



Mike Jones

Southern Maid Donuts

Shreveport, LA

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Jaime Cantrell: This is Dr. Jaime Cantrell, a contributor with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's May 17th, 2021, and we're at Southern Maid Donuts on Hearne Avenue in Shreveport, Louisiana. I'm with Mike Jones, and I'm going to ask him to introduce himself and give his date of birth, please.

Mike Jones: Name Mike Jones, date of birth December 4th, [19]58. Long time ago.

Jaime Cantrell: So tell me about your earliest memories of Southern Maid.

Mike Jones: Well, I was born and started coming around, kinda like that. And Daddy was here, Granddaddy was here. And from time to time I was there, not a participant until Daddy got sick back in [19]86.

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And it wasn't an all-at-once, pow, here I am. It was a-- well, you might say I was cultivated or something like that by my grandmother and, to a lesser extent, mother, and here I am, thirty-three years later, by the way-- well, thirty-four. Excuse me. Yeah. Going on thirty-five. It's a while.

Jaime Cantrell: So you say it was a family business. You were sort of cultivated by your mother. Tell me about your parents. Tell me about how they got involved with the company.

Mike Jones: Well, Granddaddy started it back in [19]41 when Daddy was just a kid. They came here from North Texas.

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And he was an old party buddy with J.B. Hargrove in Dallas who started the flour plant. And one day he said, hey, I think I'll open a store here, and he did. And it started out over on Texas Street, little hole in the wall. And then, in [19]48 it moved to the corner of Greenwood and Hearne, which the building is gone now. And that was back when Highway 80 was there, the main drag. And then I-20 was built, which I remember when that was going on. And in [19]76 it was moved to here, into this-- well, you can tell it was an old gas station, Conoco station. And well, there you go. That's how it got here, and we're still here and we hope to be around a while. Now, I don't know if the next generation under me will move in or not.

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So far, I've had one daughter work here some. But I'm like any parent, I don't want my kids to have to fight as hard as I did 'cause, yeah, it's a fight. Well, being in business is a fight, and a much more difficult fight lately, obviously, for obvious reasons, a much more difficult fight. But I'm still soldiering on and plan to as long as I can walk, I guess, or stay awake, as the case may be.

Jaime Cantrell: So you said that your grandfather and Hargrove were party buddies?

Mike Jones: Yeah. They worked for the same bread company in Dallas.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Do you remember the name of it?

Mike Jones: No, I don't. I just know they drove a bread route.

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J.B. came down there from somewhere in Oklahoma and Granddaddy from Moore, Texas, off the farms.

Jaime Cantrell: And when you say, "Granddaddy," you mean Bruce?

Mike Jones: Right, Bruce. Yes, Bruce. Yeah. That one. Not the other one. He had no part in this. And J.B. came up with the recipe and didn't start a franchising operation right away. He was just making it at home and eventually set up a shop, and then a family member set up another one. And the first actual Southern Maid franchise opened in Beaumont, not here. Most people think it started here. It did not. That's the result of our higher profile than other markets.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

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I've heard some locals, at least in the Ark-La-Tex, refer to the Southern Maid [inaudible 0:05:01], the smaller franchises that either opened up before or after this location that everybody remembers as the first.

Mike Jones: The first here.

Jaime Cantrell: Here, right.

Mike Jones: Right, the first one here. I'm not exactly sure where they all opened when 'cause I don't do that. They do that in Dallas. So Lon can tell you a lot more about that than I can.

Jaime Cantrell: I'm speaking with him this week, so . . .

Mike Jones: Yeah. You told me you were gonna meet with Lon. Best guy in the world.

Jaime Cantrell: So do you remember the other locations? Do you remember the Hearne Avenue location before this one?

Mike Jones: That was at Greenwood and Hearne. Oh, yeah. [19]76 was when I graduated high school so, sure, oh, yeah, I remember it. But before that, when it was over on Texas Street, the old Goodwill Building, which is still there in shambles, but it's still there, roughly where Herby-K's is. I know you know where that is. Roughly that area by the brick bridge, kinda.

