

**LYNNE TRIST BRENNAN**  
**New Orleans, LA**

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen

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[00:00:00]

**Lynne Brennan:** Dick and I, how we met and how we start dating, and not till college. But I remember the first occasion I had with him that stood out, that was funny, was Dottie and I had gone to summer camp in Gulfport, Mississippi, and you took the train there, and when we came back from the train, from camp, Dick had just gotten his driver's license. He must have been fifteen, sixteen, tall, awkward, skinny, six-three. We got off the train and everybody's kissing my mother and my daddy and my brother and Dottie and I and everything, and Dick is just standing there, and I felt so sorry for him. I thought, "Golly, isn't nobody even tell him hello?" Well, I went to kiss him hello, because everybody in New Orleans kisses everybody, and he was so timid, he backed up, fell over my suitcase; I fell on top of him. He didn't even look at me for a year. But we had one story after another about our relationship.

So then, but he was an athlete, so he really wasn't into a lot of dating or partying. I mean, I remember Dottie and I went all over town with everybody. So I remember the first time Dick asked me out, Dottie said—I said, "Guess who asked me out." And she, you know, said—went through everybody we knew. I said, "No. Your brother."

"My brother?" She said, "What do you want to go with him for?"

I said, "Well, he asked me to go to a baseball game, and sounded like fun to me."

So we went to the baseball game. We came home, and I told her, "Dottie, you should get to know your brother. He really is nice." [laughs]

So, anyway, things just went on from there. And then I think for his senior prom—I went with him to senior high school prom, but I think it's because he really

didn't know any other girls, so he asked me. [laughs] He knew other girls, but he wasn't dating anybody in particular.

And then he ended up at Tulane [University], because his parents were up in their years and they had heart trouble. He was really pulled about Kentucky, but he decided he'd stay home and play basketball at Tulane. So he did, and then the following year, I went to Newcomb [College], and once we got to Newcomb and Tulane, we started dating, okay, on weekends.

[00:02:19]

And I dated this other guy at the same time when he was out of town playing basketball, because they went on a trip every other weekend. Well, one weekend he got sick and didn't go. Well, that ended the other guy. I mean, we ended up going steady. So I went to every game with Mr. Brennan. He and I would go. An hour before the players—because he had—now I can appreciate his climbing all those steps in the gym. Because he was my age now, and let me tell you, it was tough. [laughs] And I kept saying—we were there with the popcorn man, because he wanted to sit down and rest and all that before the game. [laughs]

We had a lot, a lot of fun in college, dating, and still have good friends today. The ones that are left, anyway. But from college, we had got married and went into the business. But first of all, we were called—Dick was in law school when we were first married, and he was in about almost two years when he got called into the service for a six-month program that had just started again, and normally it was two years. So we thought, “Well, let's hurry up and take this six-month deal before they change it back to two years, and you go back to law school.”

Well, while we were in law school, Mrs. Brennan died. And Mr. Brennan was just shot after that, so instead of going back to law school, Dick went into the business. And I can remember the days of how much fun we all had together, the family, because we were young, enthusiastic, and just getting started. Now, we were at Brennan's on Bourbon Street at the time after we were married. Right before we were getting ready to move into Brennan's on Royal Street, Dick's older brother died, and that just left Ella.

[00:04:23]

**Sara Roahen:** That was—but that was Owen.

[00:04:26]

**Lynne Brennan:** Owen. Owen died. And so we all stuck together and managed to pull through and to stay in business and open the doors. And it's been history since then.

[laughs]

[00:04:40]

**Sara Roahen:** When you say that that just left Ella, did that mean that Ella was the only sibling that worked there?

[00:04:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** Owen, when he started the restaurant business—Owen was a very gregarious, outward person, and he was out front making the customers, and I think Ella really ran the restaurant. She learned everything. She was like sixteen or seventeen and

just learned as she went along. You know what I mean? She just learned. She went from the front to the kitchen to everything. And Adelaide was there, but Adelaide was like more of a secretary, and she'd do all the thank-you notes and, you know, that kind of stuff.

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I really, as I said, I wasn't in the business. However, Dottie and Barbara and I worked the front door, I guess for about six months, each two days a week at the new Brennan's till we all got pregnant. Five of us were pregnant at one time. And Mr. Brennan said people will think it was in the food, that we had to stop coming around that restaurant pregnant, and we did. We had them born in May, June, July, August, September, and October. [laughs] So, I mean, we'd say, "If one person gets pregnant, they all do," and eighteen months later, four of us were pregnant again.

So Ella's children and my children are exactly the same ages, and we lived close to each other after they were about five or six years old. So I was with the children all the time because I didn't work. And Ella would call me and say, "What are you doing tonight?"

"Nothing."

"Today," she said, "I got these two fellows with me. They're about to kill me. Would you come get them for a little while?"

"Oh," I'd say, "sure." So one night I had four of them and said, "What do y'all want to do tonight?"

Well, Alex and Lauren were maybe four years old. "We want to go to the cafeteria. We want to go to the cafeteria."

“The cafeteria?”

“Yeah, they give balloons.”

Well, I said, “Okay. I’m for it. Let’s just go for it. Let’s see what’s going to happen.”

[00:06:52]

So we get in the car. We didn’t even have car seats in those days. And we get to the cafeteria, and Alex and Lauren are let go first, and then I had Dickie in one high chair and Ti in the other high chair, and I pushed one and pulled one. In those days, people in the cafeteria would help you, you know, put your trays on the table and all of your food. But I wasn’t paying attention to Alex and Lauren because I had Dickie and Ti, and my hands were full.

So we sit down at the table, and I looked at their plate, their tray. They had sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, green potatoes—I mean every—four different kinds of potatoes and Jell-O. I said, “Well, that’s the Irish just coming out with them. Just ignore that,” you know. But, anyway, they cleaned their dishes because they ordered what they wanted, not what I wanted. [laughs] So we always laugh about this experience at the cafeteria. I don’t know how we survived, but we did, and we had a good time. At least I had a good time. But we did lots of fun things like that.

[00:07:53]

**Sara Roahen:** What cafeteria was this?

[00:07:55]

**Lynne Brennan:** There were two, and I think this was at Wise. There was A&G [and Wise on Jefferson Davis Parkway, right off of Earhart [Blvd.].

[00:08:10]

**Sara Roahen:** For the record, can you—you just mentioned a bunch of kids' names. So your kids are Dickie—

[00:08:17]

**Lynne Brennan:** Dickie and Lauren. And Ella's are Alex and Ti. We lived two blocks apart. And then my brother, who had another child, Nickie, the same age, was on Fourth Street. We were on Third and Ella was on Second. So these children were with each other every day.

[00:08:33]

**Sara Roahen:** And it didn't—I mean, if my sister just called me up and said she was dropping off two of her young children, I'd probably have a heart attack. It didn't bother you to—

[00:08:43]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, no. I was the director. I went to camp as a child, seven years, and I've always been into, well, swimming and horseback riding—just all kind of crazy stuff. I mean, I did everything as a younger person. I was from the country. There wasn't much to do in the country, so I went to camp all summer, and it was just wonderful. It

was all girls from Louisiana, Mississippi, New Orleans at this camp, this summer camp right on the Gulf Coast. When I went to Newcomb in the class of 300, I think I knew 250 people just from going to camp for seven years, because all these girls at Newcomb were state girls, you know, the local girls.

[00:09:32]

**Sara Roahen:** What part of St. Bernard Parish did you grow up in?

[00:09:34]

**Lynne Brennan:** I was a block off the line. I was right by the National Guard. I was in Arabi, was the name of the town, the first town.

[00:09:42]

**Sara Roahen:** So that was the country then.

[00:09:45]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yes. We had horses in our backyard.

[00:09:50]

**Sara Roahen:** I'm just going to back up to that time a little bit. Was your father the sheriff when you were growing up, or was that later?

[00:09:59]

**Lynne Brennan:** After. Well, I was growing up, yeah. I was maybe—no, he was the sheriff more towards, I guess, the last eight or ten years I was home.

[00:10:09]

**Sara Roahen:** Wow. That is a really fascinating combination.

[00:10:13]

**Lynne Brennan:** I know. Tell me about it. But you have to understand, a small town, everybody knows everybody. And, I mean, the things—we had such a wonderful, easy life. You know what I mean? We could play outside all night. We could ride horses. We could just—it was just wonderful. And everybody knew us, we knew everybody, and I think everybody in the whole parish knew my daddy—and my mother. My mother was a native. And, in fact, her family owned the plantation that they lost in the crevasse, Louisiana, to save the city of New Orleans with the water.

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**Sara Roahen:** Can you just describe a little bit more in detail what that was?

