



Robert Jason Gross
Pat's Snack Bar

* * *

Date: November 1, 2016
Location: Manchester, Kentucky
Interviewer: Sara Wood
Transcription: Dana Bialek
Length: Forty-Six Minutes
Project: Kentucky Chili Bun

[00:00:00.00]

Jason Gross: This should be probably our slow time of the day.

Sara Wood: And I talked to Charles. He's going to come over at 3:45. And then Johnny usually comes around 4:30?

JG: Let's see, well, no, he'll be here probably about the same time that Charles gets here. He got here yesterday about twenty minutes 'til four.

SW: Does he usually have a few minutes to talk before?

JG: Yeah. He usually gets here about forty five minutes or an hour before its time for him to start work and sits around, cuts up.

SW: Cool. Alright. And will you just tell me what you had for breakfast? This isn't going in the interview.

JG: A cheeseburger.

SW: Oh, yum. From here?

JG: I don't usually eat before I get here 'cause it makes me sleepy.

SW: Oh yeah? What time do you get here?

JG: Oh, I get here about, it just depends. Like this morning I got here about twenty minutes after ten. I've been here ever since, but I get off at four thirty.

SW: Cool. Your day is almost over, then.

JG: Um-hm. It's not too bad. Sometimes it can be stressful, but other times it's not. A lot of times it's not stressful.

SW: Do you have like a busy, busy day?

JG: Yeah.

SW: What day is that?

JG: Friday mornings.

SW: Why is that, do you think?

JG: Have no idea. That's the busiest day of the week. Actually, the busiest week of the month we have is the end of the month, the last week of the month. Yesterday it was so busy we couldn't even hold our head up. We couldn't cut onions, we couldn't cut tomatoes, we couldn't do nothing.

SW: Do you think it—that had nothing to do with Halloween, though, did it?

JG: It was just busy. The last week of the month is the busiest week, period.

SW: I wonder why that is?

JG: I have no idea. I think a lot of people that draws like social security gets their checks the last Wednesday of the month, or the 28th of the month.

SW: Okay.

JG: A lot of them got their check on Wednesday or Thursday, so this last few days has been crazy. They said Sunday was awful, and I used to work every Sunday.

SW: Well, here's my question. I mean, where else can people— are there other places to eat around here on Sunday?

JG: The Mexican restaurant is open, and I think that's about it. I'm not sure if Eileen's is open or not. Eileen's is like a little mom and pop restaurant up Garrard.

SW: Do they have chili buns there?

JG: I don't know. I know they fix dumplings and stuff like that. Pork chops.

SW: I'll have to go over there.

JG: Soup beans. It's right at a car lot up there. You can't miss it. If you know where Garrard is, you go through the underpass and then there's a road that turns to the right. That car lot right there, there's another building behind it, and that's where the restaurant is.

SW: Okay, I need to check that out. I'm obsessed with mom and pop places that are still open.

JG: She's been in business about four or five years, I guess. And she runs a little clothing store out there on the other side of Burger King.

SW: Oh, wow, she's busy. And that's Eileen?

JG: Um-hm. Her name's Eileen. She's a good woman.

SW: Did she grow up here?

JG: Yeah, she grew up on Big Creek. Yeah, she's a pretty good woman. She always tries to get me to come work for her, and I say, well, if you can pay me what I make at Pat's I'll come work for you. And she asked me what it was, she said, I can't do that. I said, well, I can't come, Eileen.

SW: So I'm going to start rolling, Jason. Are you ready?

JG: Yeah.

SW: And for starters, I normally ask people to tell me their full name and where we are right now and what you do here. Kind of like introduce yourself.

[00:03:48.23]

JG: Hi, my name's Robert J. Gross. I'm from Manchester, Kentucky, and I work at Pat's Snack Bar. And I'm the cook.

SW: And how long have you worked here?

JG: This time, I've worked here about nine months. The time before I worked here like a year and a half. Went and got my CDLs, thought it was better, I was doing a lot better, and then I wasn't home as much as I'd like to be. So I quit and came back.

SW: And that was— you were driving a truck?

JG: Uh huh.

[00:04:12.06]

SW: That seems like a really lonely job to have.

JG: It really is. Really it is. When you are out on the road for three and four months at a time, you don't never get to see your home state, much less your home county. Especially if you've got kids. I've got a kid. He's nine. He's my world. I went nine months, didn't get a phone call, didn't get to talk to him, didn't get to see him. It's 'cause of the road life. Semi, it's good money, good experience— I've seen forty-six out of forty-eight lower states. But, other than that, I missed home.