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I did not see that 'cause I wasn't here in [19]48. I was here in [19]58, but not cognizant at that age.

Jaime Cantrell: So when did you first start working with Southern Maid, being [inaudible 0:06:11] summer or--

Mike Jones: In [19]86, October of [19]86.

Jaime Cantrell: So when you were in high school, they didn't have you come help in the store?

Mike Jones: No. I hung around some, sure, but not really-- I didn't work. And at that time I had no intention of working in it.

Jaime Cantrell: What changed your mind?

Mike Jones: Well, first off, my grandmother asked me, and I said, well, yeah, we might ponder that. At that time, I was in showbiz, mostly on the road. But, like I said, it wasn't an abrupt, okay, I'm going right now. It didn't work like that. I just started out, when I was in town, I would come up and fix stuff.

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I do have mechanical skills. I'm not an ace crackerjack, but, yeah, I can do a few things. And little by little, I started doing this and doing that, doing that, and then a gig ran out. And let's see, do I want another gig or do I just wanna come here? Oh, well, I'll come here. And I came here, but I continued to play part-time gigs here and there from time to time. But once I started a family, I gave that up. And here I am.

Jaime Cantrell: What kind of music did you play?

Mike Jones: Mostly bass, some guitar, some keyboard, and sometimes I engineered for other people. And it was fun. It's fun. Oh, I'd love to do some now, but I wouldn't be able to take it up for a living 'cause that means you're goin' on the road. Not good for a family man. A lot of marriages fold that way.

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It's very few I've seen hold up in that situation. Now, a lot of guys like that, they'll take up teaching so they can stay in one spot.

Jaime Cantrell: But they can still play.

Mike Jones: And it's not the-- well, the media would have you to believe that it's all super glamorous, super easy. You spend all your time hangin' out in hot tubs with supermodels and stuff like that, and eating at the five-, ten-star restaurants, perpetual orgy of interviews, concerts, studio dates. And it's actually rough, tedious, grubby work. It's more like, well, you got there late so they gave your room away, so you have to go to one of those seedy joints by the airport. And then the next morning, well, you don't wanna go too far. You don't know this neighborhood.

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You go to the greasy spoon across the street, and the waitress with the mustache brings you a glass of stale orange juice and very old cornflakes or something like that, you know. [Laughter]
That's how it is!

Jaime Cantrell: Do you think somewhere in the Ark-La-Tex probably this mornin' some waitress with a mustache is bringing a musician a Southern Maid donut somewhere?

Mike Jones: I am offended by that!

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Well, I can't help it if you have a mustache, babe.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Sorry. I'm not nothin' to look at myself. I understand. But another thing, once you got to the gig, some of the vegetation in the crowd is not much to look at either a lot of times. [Laughter] That's another misconception. Nope. Unh-uh. But there's many of those. But that has nothing to do with making donuts.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, let me ask you this. You said you didn't have initial intentions of taking over the family business.

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What did your parents think was going to happen with this Southern Maid branch?

Mike Jones: They would just keep runnin' it and then maybe some other family member might jump in. I don't know. I never discussed it with 'em. There was no use to. I'm more interested in

what's gonna happen other than what did already happen. That's much more to worry about than what did happen. That's already done.

Jaime Cantrell: What do you like about Southern Maid?

Mike Jones: Well, it pays the bills, fed the kids.

Jaime Cantrell: Fed other people's kids.

Mike Jones: And people seemed to like us. Otherwise, we wouldn't have survived this long; obviously not. Eighty years is a while.

Jaime Cantrell: When I first moved to Shreveport, everyone told me, “Oh, you've gotta try Southern Maid, you've gotta try Southern Maid!”

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What do you think accounts for it living in the memory of locals in the way that it has?

Mike Jones: Oh, well, we have third, fourth generation customers. They'll say, “Yeah, my daddy brought me here, my grandfather brought me here, my great-grandfather brought me here. I ate them in utero because Mama did.” Oh, hey, that's great! Well, did you also eat some Freeman & Harris or Herby-K's? “Maybe that, too.”

