



Jean Anderson

Date: April 12, 2018

Location: Chapel Hill, North Carolina

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Transcription: Diana Dombrowski

Length: Two Hours and Twenty Seven Minutes

Project: Women Food Journalists Project

Annemarie N: Good afternoon. This is Annemarie Nichols recording for the Southern Foodways Alliance Women Food Journalists Project. It's Thursday, April 12, 2018, and I'm at the home of Jean Anderson. Would you begin by telling us what you do for a living?

Jean A: I'm a cookbook author/editor, food and travel writer/photographer.

Annemarie N: Let's talk a little bit about growing up in Raleigh.

Jean A: First of all, the Raleigh I grew up in was the size Chapel Hill is today – about 45,000 people, in other words a small city. There were few Yankees and because Mother was from Illinois and Daddy from Ohio I was known as "the little Yankee girl". They were both academics – my father a professor of plant physiology at NC State, my mother, a human physiologist and medical researcher. She did not work because Daddy — who was liberal in every other way — felt that a mother's place was in the home.

Mother was a good cook but she was an *Illinois* cook. Her party favorite, however, was Country Captain, a very Southern recipe she'd gotten from Colonel Harrelson's wife . . . Harrelson was the Chancellor at NC State. She'd make gallons of Country Captain and freeze to serve at dinner parties.

Mother welcomed me into her kitchen as soon as I could walk and taught me how to grease pans – and of course, lick bowls. When I was about four . . . before I could read anyway . . . I wanted to make my Illinois grandmother's soft ginger cake.

With Mama beside me, I measured everything, then arranged the ingredients in the order that they were to be added. After showing me how to set the oven temperature, Mama joined Daddy for a stroll around the yard. We had about three acres in West Raleigh . . . pure country back then.

Being impatient and eager to taste the ginger cake that I dearly loved, I baked the batter in ungreased muffin tins, shoved the oven temperature as high as it would go, popped the pans into the oven, and ran out to play. I was only four, remember. Before long smoke was pouring out of the house and Mother and Daddy raced into the kitchen. Fortunately the house didn't burn down. But I was banned from the kitchen. Mother explained that I'd been irresponsible and that until I learned to follow directions, I could not cook. Terrible punishment that lasted a few months . . . but it taught me a valuable lesson.

Soon I was growing my own vegetables. Daddy gave me a space where I could plant vegetables, and realizing that I would be fascinated by things that I could pull up like carrots and radishes, that's what we planted.

Then when I pulled up my radishes and carrots, I would try to figure out new ways to cook them. I remember once thinking, gee, I wonder if I can do something different with radish tops. I frizzled them in a skillet, and I thought they were terrible . . . today I might think them pretty good. I was always experimenting; always, always.

Both of my parents encouraged that, also my insatiable curiosity. I love learning new things, even to this day, and am grateful to them for that.

Daddy often took my brother Bob and me on botany collecting trips. He'd come to NC State way back in the 1920s . . . just an unmarried young Ph.D from Ohio State. Soon after he arrived, he and the Botany Department head, a guy named B.W. Wells, discovered Venus Fly Traps growing in eastern NC.

Annemarie N: Oh, really? Wow.

Jean A: When Bob and I were little, Daddy would always stop on drives to Carolina Beach at the place where he and Dr. Wells had found Venus Fly Traps. He'd lead us down into this awful swampy area and dig up a few to take home.

Daddy made a game of these collecting trips. I remember there was a place . . . I think it's now a state park . . . southwest of Raleigh but not very far. It was very hilly and hemlock trees grew there, which was rare. Daddy called that place "The Hemlocks" . . . and the name stuck.

Whenever Daddy took us there, he'd say, "Whoever finds the first ginger pig gets a dime" . . . "Whoever gets the first trailing arbutus gets a dime" . . . which to us was all the money in the world. We learned so much about botany on those collecting trips because Daddy was a natural born teacher. And so was Mother, for that matter.

Annemarie N: That's great.

Jean A: I now realize how blessed I am to have had such good parents.

Annemarie N: What were your mother and father's names?

Jean A: My father was Dr. Donald B.—as in Benton, related to Thomas Hart Benton—Anderson.