SW: I can't imagine.

JG: It's not too bad. Then I went to work for a utility service company last year. Went to Miami, Key West— worked down there for a couple of months, came back, then started here when I came back. And I've been here ever since.

SW: And what's your son's name?

[00:05:04.29]

JG: My son's name is Jason Brian Gross. He goes to OBI. He's pretty smart.

SW: What's OBI?

JG: It's Oneida Baptist Institute. It's like a private school. They teach from kindergarten all the way up to twelfth grade. If you want to, you can pay to live there, but if you live in Oneida, you go for free. So he goes free. He lives in Oneida.

SW: How far is that from here?

JG: About seventeen miles. Give or take. But it's still in Clay County. But it's still about seventeen miles give or take.

SW: And so you go by Jason?

JG: Yeah, I go by Jason.

SW: Does he go by Jason?

JG: He goes by Brian. He goes by Brian. He knows French, Spanish, he's nine. Yeah, he's really smart. I was kind of proud of him. But other than that, this is a real nice place to work. My bosses are really cool— one of the coolest bosses that I have ever had. You know, they don't ask too much of us, as long as we do our job we don't hear no, nothing from them. [00:06:07.22] As long as we keep everything straight, keep everything running, keep the customers happy, they're happy. So that makes us happy.

SW: And Jason, when I first visited here, you were telling me the story about your great-grandfather? Can you tell me his name and how he is related to this place?

[00:06:23.26]

JG: His name is James Cottrell. He's from Virginia, originally. He was a travelling preacher and happened to travel to Clay County. And he started working for a man named General Patton at a little hot dog stand out there where Burger King is now. When General Patton went out of business, he went to work for Pat down here under the old bank, which was called The Hole. That was the game room at the time. He racked pool there until they built this

place in 1950. Him and my grandfather, which is his son, helped build this place with Pat and his brother Clyde in 1950. They say it took them about two years to build it. 1952 they opened this as a furniture store slash pool hall slash snack bar. The snack bar was right here where the patio is. [00:07:18.13] This was the pool hall and the furniture store was over there in the stairs. And he worked here from 1952 in this building til the day he died in 1987 and everybody that I have talked to or that has asked me how my grandpa was doing, always said my great-grandpa Preacher was one of the finest people that you would ever meet. I really don't remember much about him. I was seven when he died, and now I am thirty-six, thirty-seven at the end of this month. But what I do remember of him, he was a good man. They said he was kind of ornery and mean, but all in all they said he was a good man, and he worked here for a long time.

[00:08:02.07] Him and Pat had a special relationship. Pat would go get him for work every morning about nine o'clock and bring him home at night at twelve o'clock. He done that for thirty-five years.

[00:08:12.28]

SW: Nine in the morning?

JG: Nine in the morning 'til midnight— sometimes later. Just depends how Pappy felt. If he felt like racking past twelve, Pat would stay open past twelve. On the weekends, they said— My mother grew up in here. Her mother used to bring her here when she was a little girl. My dad grew up here. He grew up across the river. My dad grew up here, my uncles grew up here, my grandpa grew up here, I've grew up here. My whole family has grew up coming to Pat's. I've known nothing else for thirty-seven years but Pat's Snack Bar. You know, it's kind of an honor for me to come and work here, you know, kind of following my great-grandfather's footsteps. It's been a good experience. We have live bands and stuff on Fridays and Saturdays and we do

different things throughout the week like Wednesday and Thursday we have corn-hole on Wednesdays and open mic on Thursdays and Sundays we have the football games on all day.

[00:09:13.22] So I mean, it's not a bad atmosphere. It's a really good atmosphere to come and eat. If you have never been here, please come and join us. We're happy to have you. And we will give you a big Pat's hello. We will say, "Welcome to Pat's" as you walk through the door.

[00:09:28.26]

SW: Can I ask you just two more questions?

JG: Yeah.

SW: What was your grandfather's name and what was your dad's name?

JG: My great-grandfather? The one that worked here? His son?

SW: His son, yes.

