BM: Mr. Holland.

GM: No, no. The neighbor that lived across there.

BM: Mr. Holland.

GM: The one that was always after Papa about putting—putting the garlic in the sausage—wore the—the helmet over there on the corner all the time**.**

BM: Bob Bostick—our neighbor. Oh, I know now. He ate garlic all the time ***[Laughs]***. So, people used to eat onion. Well, this gentleman ate garlic and he insisted that Mr. Meyer put more garlic in it. So, I don't know if that was the reason or not, but it's always been our best seller.

MB: Now, when you say this gentleman ate garlic, did he just eat it—straight?

BM: Yes, raw, raw garlic.

GM: Garlic with everything.

BM: Yes, I mean, he ate actual pods of garlic.

MB: ***[Laughs]***.

BM: So, he didn't have blood pressure problems since some wonderful—it's a wonderful medicinal—it has medicinal properties.

MB: So, did he have a little bit of influence in getting the garlic sausage made or he just tried—

00:34:58

BM: Oh, well, no. We were making it, but he always wanted more garlic in it.

MB: That's great. That's great. So, what were the original three? I know you mentioned them earlier.

BM: Garlic, sage, and plain. And now they say original, Gregg?

GM: Yes that was the original recipe.

BM: Yeah.

GM: Yeah.

BM: But I mean it's garlic, sage, and plain are the—were the three color-coded labels that we began with when we went into Austin.

MB: And the plain is the original recipe?

GM: The original recipe, uh-huh.

MB: And the garlic is a better seller than the original recipe now?

BM: It always has—

MB: It always has been.

GM: The original has gotten a lot closer in—in more recent years. Uh, we've done a lot more, uh, sampling in the groceries stores than we previously did with the original product, and, uh, it's the—the total poundage on it has—has picked up considerably in the last three or four years.

BM: Because we always sampled—when we did demos, we always sampled the garlic.

MB: Ah.

BM: Because we thought that everybody liked it, but if you're trying now that they're picking up on the—on the plain, as I still call it.

MB: Now, when you talk about doing demos, what exactly do you mean? What—what did y'all do?

BM: You actually went out and cooked the sausage within the grocery store and let everyone sample, you know. And that—you had the sausage was usually on sale by the grocery store, and they had the opportunity to taste—

MB: So you—

BM: The customers. The store customers had the opportunity to taste.

MB: So, they do that now just inside the store, but did you guys—you guys actually went out there to do that?

BM: Yes, we had—we had demonstrators, and we were probably one of the first ones. We had uniforms even when we began doing the demos.

MB: Do you still do that today?

GM: Yes. We still have our own demonstrators. Some of them have been doing demos for us, you know, for twenty years. Jerry Warren has been there for a long time. It's a little more difficult nowadays, uh, because whereas we used to just have demonstrators in the central Texas area, we've got, uh, the Corpus area, down in the [Rio Grande] Valley, San Antonio, you know, all over the state. You know, we have to have—we want to have our own people. They have demo services, where you can go and hire them, but they're not as familiar with the product—you know, one week they'll be doing cookies, the next week maybe—maybe doing tamales, and then they'll do the sausage. Whereas these people, basically work our demos, they know our product, they use it at home, and they—it makes a big difference when they believe in the product and they're out there doing it in the stores.

MB: So if—if I got into an HEB in Austin and they've got samples there, it's most likely you guys?

GM: Yeah. It's going to be our people.

MB: Interesting. You mentioned a guy that's been with you for twenty years, uh, do you have a lot of employees who have been around for a long, long time?

GM: We've got quite a few, um, Pete.

BM: Well, we—go ahead Gregg.

GM: No, I was going to say Pete is probably the oldest now. Uh—he started, what, in 1966 or 1967?

MB: What's his name?