Jaime Cantrell: Tell me about these third and fourth generation customers. They've just been comin' in--

Mike Jones: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: --certain days?

Mike Jones: Well, it's just part of their-- like other stuff around here. Like goin' to the lake is part of-- well, you say you didn't grow up here apparently. I don't know how old you were when you moved here, but you were probably an adult, right? Yeah. Okay. So you already had that locked in. That was pretty much fixed in place.

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But where you did grow up, certain things were there the whole time, and that's just how it's fixed in your mind, and that's still ongoing. People that I saw when they were kids that could barely walk are now bringing their kids in. Well, that goes for my own kids, too, for that matter, and grandkids. And you get to where they're like part of the family, too, people that I've seen coming around that long.

Jaime Cantrell: Anybody spring to mind?

Mike Jones: Yeah. The unpleasant part is you see their obits in the paper, too. Aw, there's my buddy. So there's a downside in a way. But you would like that feeling. I'll put it that way. Wait till you get to be my age. Oh, Dr. Cantrell, I read your article when I was ten, something like that.

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And you'll go, oh, I actually inspired this kid to pursue a career or something like that. And maybe they turn into a bigshot reporter.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Mike Jones: And, yeah, that's a good feeling. Most people don't experience anything close to that.

Jaime Cantrell: The impact.

Mike Jones: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: Let me ask you this. You talked about the generations in terms of it being family owned, and you talked about the generations of customers. What about the employees over the years?

Mike Jones: Well, there have currently-- now, he isn't on duty right now, but I have a guy here right now, at different times his brother, one of his cousins, and his mama worked here. Well, she worked here years ago, like, when I was in high school. Which, of course, I know the woman, yes. And there's been a couple of other similar instances that did not pan out well. I won't go into that, and I won't mention names anyway.

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But there's been a couple, the multigenerational deals, or other relatives of different types. Not a whole lot, but there has been a couple. When you've been around this long, everything has happened. A spaceship hasn't landed out here, but that's about it. Everything else has happened around here.

Jaime Cantrell: I was speaking with somebody in Shreveport, Ernie Roberson, and he was telling me about a photograph that he had seen once in the LSU Shreveport archives of a giant elephant standing in front of one of the--

Mike Jones: Yeah. That's on our wall there. Here's what that was. Okay.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Now, back in the day when the circus came to town, it came in on the train.

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There was a depot on Magazine Street, which runs off of Texas Street down there at the track. They would unload the elephants and they would roll the tiger cages, the horses. They would march it down Texas Street to the fairgrounds, to the Hirsch. I saw that twice when I was coming up. It was cool! You had the jugglers going by, the clowns, the whole bit.

Jaime Cantrell: What year?

Mike Jones: And the elephant was marched by. They either rode or marched the horses by. A horse drew a cage carrying the lions and the tigers and all that, and it was pretty cool. Okay. Granddaddy cut a deal with the circus guys to, "Hey, would you let the elephant stop here a while?" just as a publicity stunt. And they cut a deal, and I got on that elephant.

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Yeah. I'm not the kid in the picture on the elephant out there, though, but I did get on the elephant, but otherwise how are you gonna get an elephant here? And I was told by a friend of mine that was researching a book mostly about Hayride musicians, he found out along the way that on one occasion the circus came during the fair and there they were trying to march all that through that crowd, and it was just the grandfather of all chaotic messes. It was just really a bad scene. [Laughter] And they-- well, we're not gonna do that again! And then, here a few years ago, an employee asked me, "When are you gonna bring an elephant up here?" Well, I'm quite sure the city would not allow that, and certainly the insurance company wouldn't allow it, and do you know anybody that's got one?

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And if you do, what are you gonna do, put him in the trunk of your car and bring him down here? [Laughter] That's gonna be quite a job to move an elephant around. Now, yeah, it'd be cool, but I think I'll call one of my friends. He's got this little Welsh pony, Broom Bear, that the kids can sit on. That way I know I won't have a problem. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: Do you remember what year it was that you sat on the elephant?