JG: His name is Charles Edward Cottrell. Everybody calls him Strawberry. There's a little story behind how he got his nickname. His dad and his mom caught him in the root cellar eating all of the strawberries. So that's how he got his nickname, Strawberry. That's what everybody's called him ever since he was seven years old. He's seventy-eight. His dad died when he was eighty-two. He raked pool here for thirty five plus years. Probably longer than that. I mean that's all I know about this building. Maybe the other building— four or five years down there.

[00:10:11.04] But I know of this building thirty-five years, from [19]52 to [19]87. And his mom was ninety two or ninety three when she died, and his great grandma was 112. Yeah, his older sister, I think when she died she was eighty eight. So he's going to live a long life. He can still get around. He still hunts, fishes, deer hunts, fox hunts, fools with dogs. Just whatever he can do outside. I told him, I said, One of these days, old man, I'm going to find you in the yard. You're

gonna be dead, but I will find you in the yard. He says, I'll be happy. I said, Well, as long as you're happy, that's all that matters.

SW: Does he tell you stories of this place?

[00:11:00.09]

JG: Yeah, he's told me all kinds of stories. He won't really go into detail because that brings back a lot of memories of it. And he misses his dad and his mom really bad. Which I can't blame him. It holds a lot of memories for everybody in Clay County. And surrounding counties. And we have had people from New York, Illinois, Florida, Tennessee, Indiana, Michigan, California, you name it, we've had 'em here at Pat's over the sixty-some odd years it has been up and running. I mean, we used to mail burgers to New York to this certain person overnight. We would put the patty in one box and the buns and the rest of the fixings in the other. Mail it to her overnight, and she'd call us the next day and tell us that she got it.

[00:11:49.04]

SW: So that's something that I want to ask you. I came here for the chili bun story. But can you talk a little bit about the chili buns and then I'll ask you about the hamburgers. Because you guy, I know the hamburgers are—

[00:11:59.16] J

G: Yeah, Pat made his own recipe with the chili. I'm not sure exactly what he put in it, but we are pretty close to what he put in it. We still make it the same way, still with the same recipe. There might be one or two things in there that's different, but all in all it pretty much still tastes the same. When he started he did strictly cheeseburgers, hamburgers, chili buns and ham and cheese. With chips, and you know, a drink— soda or water or whatever. Milk, he used to serve milk. He used to have milk in the little bitty half pint boxes and the pint bottles. And he

was a good old man, Pat was. He was real kind and humble. Never had a harsh word to say about nobody. His recipe and the recipe that we do now is somewhat similar but different in its own ways. But it still sort of tastes the same. Now the cheeseburgers and the hamburgers on the other hand, they're not made with soy, they are not made like McDonald's or Wendy's or any other fast food restaurant out there. [00:13:08.15] We make ours out of ground beef and ground chuck. We still have the old patty that Pat had- it's still patting meat here today. It is probably sixty plus years old. We don't know. We still pat it the same way Pat did, one patty at a time. We will sell on an average day from anywhere from 250 burgers - just burgers, not including ham and cheese, chicken, hot dogs, chili buns or nothing else like that, just burgers itself - 250 to 300 on an average day.

SW: That is like a weekday? That's not even like a weekend?

JG: No. That's just an average day. We've already went through two pans of meat - they hold seventy per pan. That's 140. And the day's just started.

[00:14:01.11]

SW: Is that the big seller here?

JG: Yeah, that and ham and cheese and hot dogs. That's our main seller. Later on, we've just had fries, chicken wings, grilled chicken, crispy chicken, fried mushrooms, fried pickles, jalapeno poppers, and tenderloins for four years. Since Charles took it over.

SW: Who had it before Charles?

JG: Pat. Or Johnny. Johnny had it before Charles. So, it went from, when Pat died, he left it to the woman who had been here working with him for fifty years.

SW: Do you remember her name?

JG: Juanita. But I can't think of her last name. Everybody just called her Juanita. She worked here right up until the day she died.

SW: How old was she?

[00:14:52.23]

JG: She was seventies. Late seventies or early eighties. And Pat was in his late eighties when he died. Early nineties. Pat's only been dead I'm gonna to say, about five to six years. They died thirteen days apart. Pat died, then Juanita died of cancer. She left it to her girl Pam. Pam ran it for about a year, year and a half, and then she left it to Johnny. Johnny ran it for about a year and then Charles wanted to come in and say, "Hey, if you let me come in we'll be partners, we'll remodel, we'll start all back over." So, in 2012 in February they shut the doors to remodel.