GM: Peter Hernandez. Yeah. He does, uh, he was on the routes until, what, I guess, maybe about four years ago. And he's probably, what, mid-seventies? He wanted to slow down a little bit, so he went from five to four days. And he's, uh—he's doing merchandising four days, and he still runs a lighter—a little bit lighter route one day a week.

BM: We lost one employee, who had retired, and he had been with us over fifty years. So, he came riding a bicycle and my father-in-law hired him, and he stayed with us until he was—his health didn't allow him to work anymore.

MB: Now he—he came riding a bicycle. What do you mean by that? He just rode up?

BM: Fifteen years old, I believe ***[Laughs]***, when he came as a young boy.

MB: So, he would come to work every day on a bike. OK. In clientele, obviously you—you guys sell to grocery stores and things like that, and I know—I think Gary said one of the—that the restaurant is actually one of the biggest clients. Do you guys sell from this—this part of the company at all? I mean, this actual location or does all that go to the restaurant?

GM: No. We still—we have a retail out of our—out of our office area. We've kept that through the years. That's something we've always done.

MB: I guess I just didn't see it when I walked in. I'll definitely get some photos.

BM: Well, people come in and can purchase here, but we don't—uh, we used to be open on Saturday to allow people to buy. But when they were able to open the restaurant, then they could take the retail down there. But we do sell straight from the plant, and you'll have some people say, "We go to the plant and get it. We think it tastes better." But we don't know that to be a fact ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Well, is it—is it cheaper to get it from the plant than it is to get it from the restaurant?

GM: It's basically the same price from the two locations.

MB: Well, do you have long-time clientele that continue to come here that—that stand out in your mind—today?

00:40:06

BM: The lady from Taylor, Gregg, that came—has been coming for a hundred years. I can't remember her name.

GM: Wanda probably knows more of the—the older customers, since she's been here a lot longer.

BM: We might say that the girl in our front office demoed for us. She's been here, what, twenty-five or thirty years. She was one of our original demonstrators. The girl out in our front office, there.

MB: The one that—

BM: Wanda. That greeted you as you came in.

MB: And you have somebody from Taylor that's been coming here for how long?

BM: Oh, that lady has been coming for twenty or thirty years, I know, to purchase sausage.

GM: Grandchildren coming by, you know.

BM: Yeah ***[Laughs]***. Yeah.

MB: And probably her parents before that.

BM: ***[Indiscernible]***.

MB: Well, you know, I talked about the barbecue a lot with Gary. So, I think we've probably covered that section of it, but I do have a question about what you guys think of the future of the

sausage plant itself. Are your kids going to take over eventually or what's going to happen with that?

GM: Well, actually, we were just talking about that yesterday. Um—we don't know if it's going to happen or not, but we said if we don't make it a, you know, a possibility, then it won't happen, you know. So we're, you know—we're trying to make plans where, if that's what they want to do, then—then we'll be able to do something like that—have them part of the businesses.

MB: If that doesn't happen, would you guys be OK having an outsider run the—run the family business later or would you just decide it's it—we're just going to go ahead and close it down. Have you thought about that?

GM: Really haven't thought about that a whole lot. It might be really hard to have someone from the outside, but I don't think you would want, you know, that legacy to just go away.

MB: Sure. Well—let me pause it for one second here.

[Brief pause in the recording.]

MB: OK. So, I know the grocery store has been here for a long time, um, give me kind of and evolution of this particular—the plant here. Kind of, we talked about it with the restaurant—how it expanded. Um—and just talk about this and then maybe—maybe you could give me an idea, you know, about the land. So, let's start with, uh, Gregg here.

GM: Well the—this plant was built in '62. Is that right? '63?

BM: Early sixties.

GM: OK. It was expanded, um, when we came back, which was in 1990. We've done one, two, three, four expansions on it. We've added, of course, the two new smoke houses, the processing ovens, additional packaging area, additional cooler storage, dock area, things like that, um, modernized basically all of the equipment. All of the equipment is—with the exception, my father put on a vacuum packaging machine, what, in the late seventies, I think? And we've had two different machines, I think, since then—just larger and faster, you know, more updated versions, um, computerized stuffer, the computerized smokehouses, a lot of upgrades to do basically the same job with just a lot more—a lot more poundage having to go out.