[00:11:02]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, it was a plantation in St. Bernard and it was right along the riverbank. And New Orleans was going to flood. We didn't have the spillway like we have today or anything like that. So they thought that they would break the levee down in St. Bernard and that let flood, because it's like—we used to call it the end of the world,

because it's the Gulf of Mexico next. [laughs] And there were little towns that there was water between them, like little inlets and islands and all. But they just decided to break the crevasse, I mean break the crevasse there, and that's how we lost our plantation.

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**Sara Roahen:** I imagine there were hard feelings about that in your family.

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**Lynne Brennan:** I wasn't there to know, and I never heard my parents talk about it. I mean, I never heard them complain about it. It was like to save the city. It was like there wasn't another choice. It's just like if you have a house where they want to put a new expressway, you know. It's just you sacrifice certain things to get certain things.

[00:12:20]

**Sara Roahen:** What was your family's heritage? I know you married into an Irish family, but what was your heritage?

[00:12:25]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, my dad's family came from England and my mother's family came from France. But my dad's family was interesting, his family. He had a brother, and their mothers were best friends with Thomas Jefferson's wife. And so they came to America to go to the University of Virginia, and it wasn't complete. But they stayed with the Jeffersons and they went in the army.

And my grandfather married—not my—well, he’s four, five, six generations back—married Mary Randolph, Thomas Jefferson’s granddaughter. And he signed the peace treaty with Mexico and went to prison because President Polk had sent him news to not do it, and he was called “the disobedient servant” and signed it anyway. [laughs] So he went to jail, but then was forgiven years later, you know, and became—. Then the generation that came here, my grandfather, that generation, was the Port of Embarkation in New Orleans; he ran that. And then my father’s father did that after him. And then he died very young, too, and then my dad went and became a doctor.

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**Sara Roahen:** And you have one sibling?

[00:13:57]

**Lynne Brennan:** I have one sibling. And my mother’s parents came from France to develop Louisiana. I don’t know if you’re familiar with the name Donaldsonville, little town. Well, that’s where they established their family, and they had eight daughters. And Trist married one of the daughters, Nicholas Trist. All the Trists were called Nicholas, but anyway. [laughs] I think the family lore is one had five sons and named them all Nicholas, but they went by Peter, John, or whatever their middle name was.

[laughs]

My family history’s been real interesting, but my daddy never got into it, you know. He never did. He was very much a humanitarian, you know. He wanted to always help the poor and help people. When we went to St. Bernard, my father—I can

remember knowing—at sixteen or eighteen I began to note money and business and all that. And he was a doctor for, what, thirty years—never sent a medical statement in his entire career. And I remember at seventeen or eighteen saying, “How do you know who owes you money?”

He said, “That’s one thing you don’t have to remind somebody.” He said, “I treat poor people. If they [don’t] have it, they can’t pay me. If they [do], they’ll pay me.” Well, I mean, he just felt like if they could pay him, they’d pay him. So it was just his philosophy. But he was just a real humanitarian. Everything he started, he succeeded in. It was a shame he died so young.

[00:15:41]

**Sara Roahen:** Yeah, he died very young. How did he die?

[00:15:43]

**Lynne Brennan:** Heart attack. And really and truly, my brother is the first Trist—we were the last Trists in America, and my brother now has two sons, so the name’s coming back again. But my brother’s almost—well, he’s five—four years younger than me. I never thought he’d ever—he’s the first Trist ever to have a fiftieth—sixtieth birthday.

[00:16:15]

**Sara Roahen:** Is he still alive?

[00:16:16]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah, is he. He's just kickin' around like you wouldn't believe it. He's absolutely gorgeous. He looks like my mother. [laughs] He is so handsome. But he has two sons.

[00:16:29]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, since you just brought up your mother, I think later we'll get some film footage of the portrait of the two of you.

[00:16:37]

**Lynne Brennan:** Sure.

[00:16:38]

**Sara Roahen:** Can you just tell that story a little bit? There's a portrait, and you actually sat for it.

[00:16:41]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yes. In the French Quarter, every Saturday—and my mother and I would go down—his name was Ralph Sowell, S-o-w-e-l-l, and he'd paint me. And as I told you before, he just loved opera, and at eight years old, I wasn't too into opera, but I got through it. I'd only sit for about maybe an hour or two, and then my mother would go during the week and he'd do her. But it took him I know six weeks for him to do it.

[00:17:11]

**Sara Roahen:** It's just gorgeous.

[00:17:13]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, it's—

[00:17:14]

**Sara Roahen:** Is that the only one you did in your lifetime with your mother?

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**Lynne Brennan:** Right. And you know, it's funny how different things go on, you know. I did a picture, not—well, it's a painted picture of my two children when they were young, and I can remember my grandchildren, my two grandchildren. In fact, I have pictures on the wall with Dottie and Dick, my brother and I, and my daughter and his son—the three generations of the pairs of children that were close to each other. I still have them. But I can remember more my grandchildren because my first grandson was such a devil that we had to practically—in fact, somebody kept saying, “Oh, you have the cutest Christmas cards,” to my daughter. And I'd say, “Well, it only took eight rolls of film and three threats and four whippings, you know, before we could finally get a good picture.” They'd sit down and listen to us in a minute. [laughs]

But we've grown up a very close family. And Dottie's daughter was Brenne, the one that died, was like the leader of my daughter. She worshipped the ground she walked on. But there were three years' difference. But, I mean, if Brenne said to Lauren, “Hop,”

she'd hop. I mean, whenever—Brenne taught Lauren everything she knew, from riding bikes to skating. It was fun.

So we were all close. And then there was “Pip,” the nephew. I’m sure you heard of Pip. And he had four children that were also the ages of mine, who lived also on Fourth Street. So when we got to the neighborhood, it was like fifteen Brennan cousins all together all the time. So our children really grew up close and they’re still close.

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**Sara Roahen:** One of the questions I was going to ask you was what it was like to enter a family with such strong, imposing women. But you were friends—like, that was a natural for you because you—

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**Lynne Brennan:** They weren’t imposing yet, because they were young too.

[00:19:27]

**Sara Roahen:** You grew up with them.

[00:19:28]

**Lynne Brennan:** They hadn’t established their reputation yet. They were still working, getting started. We all kind of got started together, even though it was such a various age range.

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**Sara Roahen:** So you said that you were really close with your in-laws. Did you call them Mr. and Mrs. Brennan?

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**Lynne Brennan:** Mama. I called her Mama or Dad, like Dottie did.

[00:19:51]

**Sara Roahen:** Can you tell me a little bit about what they were like?

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**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, they were wonderful. Mr. Brennan, well, Dick looks just like him. He was an older man when I met him and absolutely so handsome, I mean really a handsome old man. And Mrs. Brennan was not handsome, but she was attractive, but she lived with the whip, you know. And it was mainly she lived her entire life for her six children, and the only thing I can remember her saying is, “That is your brother. That is your sister. You take care of your brother. You take care—,” and they really took care of each other.

And Ella was always like the—well, it’s hard to describe them because they’re all so different. I mean, Ella, Dottie, and Adelaide, the three girls, were so, so different. It was unbelievable. Adelaide was our Auntie Mame, and Ella was like a take-charge person, and Dottie and I just hung out and watched them, you know. I mean, we had a good time together. But when Dick and I got married, I think the best part about it was

that they liked me as much as I liked them, and I just felt like a glove. It just fit together. We all fit together.

And then when we first—I mean, as far as the business was concerned, as I told you, I was never involved in the business. It was six brothers and sisters. They handled it without their wives or mates. They made all the decisions together, which was absolutely fine with me, because I had a brother and we had a business, a bank, and he made all the decisions for us. So I accepted their decisions. I felt like they loved each other, they'd do the best, and they did. They took care of each other. They really did.

And then it got awfully hard when my oldest brother passed away and the sister-in-law wasn't exactly as cooperative. It wasn't a sister or brother, you see; it was an in-law, and she had three sons, but they were babies. I mean, oh, Teddy was seven years old when his father died, and yet he still thinks his father ran that restaurant, and his father never put his foot in it.

[00:22:27]

**Sara Roahen:** So you're talking—

[00:22:28]

**Lynne Brennan:** Ella ran that restaurant. Ella, Dick, and Pip ran that restaurant for twenty years, till we went to Commander's.

[00:22:37]

**Sara Roahen:** So Ella, Dick, and Pip being—

[00:22:41]

**Lynne Brennan:** A nephew.

[00:22:43]

**Sara Roahen:** But being Owen's son.

[00:22:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** Owen's son was Pip. Pip, Jim, and Ted. And then after Owen died and Mr. Brennan died after—when the business came in—the children start coming into the business is when I think—. As I said, I wasn't in the—I heard from Dick what was going on, but I wasn't there. But they just agreed to disagree with their sister-in-law, and said, "Well, let's let our attorney draw up some plans and let's divide the business now." And he did, and we presented it, and they wouldn't accept it.