[00:15:39.11] May the thirtieth or the thirty-first of 2012 they reopened under new ownership and a new look. This year, three and a half years later, was the addition of the bar, which was the old pool room. It's been open since February of this year, maybe the beginning or the end of February. It's been open seven, eight months. The patio is now where the old Pat's Snack Bar was. It was added mid-June, late-June, early July, something like that. For smokers. 'Cause a lot of smokers— I smoke— there's a lot of smokers that come here, and they were all like we don't need to stand in the rain outside of the building. It makes it look bad for customers for customers to come in and see people standing outside smoking. So Charles went ahead and built the patio.

[00:16:40.11] Now out there we have corn-hole tournaments. He's gonna do beer pong, he's going to do darts, I don't know what else he has got planned. He just kind of pops it up on us here and there, but it's a really nice atmosphere. Kids oriented— kids are welcome, even though there's a bar. Kids are welcome, they're just not allowed in the bar. Unless, you know, it is okay

with the owner. If it's alright with the owner, you won't ever hear us say a word. There's kids come all the time.

[00:17:13.04]

SW: Now do you know from when your great-grandfather and grandfather were here, 'cause I know that pool halls had a reputation of a lot of women didn't go there, there was mostly dudes.

JG: Yeah, there was no women allowed in the pool hall. It was no women beyond that door. That's the original door that entered the pool hall right there. They just kind of fancied it up a little. Put a new door in. But that was our original. Actually the storage room back here is all original. It is every bit original. Original color, original flooring, original ceiling. This is the original ceiling. That's original ceiling, they just painted it black. Original walls—I think they redid them a little bit. They made them a little better, took a few things out that was in here. Like there was two stand up urinals over there in the corners. They took those out and done away with them. There was benches along the walls on each side. Up one side and down the other where guys would sit and smoke and play pool and argue and fuss and fight over who was winning the pool game and stuff like that. [00:18:26.17] My uncles were raised here. They played a lot of pool in here. My grandfather was here. My great-grandfather racked the pool. Sometimes my grandfather would rack when Pappy wasn't feeling up for it. So he would come over here and rack in his place.

[00:18:39.20]

SW: What does that mean, to rack?

JG: Just rack the pool balls. Just rack them up for the game. Back then it was ten cents a game or a nickel a game. 1952 to 1987, I wouldn't even know where to start to guess exactly how many games of pool he racked. I had a guy guess the other day. He said, If I was guessing in

Preacher's thirty-five years in this building, probably 10,000,000. He racked probably 10,000,000 games. Yes. Then they went, after Pappy died and they shut the pool room down for a while because nobody could get nobody trustworthy to come in here and rack and give him the money. [00:19:22.29] And then he got Johnny to come in. This is how Johnny got his start. Johnny started racking in here when we was just a little boy for my great-grandfather. And then Johnny was working two jobs— he was trying to rack pool here of a evening and work at the high school as a janitor of a morning. And it just got to where it was too much and he finally quit the janitor job and came here full time and just started running the pool hall. And then it was back up and going. They said in the [19]60s, [19]70s, and [19]80s, they said if you lived outside of Manchester, that Pat's was the place to go to. This is where everybody come to in town when they came to town. This is where everybody hung out, this is where everybody eat, this is where everybody played pool or cards or darts or whatever they done back then. [00:20:13.17] Which I was born in the late [19]70s, so I really don't know much about the [19]60s and the [19]70s. Just what my grandpa tells me, and mom and my dad. But other than that, there used to be rough times here is what my uncle said. He said there was probably more fights than there was anything else, but all in all the next day everybody was still friends. It's a great atmosphere. It's good food.

[00:20:39.09]

SW: Do you know how Pat got the recipe for the chili?

JG: I have no idea. I really don't know. That is something you would have to ask Johnny. Johnny would probably know that.

SW: And Jason, I wonder, just to indulge the people who aren't familiar with chili buns, because I feel like it's an eastern Kentucky thing— how would you describe a chili bun to folks who haven't had one before?

[00:21:01.19]

JG: Well, It's kind of a naked hot dog, I would say. Or just a hot dog without the wiener in it. I like chili buns. I don't care too much about hot dogs with chili on it. I just don't care too much about the hot dog meat. A lot of people just come for the chili, chili on the bun. They really don't want the hot dog in it. You know you'll have some people that want the hot dog or something like that. But a lot of people— nine times out of ten— we sell more chili buns than we do hot dogs because people just love the chili. I put a few things in my chili that I don't tell the other ones, so other than that.