His final job was Vice President here at the University of North Carolina, working with Bill Friday. Mother's name was Marian March Johnson. When we visited my grandparents, a neighbor would come over to chat with Mother and sometimes bounce me on his knee. I had no idea who he was. So I asked Mother years later, and she said, "Oh, that was Adlai Stevenson."

While at *Ladies' Home Journal* [*LHJ*], I was assigned a big feature article on actress Greer Garson, I flew to LA, drove out to her Bel Air estate, and waited. She arrived late . . . breathless and apologetic. "I was just at a fundraiser for Adlai Stevenson," she explained.

"Oh" I said. "He used to bounce me on his knee when I was a little girl. He and my mother grew up together in Normal, Illinois.

"Your timing was a little off, dear," Garson quipped. A smart, classy lady. Of all the Hollywood stars I interviewed, she was a favorite. Another was Joan Fontaine, blazingly bright, an accomplished cook and friend who introduced me to sand dabs, a buttery sole-like Pacific fish as well as little-known LA restaurants. But I digress.

Annemarie N: No, that's great. You mention that your mother was an Illinois cook. What were some of the things she cooked?

Jean A: Lamb . . . lamb chops, roast leg of lamb, lamb stew, which none of my Raleigh friends ate, ever. One night, a grammar school girlfriend came home with me after school to play and stayed for dinner. Mama was cooking lamb chops, and my friend said, "Oh, Miz Anderson, that steak smells so good." Then at the dinner table, added, "Oh, Miz Anderson, that was just the best steak I ever ate."

My mother's reply . . . to my great embarrassment . . . "Not steak. Lamb chops."

My horrified friend cried, "But I never eat lamb!" and fled to the bathroom.

Annemarie N: Oh, no.

Jean A: Well, things have changed. What amazes me now is that Raleigh is bigger than Atlanta. I hear Raleigh people all the time on the TV, but I never hear the Raleigh accent . . . there are so few of us now. People from all over the world are attracted to this area because of the job opportunities.

Annemarie N: Definitely.

Jean A: But back to Mother's cooking. She made yeast bread . . . never or biscuits or cornbread.

Never cooked pork or sausage though she did bake big Hormel hams. The vegetables we ate

were considered weird . . . globe artichokes . . . broccoli . . . cauliflower . . . parsnips, which I hated. We just didn't eat what Southerners were eating . . . collards, kale, turnip greens, black-eyed peas, and so forth.

Daddy adored sweet corn . . . back then, nobody grew sweet corn, only field corn for animals. So Daddy paid a farmer just outside town to plant half an acre of Golden Bantam.

Whenever the farmer called to say, "It's pickin' time," Mother and I would put the big kettle on, and Daddy would race out to the farm and get a dozen ears or so.

The minute he got home, Bob and I would shuck the corn like mad. Mama'd throw the ears into boiling water, and cook them for, I don't know, maybe 10 minutes. Then we all sat at the table with gobs of butter, salt and pepper, and devoured ears and ears of sweet corn on-the-cob. The neighbors thought we were nuts.

Annemarie N: That sounds good. You mentioned, too, your fascination with Southern cooking as a young girl. Could you talk a bit about the women in Raleigh who inspired you?

Jean A: Well, a lot of them. But the most influential was Mrs. Franklin, a farm woman . . . really right out of the country . . . who moved around the corner from us. I would run over to her house after school and eat the lunch leftovers . . . things like corn pone and turnip greens. She showed me how to dip corn pone in pot-likker, and I thought, "Gee, this is really good."

She introduced me to fried pork chops, fried catfish, and fried chicken. Mama didn't fry chicken, she fricasseed it in the oven with gravy.

I'm trying to think what else . . . oh, yes, the lunches at Fred A. Olds grammar school. There were good black cooks in the kitchen each morning preparing lunch. My brother Bob used to joke that you could have black eyed peas with fatback, turnip greens with fatback,

collards with fatback. They also baked biscuits and cornbread, but what really got me . . . I had a terrible sweet tooth . . . was their brown sugar pie.

I got the recipe and made it at home but it was too sweet for everyone but me. Mother made very good lemon meringue pie., also a terrific angel food cake, but she never even tried the South's favorite -- pound cake. She also made an awful lot of gelatin salads, but everybody then was doing Jell-O this and Jell-O that, but these aren't Southern. They were Jell-O recipes.