MB: What do you do—what's going on with the—the old grocery store now? What do you use that building for?

GM: Uh, it's storage. You know, we store boxes and things like that in there.

MB: Well, you were mentioning your family came over with—they had a land grant originally with Stephen F. Austin. What is—is that part of what you still have? Is that part of this property or what—how does that go?

BM: It's not part of the property where the sausage company, but where the restaurant is my great-great-great grandmother's original land grant. She came with Stephen F. Austin. The land grant is dated 1832, and, uh, the smokehouse is located on her land grant.

MB: How big were the land grants at the time?

BM: 4400 acres.

00:44:36

MB: And, uh, did that—was that just a coincidence? Because I know that the restaurant was purchased from somebody else in the late nineties, right?

BM: That's correct, but the land has always been there and it's the original ones. Elgin's is on the [Mary Randolph Buchanan] Christian Burleson Survey, and they came at the same time. And her two—three sons also have land grants. I live on one of her son's land grant—original land grant.

MB: Well, did your—your family, Betty, did—did—what did they do for a living, I guess, through the years?

BM: My father was a farmer, and we farmed, uh, all the time that he lived.

MB: So, didn't have anything to do with the sausage. Did they make their own sausage or—?

BM: Strangely enough, we did slaughter hogs and make sausage, but it wasn't as good as ours, I have to say ***[Laughs]***.

MB: And before, uh, you guys started the—the business of the, I guess, the grocery store here and producing sausage later, what did your family do? Were they also farmers, Gregg?

GM: Are you talking to me about, like, my grandfather?

MB: Yeah.

GM: No. They ran—they ran a restaurant down, uh, downtown Elgin.

BM: They also ran a restaurant in Brenham before they came here.

MB: Really? OK. Now, see, I don't think we talked about—what was the, uh , what was the name of the restaurant? And if you remember? I mean, just approximately, how long did they run it? Do you remember?

BM: Well they came, uh, they ran it in Brenham. I have no idea how long. And then they came here and bought the one on—nearly close to Southside Market on, and they—then they bought this grocery store, so it was the forty.

MB: So did they—

BM: Forty [1940].

MB: Did they run the grocery store and the restaurant in—at the same time?

BM: No. They ran the restaurant when they first came, and then they purchased the grocery store and ran it here then.

MB: Great. That's pretty interesting. Well—at this point, I think I'm finished with my questions. Did you have anything to add?

BM: I just wanted to tell you one quote that my mother-in-law used to say, having made sausage all those years. She said, "The only thing harder than making sausage was taking care of her restaurant." And I think Gregg and Gary have both of them now ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Do you agree with that?

GM: Well—well, we caught a lot of grief. That was mentioned several times when we were talking about buying the restaurant, and, you know, we—we tried to compare it to a full-service restaurant, which may have, you know, eighty or ninety items on the menu versus a barbecue restaurant where we've got, you know, about five or six meats and three or four sides. It's a big difference than—than say like a full-service, cooked-to-order type restaurant. And that was what we were used to, you know, it was just on a bigger scale, but, I mean, you know, with my father

barbecuing all the time, and, you know, us being involved with that, you know, we—we kind of knew what was going on. It was just, uh, a lot bigger endeavor.

MB: Did the jump to do that—was it easier because you already had the sausage plant and that part of your menu was pretty much set right there, just having that?

GM: Oh, yeah. That—that was—from day one, that was what we wanted to feature was, you know, to give the sausage a—a restaurant outlet, you know. When we put the sign up, um, on the building, it was called Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse and featuring Meyer's sausage. The—all of the employees that we kept down there, they were the employees from the previous owner. And we came in there and we changed all of—all of the recipes. All of the meats and all were our recipes. And they were just amazed at just what the name itself—because Meyer's had built up such a good reputation from the name alone, we were able to draw customers. And, um, it was busy from day one.