[00:21:45.24]

SW: This is something I wanted to ask you 'cause I have heard this. If somebody orders a hot dog here, is that a hot dog with chili on it automatically?

JG: No, It's just a plain hot dog. See we have plain hot dogs. Then we have hot dogs with chili. Then we have hot dogs with everything. Everything consists of the wiener, chili, onions, and mustard. You can add cheese if you want cheese. Or you've got a chili bun with everything, which is chili, onions, and mustard. Or you can add cheese with chili, onions, mustard, and cheese. Which is still really good, either way. We have chili cheese fries, which we make out of the chili. We used to have chili cheese nachos— chili, chips, and cheese— I think is what we called it. [00:22:30.00] It was good but it didn't really sell, so we took it off of the menu. There was a lot more stuff on the menu that he took off because it really didn't sell. Oh and rib eyes. We didn't have ribeyes either and we got ribeyes, too. That's one thing I forgot to mention. Let

me see what else. I think that's it. Onion rings. And bacon- we just started bacon I'm going to say about three or four months ago.

SW: Do you put it on the cheeseburgers?

[00:22:58.11]

JG: Anything you want it on: cheeseburger, hamburger, chicken, rib eyes, ham, chili cheese fries with bacon's really good. Which, that's a new item. There's another new item, too. I think the jalapeno poppers. I think that we forgot to order those last week. We still got 'em. They are really good, if you like jalapenos.

[00:23:23.09]

SW: Do you happen to know where chili buns came from?

JG: I have no idea. I been eating them since I was a little boy. That's all I ate. I never would eat hot dog wiener, I would just want chili on the bun. I think just chili and bread, it's just good. There is just nothing like it. The wiener kinda, I guess you would say, hides the taste of the chili. Kinda muffles the real taste, on how it really tastes. But other than that, it is really good.

SW: Now when I say chili to people, they think like a bowl of chili. But I am not asking you to give away any recipes, 'cause we don't ask people to do that. But will you describe the chili that y'all put on the bun here?

[00:24:14.13]

JG: It's made out of - I could give you part of the recipe and I could leave some of it out. We don't brown our meat, we cook it all in the pot. We cook it in the steam table. It cooks for three hours before we add everything else. We make sure the meat's done. And then we strain and the grease off of it and all the water and all of the fat that comes out of the meat. And then after that, we add our ketchup and barbeque sauce and chili powder. I would tell you more, but—

SW: No need.

JG: We have got to have some secrets.

SW: I understand— recipes are highly guarded. So it's got a little tang. It's like spicy? It's got a little kick to it?

[00:24:54.25]

JG: It could have, or it could taste sweet, or it could taste more like just like regular chili in a bowl. Just depends on who makes it that day because we have three of us that makes it: me, Travis, and Johnny. Johnny makes it different than Travis. Travis makes it different than I do. I make it different than both of the other boys. Which I put a few more things in mine that they don't put in theirs. It don't make it hot, it don't make it spicy, it just adds a little bit more flavor to the chili. Which, Johnny made the chili yesterday and it is pretty good. I think Travis has a pot on right now, I'm not sure. But if not, I'd say he will probably make one before the day's out.

SW: How do you guys do that? Do you have to make the chili the night before to kind of keep up?

[00:25:48.00]

JG: Sometimes. Like this pot of chili was full— we made it yesterday. We had a half of a pot left over from the day before. So I told Trav, I said, "Whenever Tyler get the meat in we need to put on another pot of chili." He said, "Yeah, we are getting low." So whenever we get a half of pot or less, we try to put it on because we can basically judge on how long that chili is going to last us before we need the other. So if we have got a half of a pot, it will last until the chili gets done. And then we just rotate, throw the rest of that chili out and start with fresh. And then the next morning when me and Travis comes in to work, we automatically just put a pot on and have it ready. [00:26:30.28] Like if me and Travis is going to be gone for the weekend, we do two

pots on Friday. We'll cook a pot, put it in the refrigerator, and then cook another pot and leave it in the steam table. Until they run out of that one which, nine times out of ten, they will run out of the front pot. Everybody likes the chili. Everybody likes the cheeseburgers. Everybody likes just the atmosphere. We cut up, we don't sugar coat nothing, we tell you how it is. We run this place to the best of our ability. And I think we do a pretty good job. We always have repeat customers. We have regulars that come everyday—snow, rain, sleet, or shine—they are here. Everyday about the same time you can count on that person being here. [00:27:15.16] Like Skeeter, works at Flowers Bakery. Everyday, he gets off of work, he’s here. Or if he’s off work, if he don't have to work, he's here at about the same time every day. Between one-thirty and three, you can look for him ‘cause he will be here. Tony, he’ll be here, every day, same time between twelve-thirty and two o'clock. Same order every day.