Mama was a good cook, but not a very adventurous one. To be honest, I think she was annoyed that she couldn't work as a medical researcher . . . she had a Master's, and I think, most of a Ph.D. when she married.

My parents spent their early married years in Vienna, Austria, because my father was teaching at the university. Mama did pick up a few Viennese recipes from their landlady . . . Frau Berringer's *Wiener Goulash* (a rich beef stew) and *Wiener Schnitzel* became family favorites and remain mine to this day.

My brother was born in Vienna, I several years later in Raleigh. I liked Raleigh, had a lot of friends, but at that time it was fashionable to say, "Oh, I can't boil water," the suggestion being that there were cooks in the kitchen. And there usually were.

After graduating from Cornell, I got a job as an Assistant Home Agent in Iredell County west of Winston-Salem . . . Statesville's the county seat. Once again I was "the Yankee girl." Why had I gone to a Yankee college instead of majoring in home ec at WC (Women's College in Greensboro) like the other agents? Would the country people accept me? Another handicap: I'd grown up in Raleigh, not on a farm.

Once in Iredell County, I had no trouble at all, in fact learned so much from those farm women, much more than I ever could teach them, They introduced me to artichoke pickles and wild persimmon pudding, which I fell in love with immediately. After nine months in Iredell County, I was promoted into the Raleigh office, and named Women's Editor, a position created for me because while in Iredell County, I'd been free-lancing articles to various farm magazines.

As Women's Editor, I traveled all over the state covering 4-H and Home Demonstration events for newspapers and magazines, radio and TV shows. After two years, the *Raleigh Times* asked me to write a few food articles. I'd barely begun when my boss called me in . . . the extension food specialist felt that she should be writing for the paper, not me. I had to make a decision: leave Extension or go with the paper. I left Extension. Before long, I was not only the Women's Editor but also writing general front-page features.

At that point I decided to get a Master's at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York. . . *if* I could get in. Much to my surprise, I did get into this tough school . . . there were only 76 in our class, students from all over the world. By Thanksgiving, I was the class cook, preparing a turkey with all the trimmings . . . solo . . . for 27 classmates in an apartment two of the guys had rented..

Jean A: And then, the dean of the Columbia J-School asked me to cook for a big party he was having. Good practice for what I'd soon be doing at *LHJ*, not only staying late to cook for the editors-in-chief, but also at the Manhattan homes of other important editors. No overtime, no pay, and few thanks. The co-editors-in-chief, Bruce and Beatrice Blackmar Gould, had an apartment . . . allegedly illegal . . . on the top (31st) floor of the Radio City Music Hall building just down the hall from the test kitchen. They were in residence two nights a week,

and one of us test kitchen girls had to stay late . . . often very late . . . to cook their dinner and clean up afterwards. No overtime.

Because I had an advanced journalism degree and my picture had just appeared in *The New York Times*, the other test girls decided to sock it to me. So, my very first week at *LHJ* I was on "dinner duty."

That night I was to prepare veal scaloppine, blanched asparagus spears with drawn butter, and I can't remember the dessert . . . usually some make-ahead in the fridge. Dinner would follow a lengthy cocktail hour, so I was to begin cooking only when little Annie, one of the maids, came running down the hall and announced, "They're ready."

I was ready and began browning the scaloppine in my test kitchen unit . . . **one** of four. On the top of my range, there were three copper shakers . . . salt, pepper, and confectioners' sugar. The scaloppine looked gorgeous and smelled divine, so I grabbed a shaker . . . uh, oh . . . confectioners' sugar. Holding the shaker mid-air, I hesitated. Was a bad dinner a firing offense? If so, I didn't want to work here. I sugared the scaloppine.

The next morning, the food editor came in and said, "Jean, would you please come to my office?" She closed the door, and I thought, "Oh, my God, it is a firing offense. Holding a hand-written note from Mrs. Gould, she began reading:

"Whoever cooked for us last night is never to cook for us again." Hooray! Shades of that old axiom "If you're too good at typing, you'll always be a secretary." The test girls were livid. Their way to get ahead was through Mrs. Gould's stomach.