So two years later, after not speaking to each other, we split the business, and it was the same original offer that we offered in the beginning, but ended up not really speaking to each other, but not fighting. I mean, as far as we were concerned, we went to Commander's and we were starting over again. I can remember my children—Dickie can tell you some stories that make you absolutely hysterical, it's so funny. I mean, they just had a ball, but they just dove in Commander's headfirst. And I think the way they felt was, "We made Brennan's. We can make Commander's too." I mean, they weren't down when they lost Brennan's.

But we had the Brennan's out of town. Well, it was only Dick and Ella and Pip. It was impossible to run three restaurants in Dallas and Houston and New Orleans all at

one time. They had no—I mean, Dick and Pip were just—I guess they were in their thirties. Ella Brennan definitely made that restaurant. And I'm not saying—oh, Dick and Pip, as they got older, were a very important part. And then when the family split, it was just Dick and Ella and then Dottie.

[00:24:57]

**Sara Roahen:** And that was like around 19—I know that Commander's—

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**Lynne Brennan:** Commander's was a restaurant for like 100 years before we bought it, but it had just fallen down.

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**Sara Roahen:** I think it was in 1974 that—

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**Lynne Brennan:** You probably remember those numbers better than I do.

[00:25:16]

**Sara Roahen:** But your family took it over in 1974, so the sort of split at Brennan's Restaurant happened in the years prior to that. And the sister-in-law you're referring to was Owen's wife, Maude? Okay. Just for-the-record stuff.

What did you—I'm going to back up a little bit again. So when you got married to your husband, his intention was to be a lawyer.

[00:25:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** No, no.

[00:25:48]

**Sara Roahen:** He was going to law school?

[00:25:49]

**Lynne Brennan:** He was just—you know, in our business, law is such a practical thing to know about, and at the time everything was fine. Owen was alive, and Ella and Owen and Adelaide were getting ready to move to Brennan's on Royal Street, and Dick and Pip were going to law school because they just felt they could afford to educate them more, and when they got out, they'd come into the business. But, of course, between the army and the deaths, the course of life just turned.

[00:26:21]

**Sara Roahen:** I see. So you always knew that you were marrying a restaurant man.

[00:26:25]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And my father was a country doctor, so I wasn't used to having a husband at home every night. In fact, I used to say I'm a very artsy-

craftsy person, and I like to do things with my hands, and paint and draw, so I could always entertain myself.

[interruption]

[00:27:03]

**Lynne Brennan:** But, you know, with this family, you're going to be so confused when you get finished. [laughter]

[00:27:09]

**Sara Roahen:** I know.

[00:27:11]

**Lynne Brennan:** Because we all have such a different perspective of what happened when—not when or what. Not what. It's just where you were when it happened, and what your impression was or what your story was. And you came from different directions, you know. I mean, Ella was married and Dottie was married and Dick and I were married and John and Claire were married. But John was never in the business. Now, he did go to business meetings with them, but he never worked in the business. And then Dottie really started working after we went to Commander's and not really in the beginning, because she had young children too.

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**Sara Roahen:** And a husband.

[00:28:00]

**Lynne Brennan:** And, yes, a husband.

[interruption]

[00:28:10]

**Sara Roahen:** I have so many questions for you. But since you just brought it up, so just to clarify, John was sort of part of the business but not a working member of the business.

[00:28:18]

**Lynne Brennan:** Right.

[00:28:21]

**Sara Roahen:** Okay. So that's really interesting.

[00:28:23]

**Lynne Brennan:** All the five children were there. I mean, they were always—really, Dick and Ella and Adelaide were in the business more, and Adelaide was an important part of it, but a different part. You know what I mean? Ella and Dick were in the restaurant, in the dining room, in the kitchen. You know, I mean I can remember Dick

going to work. We lived three and a half blocks from Commander's, so he'd walk to work. And the waiters would always say he'd pick up a tray and put thirty spoons—now, he's not a chef, wasn't a chef. He'd put thirty spoons on a tray and go through the line and say the remoulade sauce is off or the turtle soup isn't right. You know, tasted everything. He had a palate and a—he and Ella, I mean, they could just look at it and tell you if it was right.

[00:29:14]

**Sara Roahen:** It's really interesting, because I've read that so much, you know. And I know, like, how involved they are. And even your son is involved in the food component too.

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**Lynne Brennan:** Well, Dickie had more training than Dick in the food business, you know. He worked around Commander's as a child, and he then went off to New York and cooked with Larry Forgione, an up-and-coming American chef then, and then he went to Paris and cooked in about five or six different restaurants there. But our first one educated in culinary school was—

[interruption]

[00:30:00]

**Lynne Brennan:** The first one educated in the business, I think, was—did Ralph go to CIA? I don't know. We laugh so much all the time when I'm talking with our friends about the CIA and the FBI, and they keep looking like, "CIA?" Yeah, Culinary. Or the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the—I mean the NRA: the National Restaurant Association. I mean, we just go on and on and on. [laughs] And Dick was on the NRA board for about twelve years, so we traveled a lot, met a lot of people all over the city. And Ella really worked a lot at the restaurant at night to let Dick and I go out and make—we both went to college here. We both had a lot of friends here. We got into a lot of clubs, we got into a lot of organizations, and we were more into the customer-making younger group, you know, making friends, meeting people. And I was always involved in all the schools that they went to and things like that.

[00:31:08]

**Sara Roahen:** I wanted to know what your wedding was like.

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**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, wonderful, wonderful. Dottie was one of my bridesmaids. It was just a big deal, because, like, I can remember walking out my house to the limo, and the girl, the lady, maid that was carrying my train, had carried my mother out as a bride, and that just meant so much to her, you know. And we were married in the same church my great-grandmother was married in. And we were married in St. Bernard and yet had our wedding reception at the Orleans Club on St. Charles, so—. [laughs]

But I went to Sacred Heart, and in those days, the nuns were cloistered. And I bought it in high school. And so we had to go to the convent on the way, to let the nuns see Dick—not me. I mean, we went to chapel every evening at six to pray for a good husband, and then in the morning we'd go to Mass to pray for I don't know what, but we were always praying for something. [laughs] But anyway, so we stopped at Sacred Heart and the nuns were much more interested in Dick than me. [laughs] They really were excited when one of their girls would get married.

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**Sara Roahen:** You mean on your wedding day, you stopped by there?

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**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah. We got out the car, went into the parlor, saw all the nuns, got back in the car, and went to Orleans. It was just twenty blocks up the street, you know.

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**Sara Roahen:** I don't know that—where you had your reception. I don't know what that place is.

[00:32:40]

**Lynne Brennan:** It's a women's club on St. Charles Avenue, the Orleans Club.

[00:32:45]

**Sara Roahen:** It still exists?

[00:32:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah. I went to a wedding there two weeks ago.

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**Sara Roahen:** And so that is one thing I was wondering: is how you got back and forth to school every day, because that's quite a distance.

[00:32:57]

**Lynne Brennan:** No, I drove to Newcomb every day, but I boarded from Monday through Friday at Sacred Heart. Got off every weekend. Went home either to Dottie— either to the Brennans' or to my house or one of our friends' house, you know.

[00:33:11]

**Sara Roahen:** On the weekend?

[00:33:12]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, all weekend. We were together all weekend.

[00:33:17]

**Sara Roahen:** So at what church was your marriage ceremony?

[00:33:20]

**Lynne Brennan:** St. Marie's Church. It's no longer there.

[00:33:26]

**Sara Roahen:** Do you think that one of your in-laws—who did your husband and Ella get their palate and their just really strong sense of restaurant—

[00:33:37]

**Lynne Brennan:** Through reading, through practice, through trial and error. I'm sure Ella has some really wonderful stories. I don't know. I really don't know, because—. Well, I can remember when we were first married, Mr. Brennan, Dick's father, would send us a case of wine a week, which we had to taste and give our report of what we thought about it.

Now, I couldn't boil water. Because I had a cook all my life, so I couldn't boil water when we got married, and I remember my maid taught me how to—I'd call her and ask for a recipe. Well, she didn't measure. "Well, Miss Lynne, just use a cup of—you use a little bit of flour."

I'd say, "Well, how much?"

"What you think?"

I said, "What do you mean what do I think?"

"Well, whatever you think, you use that." That's how I learned how to cook.

Then when Dick was in law school, I went over to his mother's every day and watched her cook. She was an excellent cook, and I learned how to cook all her food and would bring it home. But, anyway, we'd be drinking these gorgeous wines with a tuna casserole. You know what I mean? [laughs] We didn't have the food to go with the wine, but we sure developed a taste for wine, if nothing else. But I had such a good life. I am so fortunate.