SW: What's his order?

[00:27:39.18]

JG: Cheeseburger plain and a bag of Grippos. And a lot of you people out there that don't know what Grippos are, you’re missing them. They are the best barbeque chip that was ever invented.

SW: Are they from Kentucky?

[00:27:51.14]

JG: No, they’re actually from Cincinnati.

SW: Is there a tie between here and Cincinnati? ‘Cause I have heard people talk about Cincinnati style chili. I know it’s close— but, actually, scrap that question. Jason, what I want to know is do you think there is something special about chili in eastern Kentucky?

[00:28:11.02]

JG: We make it different than everybody else. You know, people will brown their meat first. We don't. We cook everything in the pot right with the meat. We brown the meat first, after we brown the meat, we drain it, add everything else to it. Then cook it for another forty-five minutes or a hour. That makes chili good. If you really want to know the secret to chili, cut a lemon up, squeeze the juice in it. Let it cook twenty minutes after you do that. It gives it that sweet, sour—I don't know what word would describe that—succulent taste. That's what I put in it.

SW: Did your great-grandfather do that?

[00:28:59.06]

JG: Yeah. I got a few— My grandpa has the original recipe for the chili. It was Pat and my great-grandfather that came up with the recipe to the chili. I just kind of modified it a little because people likes that. People likes different tastes. And here in southeast Kentucky, we're a breed all on our own. We like different tastes. Like western Kentucky does their burgoo, we do our chili. We do our homemade soups, we do our burgers, ham and cheese. We do everything just a little bit different, but basically the same. We just add a little more to it.

SW: Why do you think that is? What do you think drives that?

JG: I don't know. I have always been like that. When somebody says, "This is how these people fix it here." I say, "Well, we're not these people." I say, "We live here, we don't live there. They can do their way and we'll do it our way." People are always like, "Well, we like that." We have repeat customers from Illinois. We have repeat customers from Minnesota. [00:30:08.29] I have a couple that drove down here just this past June from Michigan that were just motorcycling through the country. Heard that this was one of the best places to get a burger, they

came in. They've been back twice since June. This is just October. I had a guy drive eighteen hours from Chicago one morning, and he was here before I unlocked the door.

SW: Just waiting outside?

JG: Wanting some cheeseburgers. Said that he had a long drive and he was ready to eat. [00:30:47.03] I told him to come on in, give me ten minutes and I'll have you ready. There's some nice people comes here and then you know you got your troublemakers. We try not to have the troublemakers around. That's bad for business, bad for customers, bad for little children. We try to have a family-oriented atmosphere.

[00:31:09.07]

SW: Jason I wanted to ask you this because you grew up here and there is always is tendency of people who've never been here to make assumptions about people. I am wondering, from being in this place and being around all of the customers here and your experience in Manchester and Clay County, what do you love most about it here? What do you think is important for people who don't know this place to know about y'all?

JG: What I really love about Manchester is we live simple lives. I was raised not to live above my means. Which, what I mean by that is, don't live above my raising. [00:31:49.14] Like say I live and make an amount of money a week, don't try to live above that because you can't afford it. If you live a simple, easy, non-hectic, simple life here in Manchester and Clay County, is really, really fun.

SW: What is the driving industry here? Are there factories here?

[00:32:15.20]

JG: There is a couple of factories. And, actually, Charles is the son-in-law of the guy that owns the two factories here in Clay County. He also owns one in Jackson County. There were a

few more factories here. There was a retail outfitters and their was a textile. They went out of business. Retail Floors I think went out of business like, I want to say, two or three years ago. Textile, probably about ten to fifteen. Phillips Diversified has been open, I'm not sure, probably thirty or forty years, maybe longer. Which, that's one of the factories that we have here. Actually, it is both of the factories. We actually have a plywood factory that just came in on top of Elk Mountain, which is in Big Creek towards Leslie County. It's probably been open six months or a year. [00:33:18.11] But the thriving industry for Clay County was coal. Obama has took the coal out and it's causing a lot of coal miners to struggle.