Mike Jones: It would've been about [19]63 or [19]64, something like that.

Jaime Cantrell: But that wasn't-- was it or wasn't it the first time that an elephant had been here?

Mike Jones: That was the only time the elephant was here.

Jaime Cantrell: The only time. Okay.

Mike Jones: Yeah. That was the only time. And it was just mostly for publicity.

Jaime Cantrell: Did it work? Did y'all get more customers?

Mike Jones: Well, I haven't checked into it really.

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Now, I keep telling myself I need to go to the archives-- now, see, those pictures came from me. A lady named Pat Mader picked them up and took them there, microfilmed them-- I don't know if they still use that or not-- and brought 'em back here. And they were all reproductions. None of those are original out there for obvious reasons. But there is a story, the thing I want to check out, because thanks to Granddaddy, there is or was a city ordinance on the books. He had a pet

monkey. Daddy hated that monkey. Monkeys are not good pets. They're mean, they're very unclean, destructive, and they can do a lot more than a dog or a cat. Cats are bad enough. But this monkey, it seems that he escaped and went to a yard down the street, and there were two girls named Brocato back there playing. I think they were, like, three and six or something like that, little girls.

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The monkey attacked them, and he scratched one of 'em. And let's face it, you're not a three-year-old, wouldn't you freak out if a monkey attacked you? Oh, yeah, you would. Bad. And Granddaddy settled out of court with Mr. Brocato for 500 bucks. But they hauled him into court, Granddaddy, I mean. They hauled him into court and then the city attorney said, "Well, there's no law on the books to charge him with." And at the next council meeting there was an ordinance passed prohibiting wild animals to have free range on the streets of Shreveport. So I guess that means if a squirrel drops out of a tree in my front yard and runs across the road, he's illegal.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Okay. And I'm wondering if it's still on the books. And I called the ordinance department at city hall.

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The lady said, "This was in the mid [19]40s, you say? Well, that'll be at the LSU archives. You have to go down there and check it out." One day I'll do it, just to see if that's still on the books. But I don't think I want to create a scene like that myself.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, you mentioned the Hayride.

Mike Jones: Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: And I think we should probably talk about Elvis. [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Oh, sure. No way around that one. First thing and most important thing, no, there is not a copy of the jingle, and I don't believe it exists myself. I mean, you gotta figure if anybody really did have it, they would've surfaced a long time ago and tried to shake us down and tried to shake down the Elvis estate or something. Now, I've had a few crackpots say, oh, I know a guy that's got it. Oh, you do? Well, I sure would like to hear it. Lotta people would like to hear it.

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Frank Page-- I'm sure you know the name Frank Page. Okay. Frank told me years ago-- I called him Uncle Frank-- he told me years ago he did not believe it existed, 'cause him and Daddy, they turned that building upside down years ago when it first kinda came to light in the mid-[19]70s. Some of those recordings survive and some of them don't. What I've heard and read about Colonel Parker, he probably squashed it. I can see why he would want to, too, 'cause that's something they could get him for. But they did not find it, and Frank didn't think there was one either, which I have to agree with him.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, the local rumor I have heard is that Elvis was compensated with a box of donuts.

Mike Jones: I don't know if he was or not.

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Well, and they also say that he came to the store, but the old timers, including my own mother, never saw him there. Now, that's been twisted around into a variety of other scenarios not limited to this, but Elvis worked here, Elvis owned the place; Faron Young worked here or owned the place; Webb Pierce worked here or owned the place; and now for my favorite, Eddie Van Halen owned this place. [Laughter] No, I'm serious! A guy told me that. "Did you know that?" "No, sir, I certainly did not." "Well, he met his wife, Valerie Bertinelli, at the municipal auditorium when Van Halen played." Which is true, 'cause her parents lived here at the time. And she went with her brother. Her brother, said, yeah, you gotta go see these guys! And took her down there and they met. That part is true. Possibly Eddie came here or ate some of the donuts-- I gotta go let the milkman in. Excuse me. [Pause]

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But in any case, yeah, that has also resulted in some of the more out-there Elvis nuts to show up around here. Some of 'em are . . . ew. Yeah. And a lot of them think, oh, I know you got a copy of that tape. Like there is a guy that's a ranking member of the Italian Elvis fan club-- I still think he didn't believe me-- but, no, I don't have it. I did all I could. That's probably why I had that Elvis dream one time, but . . .