[00:35:00]

**Sara Roahen:** What were some of the things you learned how to cook from your mother-in-law?

[00:35:03]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, her family special was called a daube. It was a veal roast cooked in a tomato gravy, and whenever somebody came—with spaghetti. And anything that—I mean, she was a pot cooker, like most people in New Orleans were. We didn't have foie gras. I mean, it wasn't—we learned that as time went on. And we traveled an awful lot. We went to Europe every summer for two or three weeks, a month. Not Europe—Japan, China. I've been all over the world except Alaska, and the reason why I haven't been to Alaska is because my mother went at seventy-five or eighty and came home and told Dick, "Don't hurry to Alaska. You can do that on a walker."

Well, every time I say, "Let's go to Alaska," he says we're not old enough. Do you know, right before he died, we were planning a trip to Alaska. So I haven't been. The only place that I've ever wanted to go that I haven't been is Alaska. [laughs]

But we'd take our two children and then Ella would take her two children. Maybe she'd give Dick time off, and we'd take our two children and we'd hit Europe. We'd go when they were eight and nine years old. I remember our first trip to Europe, we decided we would show them from the top to the bottom. So we had our first reservation at a *pension* in Holland, and then the last one was at the George V in Paris. We thought we'd show them how—the bottom and at the very top. Well, we get to the bottom first, and it's on the third-floor walkup, three beds, and Dickie's bed was in the wall, and there was a hand basin in the corridor. The bathroom was down the hall. And I'm with the lady and Dick's downstairs yelling up to me, can I bring the luggage up. Well, I couldn't say anything. The woman's standing there, looking at me. [laughs] So I just answered. So finally he gave up and came upstairs.

Well, when the children saw Dick, they said, "Jeezum, our cabins at the Friendship House looked better than this." Friendship House was our summer restaurant.

So to make up for it, we took them on a wine and cheese tour on the canals on a boat. Well, we had no idea—of course, they ran on the boat and sat in the last tray all by themselves. We had no idea when they gave them cheese they gave them wine also.

Well, they both got whacked. We had to carry them back to the hotel. [laughs] So we learned the difference in Europe—it was a little bit different from America. [laughs]

[00:37:39]

**Sara Roahen:** How old were they?

[00:37:40]

**Lynne Brennan:** Eight and nine years old, nine and a half or something. [laughs] They had a wonderful time. They just had a great time. But we have so many funny stories about things like that.

Now, Dick would take his grandchildren, when they were five, to lunch alone, just the two of them, all the time, and he taught them all kinds of things. I mean just crazy things. So when Lauren and George were out of town, we took Geordie when he was five or six. So we ordered wine at the restaurant, and Geordie was the type of young man that was always curious and wanted to know about things. So we're having wine, and we gave him some wine—six or seven [years old].

So he came home. Lauren came home, and he said, “Mom,” he said, “I think I like wine now.”

“Oh,” she said, “really?” She said, “When did you taste it?”

“Yeah, I like Rutherford Hill Merlot.” Now, this was—you know, he was just a child that absorbed everything. So it's like a family joke with Rutherford Hill Merlot because that's all he ever wanted from then out. [laughs]

[00:38:47]

And I can remember at Brennan's when Lancers Rosé was a big thing that came to America. When we opened Mr. B's [Bistro], Dick did all the wine, and he did all California wines. Which, really, the California—he'd always say they're as good as France, French wines. He strongly believed that California wines were going to come around because it was new too. That was all new. But he really—he was the winemaker, or the wine taster. And the weatherman, because the patio—they would come in and always wanted to know what the weather was going to be. And Ella would say, “Ask

God,” meaning Dick, because he was the one. He checked the weather. We had a weather radio in the house. [laughs] I mean, we’ve had some funny stories, we really have.

[00:39:39]

**Sara Roahen:** It seems that travel has always been a priority in the Brennan family.

[00:39:43]

**Lynne Brennan:** Absolutely. It’s educational. It is educational.

[00:39:48]

**Sara Roahen:** Especially in your generation, everyone was self-taught, so I guess that was sort of—took the place of—

[00:39:56]

**Lynne Brennan:** Exactly right. Exactly right. There weren’t culinary schools and all. In fact, we went up for some James Beard thing not too long ago, and my granddaughter married a Beard, a young boy named Beard, Bradley Beard. So somebody said, “Well, if they give us any trouble at the Beard thing, just tell them that you’re related.”

And Dottie says, “Oh, no, then they’ll think it was fixed.” [laughs]

But the Brennans would laugh at themselves, laugh at each other, and have fun together. We had so much fun together, I can’t tell you. We had a summer home called the Friendship House.

[00:40:43]

**Sara Roahen:** I wanted to ask you about that. Where was that?

[00:40:45]

**Lynne Brennan:** If you ask every grandchild what's their fondest memories, they'll bring something up that happened at the Friendship House.

[00:40:51]

**Sara Roahen:** What was the Friendship House?

[00:40:53]

**Lynne Brennan:** The Friendship House was a restaurant on the Gulf, on the beach in Biloxi, and behind it they had a motel of cabins. And when we bought the Friendship House, it was up to Dick and Pip to run it. And I can remember putting my children in a wagon, bicycles on top—I was fortunate to always have help, so I had help getting me there. To get my two children to Friendship House for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night, drive back alone, take the bikes off the car, put the children in the bed. I mean, they were young, two and three years old.

So anyway, when we bought the rooms, well, we weren't in the motel business. "Anybody wants a cabin, come get them." Well, after they took about ten cabins, we thought, "You know, we might like to come over here with our children on weekends

sometimes. Maybe we should keep some.” We kept six of them. We lived in those six cabins. [laughs]

[00:41:58]

**Sara Roahen:** Who had the other cabins? Who did you tell they could have them?

[00:42:01]

**Lynne Brennan:** I don’t remember. People just came and got them. You know, I’m talking about years ago where deals were done with a handshake and, you know, it was just a different world. It was a different world.

[00:42:15]

**Sara Roahen:** So who ran the restaurant?

[00:42:18]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, Dick and Pip ran the restaurant, the Friendship House. They went over and took over. Because I remember the night that we took it over, the dishwasher broke down and we were all in the kitchen washing dishes. But they got that straightened real quick. [laughs]

And then one time we were over there; it was the only time I remember it snowed. So I remember Dick and Pip being on the roof, shoveling the snow, worried about the roof falling in. Then we were hit by Hurricane Betsy, and took the whole restaurant, almost. Well, we rebuilt it, and then we ended up selling it when the fast foods came in,

because people would go drive through and get a hamburger rather than cook. Because it was like a hamburger, fried chicken restaurant, and stuffed lobster and that kind of—you know, seafood stuff.

But we had so many wonderful days at that. Then we'd go over there and we'd let all our children bring friends. Sometimes they'd be sleeping ten and twelve teenagers in those cabins. But we always had events. I mean, if you came, you had to pick a ribbon, and you were either the red team or the blue team, and we did everything. We did everything from Gin Rummy to volleyball against each other, you know. I mean, we'd have a tournament all weekend. It was just to say you won. No prize or anything. [laughs]

But then we'd play, the women—I mean the older [generation] against the younger kids. Well, we'd beat them 42-nothing. We were merciless. We just had absolutely no—well, they kept growing bigger and bigger and bigger till they started bringing their high school friends. Then we got beat 42-nothing. [laughs]

And they did more carrying-on with that Friendship House and crazy things. You could talk to Ti and Dickie and Alex and Lauren I guess for a week about things that happened at that Friendship House.

[00:44:09]

**Sara Roahen:** So like around what year did the Brennans purchase that place?

[00:44:14]

**Lynne Brennan:** Around what year what?

[00:44:16]

**Sara Roahen:** Did you all buy the Friendship House?

[00:44:18]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh. Well, it was the first one after—I'm trying to remember if we still had Brennan's on Royal Street. No. I think we were at Commander's. Well, let's see. I have a picture of us in the snow, and Dickie was like two, and he's fifty-four.

[00:44:44]

**Sara Roahen:** Okay.

[00:44:47]

**Lynne Brennan:** And then we sold the Friendship House to Olive Garden or the Red Lobster, somebody. But we were looking for a new place and we could never find what we wanted. So finally we were driving over to the Friendship House one weekend, and we had Geordie and Lindsey with us, and they had to go to the bathroom. So we stopped at the tourist convention, and of course I talk to everybody. The lady said, "So what are y'all doing around here?"

I said, "Well, we're really looking for some property. We'd like a house on some water, at least two or three acres."

And she said, "Oh, everybody I know's looking for that."

So we got home and the phone rang. She said, "I have a place for you."

“Oh,” I said, “really?”

She said, “Yeah.” She said, “It’s forty acres and it’s right on bayou, into the—,”  
what is it? The Jordan River.

“Oh,” I said, “we don’t want that much.”

And Dick said, “Well, let’s just go look, you know. Everybody we know is  
looking for this kind of property. We could divide it up.”