BM: I have a remembrance. We had one grocery store in Austin that told my father-in-law, "I will buy from you, as long as you never cut your quality." We sold to that store in Austin until it closed its doors. So, I—we assume we fulfilled what they expected of us.

MB: Do—do you remember the name of the store?

BM: Oh goodness, I knew you were going to ask me that...

MB: ***[Laughs]***.

BM: …I'll try to think of it. I know exactly where it is, and I can't think of the name of it. It's over in east Austin.

MB: Well, if—

BM: It'll comein in a minute.

MB: Yeah, if you remember—

BM: 71 (the age) makes you forget a few things ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Well, if you remember it, just jump in.

BM: I will.

MB: Oh gosh, I had a question, now I've lost it. Um—I blanked on my question now. I know one of the guys that you guys kept when you bought the restaurant is the cook, right? He's been—he's been there with the guy for a while. Um—do you? I remember now. As the research-development man, do you have any new things on the horizon that you're working on that may show up in stores?

00:49:44

GM: Oh, yes.

BM: ***[Laughs]*** He told me yesterday he was making barbecue tamales, and I thought—

GM: She's not supposed to talk about that. That's—that's one that's in the making. That's a project that's not—we're not talking about that yet. I just made one batch on that, so. Fortunately it turned out better than some of the first batches I've made on other products. I've thrown them out the door, and even the dogs wouldn't eat them they were so bad. But this one actually turned out pretty good. Um—we're starting to do a lot more business. We started out with one barbecue sauce; it was my grandmother's recipe. We started bottling that. Uh—we were able to hook up with the broker out of Chicago who is getting ready to go nationwide. They service all of the HEBs in the state of Texas, and we've gone from—from one product, which was located on the very bottom shelf in the—in the barbecue section to now we have two barbecue sauces, one hot sauce. We've moved up to eye-level, which is the prime shelf, and two fronts on each—on each of the sauces in about four years time. Uh—we've got another product, a barbecue sauce that's in the works. We're working on a line of marinades. Um—we've got a couple of sausage products that we're working on. We're really starting to get into the—to the—when we're starting doing our shipping, the briskets have become a big part of it. And we've found that a lot of the customers, when we ship, they're putting together brisket, sausage, barbecue sauce. You know, they're making their own barbecue. And so, our website—our new website is going to be up hopefully in the next thirty to sixty days. And it's really going to feature that barbecue in the box, where they can come in and say, "I have to feed twenty people" or "I have to feed fifty people," and we've already got the package built for them. They don't have to figure out what they need.

They just have to tell us how many people they need to feed and, you know, we're going to ship it to them.

MB: And you guys—well, before I get this question, um, where do you produce the other products like your barbecue sauces?

GM: The sauces are co-packed for us. We have a private labeler in San Antonio that does it to our recipe that Mom went down there and tested. We had had a smaller bottler a long time ago that, um, used to bottle our product. He went and changed some things to cheapen the recipe, and, you know, we started tasting it. She was saying, "It's not the same." We had to pull a lot of stuff off the shelves because it wasn't our barbecue sauce. And so, when we went to the new bottler and ran the first test batch, she went to San Antonio with us—so we could get her seal of approval to make sure that it tasted—

BM: I made a batch and he made a batch.

GM: Properly.

MB: Well, I guess, where does it—does it get mixed down there as well, or do you guys send it to them just to get it bottled?

GM: No. They—they manufacture it according to our recipe.

MB: OK.

BM: Hopefully, I told them for six months they're doing something to this barbecue sauce, it's not right, you know, it's not our recipe. And of course, we finally—they finally admitted and we had to change—

GM: Yeah, we changed bottlers.