Annemarie N: I love these stories. But I want to backtrack and ask about the things you learned as a home demonstration agent and how they impacted you as a journalist.

Jean A: My job was to help 4-H Club girls with their cooking, their canning and sewing. I met their mothers, who introduced to Southern foods I did not know, and with my nose for news, I was constantly sniffing out article ideas. We agents were deeply involved with the county and state fairs . . . I not only judged cakes and pies but also canned fruits and vegetables, pickles and relishes, deepening my knowledge of Southern food. It wasn't all fat back and collard greens.

As Women's Editor, I ate in the homes of mountain people and coastal people and dozens of places in between. I was active in Farm and Home Week held every year at NC State in Raleigh. Another broadening experience.

In Iredell County, we made a huge pitch to get women to grow herbs as well as fruits and vegetables they hadn't considered. For the first time, people were buying home freezers, so it was important to teach them how to freeze what they'd grown as well as the nutritional superiority of frozen foods..

Annemarie N: That's really interesting. I want to talk, too, about your education, and I was wondering what made you choose Cornell for Food and Nutrition?

Jean A: Because Cornell was number one. Also because Daddy wanted me to spend time in another part of the country. Cornell was terribly expensive, so I worked summers at the NC Revenue Department, addressing . . . typing . . . envelopes for the next year's tax forms. I got a \$125 a month.. I paid my way through Columbia, however . . . sold my car, then at \$50 a pop wrote several articles a month for the Raleigh news- paper . . . restaurant reviews, pieces about Tar Heels who'd made it in New York

Annemarie N: After you graduated number one at Columbia, you got your Pulitzer?

Jean A: A Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship, the J-School's top honor. It gave me a year abroad . . . I'm one of the few women to win one. *LHJ* added a condition: They would give me year off *if* I'd be on call to assist any senior editor working abroad.

I flew to Paris . . . 17 hours pre-jet . . . and I remember circling over Orly Airport at dawn and seeing French chateaux . . . thrilling! Friends had recommended cheap places to stay . . . mostly pensions . . . in Paris, Rome, wherever I was headed. I also had a list of contacts . . . relatives and friends of friends.

In Paris, I spent a week at a small, family-owned hotel behind the Bibliothèque Nationale that served home-cooked dinners. I had an under-the-eaves room . . . very French with cabbage wallpaper, but it had a private bath.

With map, camera, and high-school French. I wandered all over Paris . . . saw the Eiffel Tower . . . Louvre . . . Left Bank . . . Notre Dame . . . Montmartre, lunching at bistros. I dined at Le Grande Véfour . . . *the* restaurant then . . . and interviewed owner Raymond Oliver. I prowled Les Halles, Paris's massive food market.

Food was forever on my mind . . . I ate in restaurants plain and fancy, "cracking" recipes as I'd learned to do at *LHJ*, and scribbling notes for future articles.

From Paris I followed the itinerary I'd so carefully planned, hopping aboard trains and occasionally a plane: **Brussels** (for Expo and Belgian waffles but I fell in love with Belgian chocolate) . . . **Amsterdam** (for *rijstaffel* [multi-course Indonesian rice table], Rembrandt, and Van Gogh) . . . **Copenhagen** (for smorgasbord, The Little Mermaid, and modern design) . . . **Nuremburg** (for Black Forest Cake and *The Nutcracker*, my favorite children's book) . . . **Vienna** (to follow in my parents' footsteps to Demel for coffee and pastries, then the baroque Schönbrunn Palace and terraced gardens) . . . **Zurich** (for fondue, chocolate, and a new watch) . . . **Rome** (for

the Colosseum, Roman Forum, and Fettuccine Alfredo) . . . **Florence** (for the Ponte Vecchio, Michelangelo's David, and gelato) . . . **Venice** (for the Rialto Market, St. Mark's Square, and streets of water) . . . **Naples** (for pizza, Pompeii, and the Amalfi Drive) . . . then back to **Paris** to assist *LHJ's* Executive Editor (EE) and her 10-year-old son.

I was both baby-sitter and social secretary, inviting prominent French authors to chat with our EE at the cocktail parties I organized.

Annemarie N: It seems that being an Assistant Food Editor could be a little tense. What was your relationship with your colleagues?.