Well, we drove through the gate and fell in love with it. And we had Lauren and  
Dickie come over. They said, “Well, why didn’t you buy it?”

And they said, “Well, we can’t.” I don’t know if you know the football player  
Brett Favre. His family lived across the bayou, and he had put in a bid on the place, and,  
according to Mississippi law, you have to wait ten days for the bid to be accepted. Well,  
he didn’t accept it, so we bought it. We went over that evening.

You know, New Orleans is so small. Like the guy that was our lawyer that  
bought and sold us the Friendship House, it was his lawyer—was fraternity brothers with  
Dick, who was president of Sigma Chi when I was sweetheart and pinned my pin on me.  
And here he is in Mississippi. I mean, it was hysterical, I mean, the connections that you  
always have with people. We say, “If you talk long enough, you’re going to be related.”

[00:46:43]

**Sara Roahen:** It’s probably true.

[00:46:44]

**Lynne Brennan:** Right. It probably is.

[00:46:47]

**Sara Roahen:** So that property that you bought then—

[00:46:49]

**Lynne Brennan:** We still have that. Oh, no, that's just a summer home, and it was destroyed in Katrina. We rebuilt it then. It's wonderful and we love going there. So anybody that's available is welcome, because we have six of those cabins over there.

[00:47:07]

**Sara Roahen:** That you built on there?

[00:47:09]

**Lynne Brennan:** No, the ones that we had at the Friendship House.

[00:47:11]

**Sara Roahen:** Oh, you moved them?

[00:47:13]

**Lynne Brennan:** We moved them from the Friendship House to Brennwood. We call it Brennwood. To Brennwood, and they're all still there, the Friendship—. I wish those cabins could talk.

[00:47:22]

**Sara Roahen:** I do too. So now is the—like your grandchildren have been there—

[00:47:27]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, but this is just Dick and I's place.

[00:47:29]

**Sara Roahen:** Okay. That's so nice.

[00:47:31]

**Lynne Brennan:** We did it for our children. In fact, I gave them a party barge for Christmas. [laughs]

[00:47:36]

**Sara Roahen:** What is that?

[00:47:37]

**Lynne Brennan:** A party barge is like a flatboat that has seats all the way around it, with like a little area for a party here and the driver with the wheel. I mean, it's wonderful.

You don't know what a party boat is?

[00:47:49]

**Sara Roahen:** Like a pontoon?

[00:47:50]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, like on a pontoon, and you can go out and have sunset and drink some wine and have some dinner and come home. [laughs]

[00:47:58]

**Sara Roahen:** I want to go to Brennwood. [laughs]

[00:47:59]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, you'd love it. You would love it. It's wonderful. It's wonderful. So we go, kids, dogs, everybody. [laughs]

[00:48:07]

**Sara Roahen:** I want to ask you what you like to eat at Brennan's, and then at Commander's. Like what were some of your favorite—I mean, I'm interested in what you eat now, but also, like, back then.

[00:48:21]

**Lynne Brennan:** I eat everything, almost. But at Brennan's I can remember Filet Stanley as one of my favorites. And at Commander's it was—oh, I had lots of favorites at Commander's. And I remember every now and then they'd take my favorite off the menu, and I'd say to Dick, "I can't believe y'all took—why did y'all take that off the menu?"

He said, “Only two reasons: you can’t get the product or it isn’t selling.” [laughs]

[00:48:51]

**Sara Roahen:** Can you tell us about Filet Stanley?

[00:48:53]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, Filet Stanley was a filet and it was grilled bananas in a horseradish sauce, and it was unusual but it was different. It was tasty. It was good. But I can really eat anything. Except I don’t like tripe and few odd things like that.

[00:49:13]

**Sara Roahen:** You know, you said that you were used to not having a husband at home because of the lifestyle of your father, but what were mealtimes like at your house? Did you sit down with your children to eat—

[00:49:26]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah.

[00:49:27]

**Sara Roahen:** —when your husband was at work. Or what would you do?

[00:49:28]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah. We'd eat dinner before Dick went to work. We'd eat when they'd get home from school. Dick and Dickie would usually swim in the backyard and then they'd come in. We'd have an early dinner and Dick would go back. Then we'd do homework and they'd get ready for bed.

[00:49:45]

**Sara Roahen:** So you would have family meals together?

[00:49:48]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah. This next generation isn't doing that that much. Lauren's children—in fact, Lauren and her husband just took their four children to Africa for three weeks. They had a wonderful trip, and I asked the youngest one, Trist, I said, "What was the best part about the trip?"

He said, "Being with my sister and my brothers for twenty days straight and eating three meals a day together and being with them." Because he's ten years younger. So Geordie was off and gone by the time he was around, and it was so true. And he said, "You know what, Gram?" He said, "We didn't have one fight." [laughs]

[00:50:25]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, they're old enough now too.

[00:50:27]

**Lynne Brennan:** And he's the hunter. I mean, he shot two something with one arrow. Two impala. He's a real good hunter. He's a hunter.

[00:50:37]

**Sara Roahen:** I heard that you were the host of Christmas forever.

[00:50:41]

**Lynne Brennan:** I hosted Christmas, Thanksgiving, Mardi Gras, you name it. We were one house from St. Charles, so every parade. And I remember twenty years ago when Dick, he was in college, he said to me, "Do you mind if I invite the some Kappa Sigs to Mardi Gras?"

I said, "No, go right ahead."

Well, he made it a chapter meeting. I think 130 Kappa Sigs showed up for Mardi Gras one year. [laughs] But we'd have hundreds of people, so it didn't make any difference.

We still have Christmas. Every Christmas Eve, we have a young priest who comes by and says Mass. And we have Mass before six o'clock, and then at seven o'clock we have cocktails, and then they all play Secret Santa, whatever it is, where you bring one present and if you don't like it you can pass it on.

[00:51:33]

**Sara Roahen:** So this is at your daughter's house?

[00:51:35]

**Lynne Brennan:** At my old house, yeah, where we lived for forty years.

[00:51:39]

**Sara Roahen:** So the priest says Mass at your home?

[00:51:41]

**Lynne Brennan:** At our home.

[00:51:42]

**Sara Roahen:** Does he stay for the cocktail hour?

[00:51:44]

**Lynne Brennan:** Mm-mm. Oh, yeah. He married half of them and christened all their children. He's young. He's not that old.

[00:51:50]

**Sara Roahen:** That's pretty special.

[00:51:53]

**Lynne Brennan:** He'd come to the Friendship House with us. [laughs]

[00:51:56]

**Sara Roahen:** Really? What are some of the foods that you would always have at Christmas and maybe Mardi Gras?

[00:52:00]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, it's kind of like a St. Joseph's altar. Do you know what that is?

[00:52:06]

**Sara Roahen:** I do, but not everybody will.

[00:52:09]

**Lynne Brennan:** Okay. Well, it's like a variety of food, finger foods, or cold—you know, you have forks. But we'll do like shrimp remoulade, crabmeat, a cold salad, crab salad, a filet sliced thin, ham, salmon with the trims, potatoes, Mrs. Brennan's potato salad—we can't go without Mama's potato salad—and finger sandwiches and lots of desserts. And it looks like an altar with St. Joseph's—you'd have to know what a St. Joseph's altar was, but it's a display of foods in honor of St. Joseph. This is in honor of the Brennan family because we all eat it. [laughs] But it's lots of fun. It really is.

[00:53:02]

**Sara Roahen:** What makes Mrs. Brennan's potato salad special?

[00:53:05]

**Lynne Brennan:** I think it was the bacon and the bacon cookings that she put in it, drippings.

[00:53:13]

**Sara Roahen:** Is it a mayonnaise-based salad or is it—wow. She'd put bacon in there, huh?

[00:53:17]

**Lynne Brennan:** Definitely mayonnaise.

[00:53:19]

**Sara Roahen:** Since you mentioned Mardi Gras, I believe your husband started a krewe.

[00:53:25]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, he sure did. That was another experience in life.

[00:53:30]

**Sara Roahen:** So he started a krewe—

[00:53:33]

**Lynne Brennan:** What happened was, New Orleans has two different faces of Mardi Gras, as you well know. It has the social face and it has the face for everybody. Socials, invitation; everybody's invited to the other. He felt like people came to town, unless they

were locals or knew a local, they weren't going to see a ball, they weren't going to see anything, because they weren't going to be invited. And he felt like in our business—which, tourism was so important—that it needed a spark. So they decided to start a krewe that anybody could join. Well, not anybody, but who could afford to join could join. [laughs] And it would be fair. They'd put their names in the hat and they'd pull their floats and all this. They didn't want any queens or any court or any whose-grandmother-was-king and sister's-brother's-uncle was a maid. I mean, they didn't want to put up with all of that. So they decided all they'd have is a king and they'd have a celebrity. The first one was Danny Kaye, and so they had a king every year. Raymond Burr, Jamie—I mean, everybody we knew through business. And it was quite interesting because it took the city like storm. I mean, people came out more for Bacchus than they did for Mardi Gras Day.