BM: Bottlers. Yeah, because it was—they were not doing—putting all the ingredients for our recipe, and it made a tremendous difference.

MB: Now, obviously it's not as simple as giving them a recipe and them getting it right. I mean, you had to switch bottlers. Did you actually go down there and show them how to do it or just give them the recipe?

GM: Well, they have—they have their own procedures, you know, as far as how to cook and everything like that.

BM: I did have one input. When I tasted it, I had to ask him one thing about the product. I said, "What did you do with the onion?" And he told me he—he puréed it and put it in there. I said, "That's the difference. I taste onion at the end. Take the onion out, you just need it for flavoring." And so he did that, and it works. It tasted like mine—mine when I made it.

MB: So, your recipe included onion, but you add it later? Explain that a little bit.

BM: No. Well, you would cook it with your—but you didn't puree the onion and put it in your sauce. It was there for flavoring, and it made it too strong. So, I wanted him to do it like we originally did it and he did.

MB: And you—how did you do it originally? I'm—I feel like an idiot, I'm not understanding.

BM: OK. Well, we—I did the recipe to taste, and then, Gregg, I'll have to explain this. My mother-in-law made it, and I knew how to make it as she did, but I didn't have it down, like, by so many ounces of this and so many ounces of that and all that. So he said, "Mom I have to have the recipe." He came to my home and I made it to taste, and he drove me crazy. I'd say, "I have to add, you know, more of this." He'd say, "Measure it, measure it, measure it." And we finally got it, so we could have a recipe to make it. And, you know, that you could give to anyone else to make. And I—it took us quite a while and a lot of headaches, uh, to get it down just exactly to taste because I knew how to make it, but my mother-in-law taught me, but we finally got it. So, it was like hers.

MB: So is it safe to say, though, if I came to your house and y'all barbecued and you made some sauce homemade, it would probably be better than what I got in the bottle.

00:55:01

BM: I don't think so, as long as they follow that recipe—original recipe—we're OK ***[Laughs]***. It's very good. I used to make it and give it. By them bottling it, it took away my Christmas gifts

because I used to make it and give quarts of barbecue sauce as Christmas gifts. And now, they can all buy it. So, I don't have a—it's my taken away my gift—Christmas gift.

MB: ***[Laughs]*** It saves you some time, but I guess you have to spend that shopping now. Well, um, do you guys do other products like dry rubs and things like that or spices that you bottle?

GM: We do a—we do a barbecue rub and we do the bean seasoning. That's—that's another area we're looking at doing some other—other rubs from our seasonings. You know, to put on the market also.

MB: Um—

BM: I might tell you about the bean seasoning. Buddy Meyer's beans were famous around Elgin. So, everybody tried to make beans like he did when he cooked for, like, weddings and things. So, that—his was the mark. If you could get beans to taste as good as Buddy Meyer's, you were in good shape.

MB: How did everybody taste his? Did he cook at a festival where—

BM: Mostly weddings. I mean, we barbecued for every—every friend's kid that got married we—Buddy would do the barbecuing for and do the beans and all of that for weddings and festivals.

MB: Now—

GM: His beans were for the fireman's cookout too weren't they?

BM: Oh yes.

MB: Yeah. OK. Well, I think Gary mentioned, and I'm blanking on this. We have it on tape from last week, but that he cooked at—was it their wedding? And was it raining? Can you—?

BM: Cold and windy and he was panicked because he thought the pits were not—I mean we had the huge rolling pits. By this time, everybody in Elgin has had a pit made, you know, on wheels. And they had them all out behind the SPJST [Slovanska Podporujici Jednota Statu Texas (Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas)] with plywood in front of them. He was panicked because he thought they weren't going to heat properly, you know. So, he was panicked at his own son's—and he had cooked for thousands already, you know.

MB: Well, did it turn out OK?