Jean A: Very competitive. When I applied for a job at *LHJ*, I was interviewed by the Food Editor, the Test Kitchen Director . . . who'd gone to Syracuse, Cornell's vicious rival . . . and finally, the Executive Editor.

" Why do you want to work here?" the Test Kitchen Director began.

"I'd like to write about food."

"Forget it! You will never will never write a word here."

For my interview with the Executive Editor, I took a portfolio of articles I'd written for the *Raleigh Times*, *Southern Living*, and various other magazines. She asked about my family, what my father did, what interested me. And I got the job. I was also offered a job at *Good Housekeeping*, but Hearst was stingy . . . *LHJ* offered me \$125 a week, *Good House* \$100. I also had an ulterior motive for going with *LHJ*. One of its sister magazines was *Holiday* . . . oh, to write some of its travel articles.

On my first day as an Assistant Food Editor, I asked for a typewriter.

"You can't have a typewriter," the Test Kitchen Director said. So I brought my little portable from home. I had no desk and sat at a waist-high shelf in the test kitchen.

One day the office manager sailed in for morning coffee and did a double-take.

"Where'd you get that typewriter?"

"It's mine."

"You mean you own it? Why didn't you ask for a typewriter?"

"I was told I couldn't have one."

"Of course you can have a typewriter." Within 10 minutes, I had an IBM Selectric. To get even, the Test Kitchen Director refused to OK any of my tested, typed recipes until they were letter-perfect. No typos.

One day she confronted me: "OK, what's junket?" I thought, oh, come on!

But said, "It's an enzyme produced in a cow's stomach that can coagulate milk. We use it to set chocolate pudding, butterscotch pudding, and vanilla pudding."

She stomped away. Yes, working at big women's magazines was – and still can be -- vicious. One unstable young recipe tester took to throwing knives.

Annemarie N: Oh, goodness.

Jean A: Then a young NC home ec grad joined the staff. We got along like a house afire . . . we talked the same language. Otherwise, it was dog-eat-dog at LHJ . . . fierce.

Another thing . . . we test girls had to cook lunch for all of the VIP guests . . . the executive dining room adjoined our kitchen. We cooked for Isak Dinesen, we cooked for Daphne du Maurier, we cooked for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

LHJ discovered Dinesen and du Maurier and I credit the Goulds for that. Dinesen was ancient then, skeletal . . . sipping Dom Perignon, she'd eat three Thompson seed-less grapes . . . peeled . . . and three oysters on-the-half-shell. Nothing more.

One day Gloria Swanson breezed into the kitchen . . . on some weird grain diet, she came to see if I was following directions, and asked, "There are no bugs in there?"

"No, I'm sure there aren't. The grains have been pasteurized."

"Well, it doesn't hurt to kill 'em twice."

These are the kinds of experiences I had at LHJ. People keep saying, "Gosh, you should write your memoir" . . . I'd like to but who would publish it? I'm not a celebrity. The book business is in a sorry state . . . small publishers have been devoured by big ones, and these have been swallowed by media conglomerates . . . book people are being replaced by business whizzes, who want to make as much money as fast as possible. Several of my New York editors have ghosted cook-books for "authors" who know little or nothing about food. Celebrity sells . . . there's built-in publicity so there's no need for expensive book tours.

The salvation for food journalists are the university presses . . . they want bona fide authors. UNC Press is publishing my new cookbook, *From a Potter's Oven*.

Annemarie N: Once you developed a stronger relationship with LHJ's Executive Editor, did you write other feature articles or still focus on food?

Jean A: Still food. But LHJ began losing money, the Goulds were fired, and a new young editor was brought in . . . Curtiss Anderson (no relation) . . . who'd been a top editor at *Better Homes & Gardens* in Des Moines, Iowa. Curt promoted me to Copy Director, which meant writing or rewriting all departmental stuff . . . homemaking, beauty, fashion, and interior decoration as well as food. Excellent experience!

The training I got at LHJ was invaluable, Assigned a food article, I did it all . . . interviews . . . recipe testing . . . writing. Next step? Photographing the most alluring recipes. That meant propping (accessorizing) each picture . . . prepping the food using LHJ tips for

making it beautiful . . . glossing meats and vegetables with vegetable oil, fruits with light corn syrup. *LHJ* taught me styling techniques I use to this day.