The first year it was so unorganized, and it lined up right here on Jackson Avenue. Now, we lived three blocks up the street on Third Street, and Pip's son and Dickie were the first pages. There were seven. Well, we couldn't get through the traffic. Barbara and I put the two pages on a bicycle, on the handlebars with their things flapping in the air and all their coats behind them, to get to the float on Jackson. We got them on the float.

So we're sitting at—finally, after all of this—I mean, I have so many Mardi Gras stories I could tell you these for five years. But we get them down and everything's fine, and we go by City Hall, and Dickie is like on top of this roof with a rope about this big tied around his waist. Well, I could not believe—it was the age of your son.

[00:55:51]

**Sara Roahen:** It was a float? He was on a float, right?

[00:55:53]

**Lynne Brennan:** Huge, huge float. These were the biggest floats you could—they were twice as big as any other Mardi Gras Parade. And, of course, Danny Kaye was like—he was confused as to what Mardi Gras was. He thought he was Nero, and our Mardi Gras kings are anything but Nero. So he'd come flapping, and he was complaining it was too cold and he needed a blanket. Well, the actor that he is, when he hit the streets and he saw those people screaming about him, he just lit up like a Christmas tree. [laughs]

But we didn't know—then, afterwards, instead of a court and a ball and everything, they'd have a cocktail dance at the Rivergate—big, big, big convention center. Well, the floats come in, and Dick and Pip pull float number twenty-one or something, so they weren't on the stage with the king. Well, Barbara and I are the only two up there. People nearly tore my dress off me to get to Danny Kaye. I mean, it was like I can't believe this is happening, you know. But, anyway, we got through that night.

[00:56:57]

Then the next year, they're on float fourteen or something, and right as we pass—they pass by—the flame carriers [flambeaus] leaned over and the fringe on their float caught on fire. And I'm standing at City Hall watching them go up in flames. And all of a sudden, I thought, "And they have gas generators. They're going to blow up." Well, some hero out of the crowd jumped in there and pulled that fringe off the float.

Then the next year, they all got into themes of other Carnival krewes. And Zulus, which was the black organization, when they first paraded, threw chickens. Well, I'm

scared to death of a chicken, okay? I don't have to tell you, but at City Hall I got a chicken right in my chest. I said, "I quit Bacchus. I can't handle it. It's going to kill me." [laughs]

But then anyway, when we split the restaurants, he and Pip were both co-captains, and we just stayed with the social clubs and got out of all that. It was too much.

[00:57:51]

**Sara Roahen:** Oh, you got out of Bacchus. So Bacchus was the name of the krewe that they started?

[00:57:54]

**Lynne Brennan:** Right, right.

[00:57:55]

**Sara Roahen:** So you didn't continue with that for very long?

[00:57:57]

**Lynne Brennan:** Dick didn't. Oh, he did for quite a while. I mean, some people, some of my friends, some of my family—I think Pepper still rides. I think my son-in-law is riding for somebody this year. But they still support it. I mean, you know, they'll still support it. But now it's caused a nightmare because it also includes Endymion. Have you been to Endymion? Well, you saw what that's like.

[00:58:24]

**Sara Roahen:** That's another Mardi Gras parade.

[00:58:26]

**Lynne Brennan:** Muses, and now there's a new women's organization. They don't do shoes; they do purses. So everybody—I mean, this—I say it's my stress test every year. If I can live through Mardi Gras, I know I have another year in me. [laughs]

[00:58:42]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, you still live on—

[00:58:43]

**Lynne Brennan:** I'm still on St. Charles Avenue, right. [laughs]

[00:58:47]

**Sara Roahen:** That's really fascinating to me, though, because I didn't realize that Bacchus was the first krewe that was sort of for the people.

[00:58:55]

**Lynne Brennan:** First one.

[00:58:57]

**Sara Roahen:** So for people like me, who didn't grow up here, there *is* a chance that you can be involved.

[00:59:03]

**Lynne Brennan:** Absolutely. You could even go to the dance.

[00:59:05]

**Sara Roahen:** There's certain krewes that you have to marry into.

[00:59:08]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I mean, I remember when both my granddaughters were queen of the same club. But I put their names up when they were born.

[00:59:17]

**Sara Roahen:** For that—

[00:59:18]

**Lynne Brennan:** On the list.

[00:59:19]

**Sara Roahen:** What club is that?

[00:59:20]

**Lynne Brennan:** It was Dorians. They were both in Rex. They were both in—I mean, they were in a lot of things. So we've done a lot. I don't think we have anybody in anything this year. Well, they're all grown.

[00:59:32]

**Sara Roahen:** What do you do on Mardi Gras Day these days?

[00:59:35]

**Lynne Brennan:** We still get dressed and go to Lauren's house, go to the parade. We have masked for fifty years, sixty years. We've been everything you can think of.

[00:59:45]

**Sara Roahen:** What were you last year?

[00:59:47]

**Lynne Brennan:** I think we were pirates. It's getting easier and easier. I remember one year Dottie and—the older ones didn't mask. It was Pip and Barbara, Dottie and Ben, and Dick and I. We went as flappers, and we sewed all our fringe on our dresses. We were sewing. One year we went as angels in the red with the tutu and all that, and the boys were the—we were the devils and they were the angels. And I remember Dick's wings were about from here to the floor and Richard's were about—I mean, Dickie's was about that big. But we were busy sewing and gluing, and I sewed through my finger on a

sewing machine. [laughs] Three of us—Barbara still had her dress on with a hundred pins in it—we’re driving up the highway 100 miles an hour to Ochsner [Hospital] to get this—I mean, it was—I have so many wonderful, funny, funny memories in life. I am so lucky. God’s been good to me.

[01:00:48]

**Sara Roahen:** You can write a memoir.

[01:00:49]

**Lynne Brennan:** I wish I had.

[01:00:53]

**Sara Roahen:** Can you tell me about the rooster [sculpture sitting on the table]?

[01:00:57]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, Dick and I took the children to Venice. This was at the Murano, the glass place. And this thing was there and it had been made for Charles de Gaulle for Christmas. It was their present to him. And he died. And we saw it and it was on the shelf, and we asked if they’d sell it. And they said, “I’ll go see.” So he just came out and said, “Yes.” So we bought it. And that was thirty years ago. Well, whenever Charles de Gaulle died, that year.

[01:01:29]

**Sara Roahen:** So, for the record, the rooster is significant.

[01:01:34]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, it was Brennan's [Restaurant]. It was the chanticleer. That's what really caught our eye, was the fact that it was just like the menu of Brennan's.

[01:01:41]

**Sara Roahen:** Of Brennan's, yeah.

[01:01:42]

**Lynne Brennan:** And we were still at Brennan's at the time.

[01:01:44]

**Sara Roahen:** It's really beautiful.

[01:01:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, it is pretty.

[01:01:49]

**Sara Roahen:** I feel like I shouldn't keep you too much longer, but I'm just going to ask a couple more questions. First of all, you mentioned Barbara a couple times. Is she the wife of—

[01:01:56]

**Lynne Brennan:** That was Pip's wife, whom I was very, very close to because Dick and Pip worked so much together. We had our children together, and we spent a lot of time together.

[01:02:09]

**Sara Roahen:** She's no longer living?

[01:02:14]

**Lynne Brennan:** She's alive. She has terrible Alzheimer's. She's very sick. They've had a lot, a lot, a lot of misfortune.

[01:02:21]

**Sara Roahen:** I'm sorry to hear that.

[01:02:23]

**Lynne Brennan:** A lot. The three brothers sued each other and they lost the restaurant, and that's how Ralph got it.

[01:02:31]

**Sara Roahen:** Have you been back to the restaurant since Ralph—

[01:02:33]

**Lynne Brennan:** Mm-hmm. I even got Dick there.

[01:02:35]

**Sara Roahen:** What was that like for you?

[01:02:37]

**Lynne Brennan:** It was—it was—it was—it was—it's hard to describe how it felt because we had left Brennan's so long ago, and we lived three blocks from Commander's and Dick worked there for forty years, so I was more attached to Commander's by then. I know that Brennan's, you know, started our help of building the business, and I remember every minute of it. But when I went there this time, it had been—it wasn't worth the fight, you know; you just gave up and said, "Goodbye." But I was happy to see it was back in the family again because we did start it and we did work it and we did do it. So we're happy, and they did a magnificent job.

[01:03:29]

**Sara Roahen:** It's beautiful.

[01:03:31]

**Lynne Brennan:** It is beautiful. So I'm happy for Ralph.

[01:03:34]

**Sara Roahen:** I was talking about this earlier. It's really impressive to me that the Brennan—and I'm just speaking the Brennan family, like all of you—

[01:03:54]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, it's almost one person, I mean. They're so close. The six of them were so close.