BM: It turned out fine. And there was plenty food and it was well cooked ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Well do you—what was the, just to clarify, the building you mentioned? SP—

BM: SPJST is our—one of our, uh, service fraternal organization here for the Czechs. And it's our biggest hall for festivals. It holds, uh, I think, 600 people. So, most weddings are all—receptions are done there.

MB: Well, let's take a short break real quick. I'm going to pause this.

[Brief pause in recording.]

MB: OK, we're back from the short break and we're looking through some photos here. You mentioned in one of the photos, helped you get the pit back? It was stolen?

GM: Actually, we had a pit that was stolen about, what, four years ago? Four or five years ago. And we just came across it probably in the last three or four months.

BM: Gary recognized it.

GM: Gary saw it.

BM: Sitting out.

GM: And it had been through several hands since then. I don't know what the investigation has turned up, but uh—because of the pictures that we had, you know, we were able to get the pit back. We were able to prove that it was our pit.

MB: Well, so I'm looking at a photo of an old—I guess that's—is this a—

BM: Billboard.

MB: It is? OK. And it's, uh, I have a picture of it for the archive. But you mentioned those are actual—that's actual rope for the tie of the sausage.

GM: That's a huge maritime rope that he had found. Some type of ship, uh, ship rope.

MB: So the rope—the rope is hanging off of the billboard.

BM: It's where the sausage was tied.

MB: Yeah. It looks like the sausage has been tied with it.

BM: ***[Inaudible]***.

MB: Now this it the stuffer that—

BM: ***[Inaudible]***.

MB: Can you explain the tubs again?

BM: These—this is the different flavors. And you'll see a tag there, and it would denote what—what the ground product is that would be stuffed the next day. There's the meat—seasoned meat—going out the one stuffer into the second stuffer as he explained to you.

MB: OK. What we're looking at here is a picture of the—of the stuffer at—when do you think this was taken?

BM: Oh, this was a long—

GM: Grinders.

BM: Grinders, very long ago. This is the table where the meat would be placed with the seasoning on it, and then it would be transferred up there, and then it would go down to each one of those. And this is ready to be—these are tubs that have been ground and are ready to go in the stuffer.

MB: And what are the tags on them?

BM: The tags denote what flavor it is.

MB: OK.

BM: It would be the garlic, sage, or plain on these.

MB: Great. Well let me—

BM: But this is many years ago.

00:59:52

MB: Right. OK, well—

GM: ***[Inaudible]***

BM: ***[Inaudible]*** I thought maybe you had that one. I have one of them, and I just don't know if I—one of these days I'm going to rob all of yours ***[Laughs]***.

GM: That's the old mixer right there. What they—what they used to do is they would cut the—cut the meat. It would go into a mixer, and then you put the spices in there. That's what I was talking to you about last week, that that would be my job to mix the spices and the water into the mixture with the cubed-up meat. And the last thing that we would do every day was the sage. And that would just make me—smelling that concentrated sage would just make me sick. I could not eat the sage sausage for probably ten or fifteen years because—because of that.

MB: How much of the day did you have to do that?

GM: Well, we do that before we went to school. If there were shorthanded here, something like that, you know, we'd come over at four thirty and help grind sausage.

BM: Five usually. They told us, when we would ask them to get up and come, and they said, "Well not everybody has to get up at five and go in and help." And we said, "Well, you get to—we work from five to seven." And then I'd cook breakfast for them, and then they'd go to school. But, you know, so. But they worked during the summers. But they—we said they're on the payroll, so you get to work. So, it really was good training for them with them putting in sixteen so, or eighteen hours a day now. We used to put in that many, so. Welcome to the world when they get to work that long ***[Laughs]***. This used to be my job, right there. I would grind at five o'clock in the morning. Reverend Herman England was our pastor for thirty or forty years, uh, when he retired, worked for us. And he would mix it and he would feed it up there. I would send it down into the—stand there and send it down into here, feed it. So, I did that.

MB: Now how did you—is there a ladder back there?