Take the Thanksgiving turkey. To prep it for a close-up, you roast it at 400° F. for only 35 to 40 minutes . . . just until the skin tightens. Then you pull it out of the oven and "brown" it with Kitchen Bouquet.

Annemarie N: That's crazy . . . really interesting . . . but I want to talk, too, about why you left *LHJ* to become a founding editor at *Venture: The Traveler's World*.

Jean A: *LHJ* was going down the tube and *Look* publisher Mike Cowles asked departing *LHJ* editor Curt Anderson to create a high-end travel magazine . . . he asked for my help.

Annemarie N: How did working as a travel journalist help you as a food journalist?

Jean A: Discovering new foods, new recipes is one of the great rewards of travel . . . every country has its specialties. We're familiar with Italian pasta, Yorkshire pudding, and Russian borscht. But what about Jordanian mezze, Indian tandoori, and Portuguese cataplana? It's exciting to taste them. My guide in India gave me a sheath of family recipes. One of my favorites is her curried cabbage . . . very fast, very good, very nutritious. I make it often.

Annemarie N: That's so interesting.

Jean A: The point is that wherever you go, you learn . . . broaden your knowledge of food. I visit home cooks as well as chefs, I tour farms and vineyards, food factories. I inter-view bakers, butchers, and confectioners because I want to understand what they do.

Annemarie N: That's great.

Jean A: It's very enriching.

Annemarie N: When you were a Contributing Editor at *Family Circle*, you had a column . . .

Jean A: Right . . . "America's Great Grass Roots Cooks" . . . When I suggested the idea to Art Hettich, one of the best editors I've ever worked with, he said, "Great! Let's do it!"

Annemarie N: What was the reception?

Jean A: Huge. People loved it. *Family Circle*, like many mass magazines, hired a company to rate and critique each issue. "Grass Roots" got high marks for years. The first woman I profiled was a farm woman living near Reedsville, NC. I got her name from the local Home Demonstration Agent . . . another advantage of my years in Extension.

To turn the *Family Circle* columns into a cookbook, I needed to add grass roots cooks in other areas. I spent a year on the road with a tape recorder interviewing good cooks all over the country . . . cooking with them. Back home, I transcribed miles of tape . . . tested recipes . . . and wrote. *The Grass Roots Cookbook* was very successful. I still get fan letters.

Annemarie N: It's a great book. I really enjoyed it . . . all of the women that you chose . . . pretty diverse . . . kind of cultural.

Jean A: I did that on purpose because America's a melting pot. And I wanted to reflect that by featuring Native American cooks . . . Black . . . Hispanic . . . Italian . . . Portuguese . . . Scandinavian . . . Cajun . . . Pennsylvania Dutch . . . Tex Mex . . . New England . . . **and** of course Southern.

Annemarie N: How did you choose these women? They're not well-known.

Jean A: No, they're not. I began with Extension . . . its network is vast. I'd pick a state, then call "Extension Central" and ask for the names of home agents in counties known for good cooks . . . blue ribbon winners. Then I'd phone those agents and ask them to recommend two or three of their county's best cooks and got what I wanted.

Annemarie N: That's so interesting . . . in the 1960s people were really thinking about French cooking, not about American regional cooking.

Jean A: 1970s. True, though Julia did swing went back to American cooking when her editor Judith Jones considered it the new trend. Judith was the one who found Edna Lewis, a Black Virginia woman cooking at Café Nicholson, a small restaurant on East 58th Street where chi-chi New York lunched . . . Truman Capote . . . Gloria Vanderbilt . . . *Vogue* Editor Diana Vreeland. Impressed by Edna's simple Southern recipes, Judith helped her write the cookbook that made her famous. I used to see Edna at the Union Square Market . . . swathed in African robes, she'd sweep in with her entourage . . . a very impressive woman.

I interviewed Judith for *Publishers Weekly*, the Bible of the publishing industry back when she was "the Queen of Cookbook Editors."

I also served on a cookbook panel with Judith and remember her saying , "If I read '*in a skillet, put*' one more time, I am going to scream." I couldn't agree more. It's shocking how few cookbook editors know good English.