[01:04:00]

**Sara Roahen:** I know. It's interesting because there's so many different branches, and they're independent, but there's still a Brennan feel and a Brennan sort of philosophy.

[01:04:07]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, yeah. Oh, we still get together. I mean, we still have dinners together. Oh, there's so many of us now that it's hard to fit anywhere to sit down. [laughs] We eat in groups. Like the cousins—they still have a cousins dinner. I mean, they eat every two or three months; they get together for dinner. That's Ralph's generation, and Dickie and Lauren and all of them. And now the grandchildren are doing the same thing, Lauren's children and Ralph's children. Lauren's daughter Lindsey and Ralph's daughter Kristin were in each other's weddings. I mean, they were best friends. They both went to Sacred Heart together.

[01:04:47]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, I did want to ask—well, who was the great business mind?  
Because I feel like not only are the restaurants pretty amazing from a—

[01:05:01]

**Lynne Brennan:** There was a person, a man, that Adelaide dated who was an accountant, and they fell in love. Unfortunately, he was married. They never divorced and he never remarried, but he and Adelaide dated each other for life, and he became like—we think of Ralph as a member of the family. In fact, it was Ralph Alexis, and that's who Ella's son is named after, Alex, is Alexis. And he was definitely a businessperson. And as I told you, I was never in a business meeting, so I don't know, but they all made their decisions together. That I do know. And we had a good lawyer, and I think they just worked as a group.

[01:05:52]

**Sara Roahen:** Because it's impressive how stable, economically stable, the Brennan restaurants are.

[01:06:01]

**Lynne Brennan:** We were lucky. We were lucky. We've had some failures.

[01:06:06]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, that's true. I guess you know when to let go also.

[01:06:10]

**Lynne Brennan:** That's very important. That's very important. And, you know, each generation goes through a period where there's nobody yet to do it, you know, to make it. I mean to increase more. But now that Dickie has opened his restaurants—well, then there was another thing.

Then years later, it got to the point where we really had a lot of children coming in the business, and it wasn't going to be fair to twenty children to change the rugs, you know. So we thought each member of the brothers and sisters, before one died, we should divide it up, and that's when we had another division. But this time we didn't have to go through lawyers and have fights. [laughs] You know, we just said—so my children—Ella, I think, and Dottie's have Commander's and Café Adelaide, and Las Vegas. Well, they had Las Vegas. Oh, Brennan's in Houston. And we have Palace Café. My two children have Palace Café and Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse, the Bourbon House, and the new restaurant Tableau.

Now it's just Dickie and his sister, so, I mean, it's a lot easier to make decisions. They have a partner that is a percentage holder, but the three of them make all the decisions. I mean, they don't have to—we can do things with cousins but we don't work with them every day, you know, but they do share. They'll share doing some charity event or they'll say the Brennan restaurants are doing this together or something like that. But they all have their individual ownership.

[01:08:04]

**Sara Roahen:** Were you happy that both of your kids wanted to go into the business, or how did you feel?

[01:08:08]

**Lynne Brennan:** I think Lauren went in by mistake, through necessity, like most people do. She was definitely a mother; four children. I knew Dickie would forever. I mean, when he was a little boy, five years old, people would say, “What are you going to do when you grow up?” and he’d look at them like, “Are you crazy? I’m going to go in the restaurant business,” you know, because he’d spent his life in the business with his daddy. He was always around.

[01:08:35]

**Sara Roahen:** So you weren’t surprised by that, but—

[01:08:38]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, no, not at all. I expected it, you know. And then with my grandchildren, I don’t expect it with them, but we already have one that’s a chef and one—well, my granddaughter would be in the business, but she’s married and lives in Houston. I think she’s coming back soon. I mean, I think she’ll be back. So hard to get those girls out of New Orleans. But she’s married a lovely boy from Houston who’s also fifth-generation Houston, which is old, and so they’re kind of established, his family. We’ll see. Whatever happens.

[01:09:13]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, we can wrap this up. I'd love to know some—you know, I'm sorry about your husband. Your husband died less than a year ago.

[01:09:24]

**Lynne Brennan:** He was wonderful.

[01:09:26]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, I'd love to know a little bit more about him from your perspective, his personality, what he was like.

[01:09:32]

**Lynne Brennan:** He was a very timid man, a very modest person. Very good-looking but didn't know it. Real tall, six-foot-three Irishman. I mean really, really handsome. I'm sure you've seen pictures of him. I don't think a person that I knew didn't like him. He was just a likable person. He didn't put his foot in his mouth all the time. [laughs] He listened to people more than he spoke. But he was quite wise.

His funeral, to me, summed up what he was, because the people that came to his wake—over a thousand. But it was from the governor to three kings of Rex to Chris Owens' strip on Bourbon Street to the man that does the spray in his house. I mean, I never knew a person that met Dick that didn't like him. He just had that—you know, Ronald Reagan had that smile? People said he looked just like him. He had that Ronald

Reagan smile where, “I like you,” you know. “You like me, I like you.” He just was very, very likable.

Excellent athlete; never ever showed it, talked about it, did anything. He’s in the Tulane Hall of Fame. You’d never know it unless he told you, you know. I remember in high school he was breaking all the records, and I think his older brother used to pay him \$5 every time he did, because his name would be in the paper the next day, and we’d get “Brennan” written in the paper. [laughs]

[01:11:27]

**Sara Roahen:** Did he like to work out or exercise in later years?

[01:11:33]

**Lynne Brennan:** Afterwards? No, he quit. The last day he played ball—I don’t ever remember him playing again. A lot of his friends would get a game up for something, but he had had it. You know, as he got older, the first thing that he lost was his legs. I guess they were worn out. He’d been playing since grammar school, you know, through college. That’s a long time to run every day of your life.

[01:11:55]

**Sara Roahen:** And standing in a restaurant too.

[01:11:57]

**Lynne Brennan:** That’s another thing, yeah.

[01:12:00]

**Sara Roahen:** You said he was timid, but when he passed away, I read quite a few people who worked for him—

[01:12:07]

**Lynne Brennan:** They loved him.

[01:12:09]

**Sara Roahen:** They loved him, but he would tell the truth.

[01:12:12]

**Lynne Brennan:** He was very honest. He said it like it was, but never in a mean way that it made you angry, you know. You'd end up saying, "Thanks, I didn't realize that," or, "Thanks, I didn't—." And he wasn't an argumentative type of person. We were married sixty years, and I don't think we've ever had a real good fight. Because I'd win in two minutes, I mean, so he didn't even bother. [laughs] But he was a very, very quiet man, a very Irish quiet man. Oh, god, he was Irish. Oh, he—

[01:12:50]

**Sara Roahen:** What does that mean?

[01:12:50]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, that means St. Patrick's Day is like Christmas. It's important. I mean, that's a big important holiday. We've got dressed up in green every year and went out and celebrated. [laughs] No, it was just his Irish traits, you know, his funny—not jokes. I mean, he would do things like you'd be in a restaurant and everybody was like sitting, and his favorite thing to do was to wave, and everybody would turn around to see who he was waving at. No one, you know. Or he'd say to somebody, "Gee, that looks good on your tie," and they'd look down, and, you know, there wasn't anything.

I mean, he was just a simple man, but sincere and loved. He was really loved. My husband was really loved. I wish—I hope somebody likes me half as much as him. But he had a lot, a lot of friends. A lot of friends. And his life ran the gamut, you know, from the Irish Channel to—I mean, every social thing he could get in. He was just in everything, you know. He was just quiet, but he was there. He was involved.

[01:14:01]

He started the Convention Center. He tells the story about how they went to get people to get money to join that club, the New Orleans Convention Center. But he never wanted to be president. He was president of the Louisiana Restaurant Association and the state, but he never wanted to be president of things because he was too shy to get up and talk. Dick stuttered as a child, and once when the coach told him he couldn't be captain of his team if he stuttered, he quit stuttering. Never stuttered since. But there were still certain words he couldn't say, so he didn't talk a lot because I think he was conscious of that. And he had very much a New Orleans accent, so people sometimes couldn't understand. [laughs] You know what I mean? They didn't understand what he was saying.

But he was just a wonderful person. I know those nuns dragging me to pray for that good husband worked for me, so. Now, I will say another thing. He did drink. I think the only time I would have given him away was a couple of times that he—well, he came home but I don't know if he was really home. But anyway. [laughs] I would have given him away gladly.

[01:15:27]

**Sara Roahen:** What did he like to drink?

[01:15:29]

**Lynne Brennan:** Anything. No, he liked wine, Scotch. The Brennans drink anything. They go from martinis to—I don't know. They all like to drink. That's Irish.