[00:33:31.15]

SW: Can you describe what that looks like here? Like do you see some of the older miners come in? What does that look like to you?

JG: It is just hard everyday life of living in a small town in the mountains. We live at the foothills of the Appalachians. Like West Virginia has it worst than we do. The whole state thrived on coal. The whole state. I mean that put a lot of coal miners out of work, when they shut the mines down. My dad's a retired miner. He retired before Obama shut him down. And I mean, just barely before he shut them down. He worked there thirty some years in the mines. His dad before him was a miner. [00:34:16.20] His dad before him was a miner. And I'm not sure after that. But basically everybody in Manchester and surrounding areas, Leslie Country, Hazard, Harlan, Bell County, Breathitt County, all of those counties in here in southeast Kentucky were coal counties. That was their biggest industry: coal. That's what made their families money. When you take their families' work away from 'em, they starve. A lot of the coal miners had to resort to going to CDL training to get their CDLs to go out and get truck drivers jobs somewhere else after the coal mines kinda, you know. [00:35:09.24] There's a few coal mines here, but as

far as coal mines, how many is here, my dad worked here. He worked right across the river here and there was two coal mines over there. He worked there for fifteen years, they shut it down and moved it to Hazard. [00:35:26.26] Here in the last, I'd say—I'm going to say in the last six or seven years, that the coal industry here in Clay County has hit rock bottom. If you are a coal miner, you have to start looking for other work. And, I mean, you're not going to find other work where you're making the same amount of money you were making when you were a coal miner. You're going to have to work in restaurants, factories, work for yourself odd jobs, just different things to make ends meet. Afford what you need, not what you want. The necessities in life.

[00:36:14.08] Money is not a really big issue with me. As long as I've got a roof over my head, food in my refrigerator, and shoes on my feet, I'm happy. I don't have to have this big fancy life. I work at Pat's Snack Bar. Yes, I make pretty good money, but I live a simple life. Just like every other person in Clay County, Everybody here lives simple lives. [00:36:39.09] We're not like the big cities like Atlanta, Lexington, Cincinnati, Louisville, New York. We live simple lives. We don't try to live fast paced. We just live simple, slow lives.

[00:36:53.25]

SW: What would you want people in a fast city to know about a simple life. I mean, I think people say that, but a simple life is a pretty incredible life. One isn't better than the other, and I think when people say "simple lives" sometimes I think there's a stigma to that. I'm just curious about what you love most about it.

[00:37:12.21]

JG: What I love most is that I can walk out on my back porch— which is my deck of my house— and I am surrounded by nature. From one end to the other. That's a simple life. Not living in a concrete jungle as they call it. Not a man-made city. But don't take me wrong, I've

lived in big cities. Big cities are not for me. I'm a country boy. When you're a country boy, you'll always be a country boy, no matter if you live in Alaska, New York, California, Washington, Florida – you're still going to be a country boy at heart. You just live in a big city. And one of these days, you will always come back home. Always. [00:38:02.11] I left when I was eighteen and I came back home. I'm not going to leave anymore. Simple, slow, not fast paced. We do everything at our own pace. We don't get in a rush. That what's really, simple life, I think that's the meaning to a simple life. Don't live fast-paced, don't get in a hurry. Stop and smell the roses. If you ever get to Clay County, come and see us at Pat's. We will be glad to take care of you.

[00:38:35.20]

SW: I have one more question.

JG: Yes ma'am.

SW: This has been in your family for so long, what does it mean for you to be here? Do you feel attached to your great-grandfather even though you didn't really know him?

[00:38:46.02]

JG: Somewhat I do, and to me it's kind of an honor to be able to work somewhere where my great-grandfather made a living and raised nine children and three grandchildren. He worked here for thirty-five years at ten cents a game. He made ten cents a game off the billiards, the pool games. In his day, that was good money. Nowadays, ten cents won't even buy you a piece of bubble gum. But all of those memories- I can still remember what it smells like in here.

SW: Can you describe the smell?