There are fewer and fewer publishing houses today. Random House, now owned by the German conglomerate Bertelsmann, swallowed Doubleday and along with it, *The Doubleday Cookbook* . . . it sold millions . . . was named "Tastemaker Cookbook of the Year," yet the powers-who-be decided the book was too expensive to reprint. People love that book . . . I still get e-mails asking where they can buy it.

[**Annemarie N:** Can you talk about writing that cookbook?

Jean A: It's sort of funny how it happened. I worked on the *LHJ Cookbook*, which Doubleday published, and had to deal with the cookbook editor, a tiger of a woman . . . but the two of us got along OK.

Then my landlady in the Village, an American Indian, said, "We must write an Indian cookbook." I fired off a pitch to the Doubleday cookbook editor and in no time got a call from my agent, "Doubleday wants *The Art of American Indian Cooking*."

I wrote that book . . . my co-author, an Osage from Oklahoma, did a few little sketches, and opened her library to me. But I wrote that book and tested all the recipes . . . it's still in print after all these years.

Thanks to the Indian book, the Doubleday cookbook editor said, "You know, Jean, Doubleday would like to do a big, general cookbook, sort of like *Fannie Farmer* or *Joy of Cooking*, but it has to be different . . . we're talking 5,000 recipes and I think you're the one, maybe, who can do this . . ."

Wow! I asked Elaine Hanna, a former *LHJ* colleague, to help test those 5,000 recipes. We quit our jobs and worked 10 long years on *The Doubleday Cookbook*. Halfway through, we got a new editor . . . an archaeologist with no interest in food, who shoved our manuscript on a shelf in some Doubleday closet. We were paid in full, but we wanted the book to be printed.

Fortunately, I'd begun reviewing candidates for Doubleday's Cook Book Guild . . . its director Ruth Buchan, a force at Doubleday, had agreed to offer *The Doubleday Cookbook* as a featured Guild selection. So I began inviting her to dinners that show-cased our carefully tested manuscript recipes. After six or seven dinners, she said, "I've got to have a look at that manuscript."

Ruth went to bat for us and Doubleday not only published the book but went all out for promotion . . . sent us all over the country doing radio and television shows, newspaper and magazine interviews . . . the works . . . and we got raves.

"Move over, *Joy of Cooking*" . . . that was an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* headline.

We were a massive hit . . . and sold . . . I don't know . . . some 1,500,000 copies.

Unfortunately, *The Doubleday Cookbook* is no longer in print.

Annemarie N: That's frustrating. But I also want to talk about your *Love Affair with Southern Cooking*, which won a lot of awards, and *From the Southern Oven*. Also about the international cookbooks you've done.

Jean A: German and Portuguese . . . both still selling well.

Annemarie N: What made you want to go back to your roots in Raleigh and Southern food?

Jean A: Well, as they say, "I'm a Tar Heel born, I'm a Tar Heel bred, when I die, I'll be a Tar Heel dead." But, you know, there is just something about this state. Once you get the tar on your heels, you can't get it off . . . I love this state . . . I've always loved this state. I wrote many articles about North Carolina when I was still in New York. Did a major piece for *Venture* magazine; also, a North Carolina portfolio for *Family Circle*. More people need to know about this state and what it offers.

I'll tell you one program I like . . . it's a weekly show on UNC-TV hosted by Lisa Prince of NC's Ag Department. She'll pick an NC food . . . shrimp, for example . . . go out on a shrimp boat, then return and demo shrimp recipes with a local chef.

Annemarie N: I'll look that up. How did you, as a journalist, sell the South and its food?

Jean A: Well, I get very enthusiastic. And I do my homework . . . always have backup ideas. I keep active dreaming up new book ideas. I've already got three for UNC Press . . . and no, I'm not going to tell you any of them.

Annemarie N: I found your book about Portugal really interesting, especially the similarities and differences between Portuguese and Southern food.