[01:15:41]

**Sara Roahen:** When I was talking to Ralph, I told him, "I don't think you're allowed to be born into the Brennan family and be lazy or like to sleep." They just keep going. And I think maybe you were sort of born a secret Brennan because it seems like you have that energy too.

[01:15:58]

**Lynne Brennan:** No, no. I have a lot of energy, but I'm a night person. You come around here at eleven o'clock at night, I'll be ready to go out and hit the streets. I'm definitely—because I'd wait for Dick every night. You know, I'd wait up till he got

home. Sometimes twelve, one, you know. But I just got in that habit. And then I'd get my children to school and I'd be back in bed.

I can remember Dickie spending the night with Aunt Adelaide, who lived around the corner. And Adelaide never saw morning, okay? And she came down fully dressed with her marabou and her hair all fluffed up and her makeup and everything, and her cigarette holder and all that. And Dickie came home the next day and says to me, "I wish you looked like Aunt Adelaide looked in the morning."

I said, "Aunt Adelaide doesn't even know what a school bus looks like." I said, "Let me tell you. Or a lunch. You think she ever made a lunch for anybody?" [laughs] "You want to go to school without eating?" But he was so funny, "I wish you looked like Aunt Adelaide."

But she was beautiful. And she had no children and no husband, so she had fun being herself. But she collected people. I mean, we'd get a phone call like at eleven o'clock at night. "Carol Burnett's here and I have music coming up. Come on over." We were just a block away. We'd have to get dressed up and go learn how to dance with Carol Burnett in her ballroom. [laughs] But that's what I said, I had a fun life. I had a good, fun life.

[01:17:29]

**Sara Roahen:** A really fun life.

[01:17:31]

**Lynne Brennan:** And my mother was such a party girl.

[01:17:33]

**Sara Roahen:** She was?

[01:17:34]

**Lynne Brennan:** But she joined in all kind of—oh, yeah, she was always traveling after my dad died. She and I traveled before we were married, a lot, but after I was married, she traveled with friends till she died.

[interruption]

[Interviewer's note: The equipment failed to record the beginning of the interview, so we ended the interview with a proper introduction, which follows.]

[01:18:12]

**Sara Roahen:** This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Monday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016. I'm in the Garden District at the home of Aunt Lynne.

[01:18:26]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, right. [laughs]

[01:18:28]

**Sara Roahen:** Could you please state your full name for us and, if you're comfortable, your birth date?

[01:18:34]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yes. Lynne Trist Brennan, 9/24/34.

[01:18:39]

**Sara Roahen:** Thank you very much. You're a native New Orleanian, you told me before we started rolling. Can you tell me where you were born and where you grew up?

[01:18:48]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, I was born at Touro Hospital on Tulane Avenue. I grew up in St. Bernard, because my dad was from New Orleans but he married my mother, who was from St. Bernard. It was during the war, and when he got out of med school they were in desperate need of a doctor in St. Bernard, so he formed his practice down there.

[01:19:16]

**Sara Roahen:** Where did he go to medical school?

[01:19:24]

**Lynne Brennan:** Tulane.

[01:19:25]

**Sara Roahen:** And back then, Touro was on Tulane—

[01:19:28]

**Lynne Brennan:** And, you know, the funny thing about it is my mother and Dick's brother Owen were the same age.

[01:19:35]

**Sara Roahen:** So your mother and your brother-in-law—

[01:19:39]

**Lynne Brennan:** Were the same age. And that's why I felt like Mr. and Mrs. Brennan, Mom and Dad, were kind of like my grandparents, more or less. Because they were Dottie's parents, but really Adelaide and Ella almost reared Dottie. You know, Mrs. Brennan was in her years. I think she was fifty-two when she had Dick, so I think—or forty-two. It must have been forty-two, and Dottie at forty-four. But that's late.

[01:20:10]

**Sara Roahen:** Yeah, that is late. And I guess you told us originally that your father was a family practice physician and also the coroner, which led to—

[01:20:24]

**Lynne Brennan:** Being sheriff.

[01:20:25]

**Sara Roahen:** Being sheriff. So when you were growing up, he was a physician, the coroner, and the sheriff.

[01:20:31]

**Lynne Brennan:** Right.

[01:20:33]

**Sara Roahen:** Not home a lot.

[01:20:35]

**Lynne Brennan:** No. Well, he treated a lot of country people, so he had night office hours too. Yeah, my dad worked. My dad really worked hard. All of our family worked. We didn't inherit—I mean, we worked for it. All the Brennans, you know—my family, I mean, we worked for it. They worked.

So I can remember telling my daddy, “Boy, you must love to work.”

He said, “I have to, the way y'all spend money around here.” [laughs]

[01:21:07]

And then my mother—one time I remember when Dick and I were first married, eating hot dogs and all these beautiful wines, and I used to—. At Newcomb [College], I know the bank called my daddy once a month and told him I was on the honor roll again. But, anyway, after I was married, my mother said, “I can't believe it. In six months, you haven't asked us for a nickel.”

And I said, “Well, there's a big difference now.”

She said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Well, I know exactly what Dick makes, but I never knew what Daddy made, so I just kept spending till he told me to stop.” [laughs]

And I remember Dick giving me his paycheck and saying to me, “This is what we have. I don’t care what you do with it. Just don’t spend more than I give you.” And I paid every check, every bill we ever had, except taxes and insurance. I didn’t handle that. But I really stayed home around the house and the kids and the neighborhood and everybody. I loved it. [laughs] I didn’t mind being a stay-at-home mom. I wasn’t embarrassed at all.

[01:22:12]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, you weren’t bored. You had a lot going on.

[01:22:15]

**Lynne Brennan:** I sure did have a lot going on. [laughs] And I did a lot of Volunteers of Americas and, you know, I was on both school boards and—just, I was busy.

[01:22:30]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, one thing that I like—in the course of our conversation, you’re probably not even conscious of it—but when you talk about the different stages that the Brennan family business went through, or different stages that your husband went through, you always said “we.” You really felt a part of it.

[01:22:48]

**Lynne Brennan:** Well, we are “we.” [laughs] You don’t have a chance to be a person around us. You’re a “we.” That’s all there is to it. And I’m glad for it. I mean, my family, you know, my intimate family, personal family, are extremely close. You know what I mean? I talk to my daughter, I talk to her every day of my life. And her daughter too. She calls me from Houston. And her son called me from New York every—. I mean, we’re very close, our family, and we’re close to all the cousins. I mean, Dickie and Ti do things together. Dickie and Ralph do things together. Lauren does things with Ti. I mean, they’re all tied to each other. I go to Ella’s and Dottie’s and have dinner, and then the three of us just hang out sometimes.

[01:23:38]

**Sara Roahen:** I bet that’s fun.

[01:23:40]

**Lynne Brennan:** It is fun.

[01:23:42]

**Sara Roahen:** It seems to me that even though you weren’t present at the restaurant every day, you were very much a part of things.

[01:23:47]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely.

[interruption]

[01:24:00]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, Aunt Lynne, thank you so much—

[01:24:02]

**Lynne Brennan:** I'm so glad you came.

[01:24:03]

**Sara Roahen:** —for giving us your time and your stories.

[01:24:05]

**Lynne Brennan:** Thank you.

[01:24:06]

**Sara Roahen:** It was a real treat.

[01:24:07]

**Lynne Brennan:** I'm telling you, by the time you get finished with all of us, you'll think you're talking—I mean, you'll be so confused, you won't know how to write this, write anything about anybody. We all—

[01:24:17]

**Sara Roahen:** I think I'm a little less confused now, actually, now that I've [unclear].

[01:24:20]

**Lynne Brennan:** Oh, good.

[01:24:21]

**Sara Roahen:** Not just reading, but talking to an actual person, it's really, really nice.

[01:24:26]

**Lynne Brennan:** I remember when Ralph was two, it snowed in New Orleans, and we had no children, so Dick and I went and got Ralph to go to the park to play in the snow. I mean, we've just always been together.

[01:24:41]

**Sara Roahen:** It's really nice.

[01:24:43]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah.

[01:24:44]

**Sara Roahen:** Well, thank you.

[01:24:46]

**Lynne Brennan:** We'd go to the country club and John and Claire's friends would take us in. We were ten years younger than them, but they would still include us in their groups and everything, and it's amazing. But that's New Orleans. New Orleans is a very friendly town, especially if you've been around for a couple generations. Everybody knows everybody. I mean, Lauren's first date with a boy that I didn't know the mother or father, I was horrified. I was scared out of my—I kept saying, "But who is he? Where did he go to school? Who's his mother?" You say, "Who's your mother?" [laughs]

[01:25:22]

**Sara Roahen:** And, "Where'd you go to school?"

[01:25:24]

**Lynne Brennan:** Yeah, "Where'd you go to school and who's your mother?" [laughs]

[End of interview]