[00:39:26.12]

JG: Musky, dark, smoky. I can still remember it. I can remember when I was five-years old just barely being able to see above the top of the table. And I can remember everybody saying, "Hey Preacher." That's what everybody called him. That was his nickname because he was the travelling preacher from Virginia. He would yell out, What do you want boys? Another game? Yeah, come and rack 'em! Well, he would get up, never would sit down. When Fridays and Saturdays would come, you would never see him on his tail. He was always running around the game room. Racking pool, taking guys money, breaking fights up, hitting somebody in the head with a pool stick because they wanted to start a fight. He wasn't a mean person, and by no means did he like to fight. But he didn't like to see nobody else fight. [00:40:24.13] He was a good man was what everybody else has told me. They said, If you have met one person that talks about him, you have met 'em all. Because nobody has bad word to say about him. They said he was a little mean at times, when you didn't pay him, and if you owed him, he never forgot it. But, all in all, he was a real good guy. I wish I'd a got to meet him, you know, talk to him a little bit. But, I'm just glad of what few memories I've got of him. I can remember when he died they had him in his living room in a casket. And we buried him up on the hill in 1987. [00:41:08.20] And he started working here in like 1949, [19]48, or something like that. That was when Pat first started the pool hall. Before he even started making burgers, he just had the game room by itself. And then he decided to make a restaurant and then Pappy told him, "Let's do it." So they built this building that's been here ever since. I think it's kind of— Manchester without Pat's is like Cincinnati without the Bengals or the Reds, or The University of Kentucky without the Wildcats. If you take Pat's away from Manchester, you just might as well not come here to visit. Because this is where everybody comes. This is where everybody wants to come. This is what

everybody's heard about. Well, where is this place at? Tell me how to get there. [00:42:02.17]

We have people come in that have never heard of us. And they are from a few counties away.

They still live in the state of Kentucky. Or they are from Tennessee. But they don't, have never heard of it. They say there are many duplicators, but there's only one original. And I think that we're the original.

[00:42:24.05]

SW: That's pretty neat that after all of this time to stay that way.

JG: We're pretty original. Even though we have upgraded and come to technology. But it's still Pat's. It's still— people say that the atmosphere has changed a little, but not much. The only thing they say they are really missing is a pool table. They want us to put pool tables.

SW: Do you think you all will go back to that?

[00:42:51.10]

JG: Maybe. I don't know. It's whatever Charles wants to do. If he wants pool tables, we'll have pool tables. If he don't want no pool tables than we may not ever get any. Which Johnny still has all the old board games. The old Pat's Snack Bar sign. My great-grandfather's coin changer that he packed on his hip for thirty-five years. He's still got all of that. Johnny has the original Pat's. The old grill, the sign, the coin changer. The board game that they played pool on. He has all of it. To me, Johnny is Pat's, Johnny represents Pat's.

[00:43:36.25]

SW: Are you close with Johnny?

[00:43:36.25]

JG: Yes, me and Johnny's pretty close. I'd rather go back to second shift and work with Johnny, but right now, we are kind of in a bind and don't have nobody to work first so that's why

I had to come to first. And I was the only person that could work first. I told him, I was like, "Yeah, I can do it until we find somebody." And he said, "That's fine." I said, "But please try to hurry." And he said, "Why? And I said, "Well I am losing like eight hours a week working first." And he said, " Well I can understand, man." And I said, "Well, get me back on nights, then." He's supposed to be hiring somebody, I don't know.

SW: I hope that's soon.

JG: Me too. I want to go back to nights so bad. I just miss the people that come in on the night shift. [00:44:17.15] You've got your different set of people that comes in through the day then of a night. They're totally different. You have, like, I guess you would call them the day-timers and the night-timers. Night-timers are the fun crowd. They're always cutting up, acting the fool. That's what we try to do. We try to cut up and act the fool with the customer and keep everybody smiling. That way you wanna come back. We can't be walking around here with a sad face all of the time, or you won't come back. That's not Pat's. We're Pat's. There's no other. We're it.

SW: Jason, I've asked you a ton of questions. Do you have anything else that you want to add that you think is important for people to know about this place that I didn't think to ask you? Or something else you want to add?

[00:45:13.16]

JG: About the only thing I can add is, if you've never been here, and you've never been to Clay County, come on up and try one of the burgers. We are number three in the state. I don't know what in the nation or the country or whatever, or the United States, but in the state of Kentucky we have the third best burger in the state. The other two are northern Kentucky ones. I'm not sure what the restaurants are called but they are up around Covington and Newport. But

we used to be the number one burger. I think they've have added a little more stuff to their burgers, but, we'll take number three.

SW: Thank you for doing this.

JG: You're welcome.