Jean A: I'll tell you the most amazing thing . . . I was sent to Portugal on article assignment . . . my first trip . . . and the minute I stepped on the ground I had this weird feeling . . . "I'm home" . . . if I were Shirley MacLaine, I'd say that I had been Portuguese in an earlier life. My favorite part of Portugal is Alentejo, the bread basket . . . it occupies about two-thirds of the country, and it's as red as Carolina clay . . . potters every-where (just like North Carolina) . . . big on pork . . . big on sausage . . . and, oh, those tomatoes. There are many similarities but the Portuguese recipes contain lots of garlic . . . lots of cilantro . . . and there are curious pork and clam combos. Like Southerners, the Portuguese are masters at recycling . . . don't waste a scrap . . . their *açordas* are yesterday's bread plus yesterday's cooking water plus leftover this and that. Like good Southern cooks, the Portuguese are also remarkably inventive.

Annemarie N: That's really interesting . . . I didn't know they liked coriander so much.

Jean A: Oh, absolutely. But not chocolate. When I first went to Portugal, I searched every-where for a chocolate bar . . . unheard of back then. And here's why. Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese explorer who found the water route to the Spice Islands of the East, brought cinnamon, coriander, and curry home to Portugal – all three now integral to Portuguese cuisine. Columbus, on the other hand, carried New World chocolate and vanilla back to Spain. Though next-door to one another, these two countries have never been what you'd call "best friends."

Annemarie N: Transitioning, let's talk about your *Love Affair with Southern Cooking* . . . it's a little bit memoir-ish . . . you add some of your personal experiences . . .

Jean A: The more personal you are, the more rapport you have with your reader. People often tell me, "Whenever I cook from one of your books, I feel that you're in the kitchen beside me" . . . the

ultimate compliment. As for recipe back stories and snippets of history, they enrich a book . . . make good armchair reading.

Annemarie N: That's true. It's definitely a good book. How was it received?

Jean A: Very well. I outed myself . . . practically in sentence number one . . . that I'm the daughter of Yankees, and I didn't grow up eating Southern food.

Annemarie N: That's great. So during your long career you've mentored lots of people?

Jean A: I have, yes. But only those who are willing to work . . . pay their dues. Sara Moulton's certainly number one. She's dedicated and so smart I hired her as my assistant on three overseas article assignments, which I was photographing as well as writing . . . Holland . . . Brazil . . . and Portugal. Turns out, Sara's also the perfect traveling companion . . . upbeat . . . eager to help . . . eager to learn.

Annemarie N: I'm about at the end of my questions but wanted to ask what you're the most proud of as a food journalist . . . food writer . . . travel writer?

Jean A: My enthusiasm, my eagerness to learn, my determination to keep at it. I'm grateful, of course, for all the awards, but I truly believe that it's my ongoing study of food. I'm lucky to have so many food friends . . . editors and authors Sally Belk. Joanne Hayes, and Sandy Gluck . . . and of course Sara Moulton. We chat by phone and e-mail back and forth.

Annemarie N: I have one more large, esoteric question for you. Where do you see the future of food writing in North Carolina, in the South, in the US?

Jean A: I pray that we never lose interest in regional **cooking** . . . and kudos to Southern Foodways for its mission. With more and more big food corporations moving south, I worry that packaged foods will squelch from-scratch, grass-roots cooking. Can't there be harmony . . . symbiotic relationships?

Annemarie N: Is there anything else you want to add?

Jean A: Well, I would like to salute the Southern food writers I respect. John T. Edge, of course, but also in alphabetical order: Brett Anderson (no relation) . . . Marcelle Bienvenu . . . Wendell Brock . . . Marion Brown . . . John Egerton . . . Damon Lee Fowler . . . Christiane Lauterbach . . . Ronni Lundy . . . Debbie Moose . . . Bill Neal . . . Moreton Neal . . . Kathleen Purvis . . . Elizabeth Hedgecock Sparks (Beth Tartan) . . . John Martin (Hoppin' John) Taylor . . . James Villas . . . Jeanne Voltz . . . Eugene Walter . . . Andrea Weigl.

Another thing, I collect community cookbooks . . . must have a thousand of them. To succeed, however, these fundraisers must have a sense of time, a sense of place, and local recipes . . . preferably old family recipes along with their back stories. *Charleston Receipts* is the gold standard.

Annemarie N: That's great. Do you have anything else you want to add?

Jean A: I hope that the lessons I've learned during my long career will help young food journalists just starting out.

Annemarie N: Definitely Thank you so much.