BM: There's the stepstool—right there. A platform, you step up there and just watch it and feed it in. Oh yes, we—I told you I did everything expect bone out those Boston butts ***[Laughs]***. I couldn't do it.

MB: Well now, before—back then, did you guys slaughter your own meat?

BM: We bought, uh, always bought inspected meat. One time we had an episode when the shortage was so much that my father went to the auctions and bought, uh, hogs. And then we—our local slaughterhouse here slaughtered them because we couldn't get the pork. And that's the only one time in all of our history that we had to buy local to supply our pork needs.

MB: So, how did the meat—did the meat arrive pretty much all cut up into pieces or did you get full slices?

BM: Oh, no. We got Boston butts and you had to take the bone out, and then it was all cut up. And then you had, you know, they would mix it, you know, after it was cut into cubes.

GM: I think in the late seventies we started bringing in—it was late seventies or early eighties when they quit using the Boston butts and went to all-boneless meat.

BM: Yeah.

GM: So, that's the way it comes in now.

BM: That's one step they took out. And now they don't tie the sausage. That's another step they take out, so.

MB: How does it stay closed on the ends now?

GM: Well, what most of our product has gone from a ring sausage to a link. You know, we had, I don't know, it's probably been fifteen years or so that we started converting everything over. It seemed like more of the customers were wanting a link product versus the old ring. It just—it was already cut into a portion that they could use. When you had a ring, you could probably get four—four pretty good pieces out of it, but then it either had to be cut, um, it was just easier for the customers—more convenient—to use a link product.

BM: You can see this picture that I'm showing you here they're actually all tied. These are the old ones. We had a fire one time in our smokehouse, and it topped through there just like a forest fire. It burned all the strings and all the sausage came down. That's the only time we ever had one fire, and it cooked a lot of sausage.

MB: Yeah. Were you able to eat it ***[Laughs]***?

BM: No ***[Laughs]***. No, It was a total loss.

MB: So is that what you are talking about as the rings? Is—

GM: Yeah.

BM: These are the links.

GM: These are the rings like horseshoes.

BM: Uh—yeah.

MB: OK.

BM: Rings. Yeah, they're rings, and the little short ones are links. Is that the way you say it now? But these—and this big one—this is a ring.

MB: Right. OK, OK.

GM: We still do—we still do make some rings. And the way they're made now is, um, the section that would have been taken and tied at the end—put together and tied at the ends, they twist it into a long link, basically, and then loop it over the smoke sticks. And so, when they come through the smokehouse and they're ready to be cut, they're cut at that link, which is being hung on the stick like that, and then put back together in the package. Both ends are sealed just like this because of the links are twisted at the ends.

BM: That's not it there.

GM: No.

BM: No.

GM: Well, those are rings. It would be the same—basically the same thing. And they're put in the package, and it, you know, it looks like—just like the rings did.

BM: It appears that it's tied and it's actually not.

GM: Nobody—nobody ties them any more.

BM: No.

GM: I mean, you know, maybe some small custom markets, things like that but they don't do it anymore.

BM: We tried actually a staple did we not? And it—that was a disaster.

GM: That was not—that was not a good idea.

BM: It was a disaster.

MB: I guess people that probably make it at home still tie them. That's probably about it.

BM: It's too labor intensive. Sausage making was terribly labor intensive.

MB: Well, I'm out of questions at the moment. Did you guys have anything else you wanted to add that you thought about maybe in the break? No?

BM: Didn't think of anything.

GM: Not that I can think of.

BM: We've got distracted there with our cute visitor [a little girl who came into the market] ***[Laughs]***.

MB: Well, I really appreciate you guys taking the time to talk to me. It's been a great interview. I will get you a copy of this stuff as soon as I can, but I do want to thank you. I really appreciate it. So, we're going to go ahead and close it now.

BM: OK. Thank you.

GM: Thanks.

[END] **01:06:15**