Jaime Cantrell: So you don't believe a recording ever existed. What do you know to be true about Elvis?

Mike Jones: He did do the commercial. There are people walking around out there now, including my own mother, that were there and actually heard it performed. But as far as the recording of it, there's not one known to exist.

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Yeah, and there was a doctor from here-- [Phone ringing] [Pause] At one point about, oh, seven or eight years ago, there was a doctor from here and a lawyer in LA that wanted to open one in LA. They refused to believe that I didn't have the copy. First, I talked to the doctor, who tried to bluff me unsuccessfully. "Man, it's not there." Then the lawyer guy called me, "Well, if you don't have the commercial, I guess that's the end of this." Well, I wouldn't have been dealing with it, but I was glad to hear that they weren't gonna do it because they thought that the product wouldn't have a chance without that commercial. It couldn't stand on its own two feet. If that's how you feel, don't do it. That's just like you say, well, I don't want to marry that guy if his rich granny don't have him in his [sic] will, or something like that. [Laughter]

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I'm not implying anything by the way, but you see my point. But, no, there is not a surviving copy of that recording. I don't believe it is.

Jaime Cantrell: But your mother went. What did she tell you about hearing and seeing him?

Mike Jones: "I saw him." She's not a music critic. She's not a journalist. She still does book-keeping here, though. But that's about all she'll say, is "Well, I saw him." And he was not the instant sensation that people think he was. I don't know. You probably heard that. Took a little while for him to catch on 'cause the crowd at the time he got there was, like, middle-aged to elderly, country-and-gospel-type crowd, and he didn't exactly appeal to them. It took a little while. But once he caught on, he caught on really big and, well, it happened.

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But I never was a major Elvis fan myself. As a musician, I respect his contribution and his abilities and so on and so forth, but I never went Elvis crazy and I don't think I ever will. In fact, a lot of the stuff is just really too out there for me, like the Church of Elvis in Seattle. That's too much for me. [Laughter] I think I'll stay out of that. But everybody all the time, "Did you know Elvis made a commercial for y'all?" Sure did. Like, oh, I wouldn't know that?

Jaime Cantrell: So the jingle itself--

Mike Jones: Right.

Jaime Cantrell: --"Ready after four . . ."

Mike Jones: Something about, "You can get 'em piping hot."

Jaime Cantrell: Hot. Hot, yeah. So was the jingle original to the Hargroves, to y'all?

Mike Jones: Here, to us.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

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Mike Jones: The only reason it happened-- now, lot of people think there was a brilliant plan, execution, strategy. It was pure happenstance, like most things are. All it was was Granddaddy bought the sponsorship on the Hayride and, during the show, either Frank or one of the performers would plug us in some way or the other, and somebody wrote the little thing for Elvis to sing. Johnny Cash did a little plug for us, too. That recording does exist, possibly you even heard it. That was the first concert I saw, by the way. Yep, Johnny.

Jaime Cantrell: At the Hayride?

Mike Jones: No. At the Hirsch years after the Hayride.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay. Yes. Yeah.

Mike Jones: But, no, that was just something they did. And they did songs for other people, too, different performers. Johnnie Fair Syrup, Lucky Strike cigarettes was another one. I'm not sure what all else. Other products that they plugged.

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But that's how that happened. It's not like Granddaddy-- well, let's see, there's gonna be a boy named Elvis that's gonna grow up that's gonna turn into a virtual deity, and years after he dies, he's gonna be worshipped like a god, and I think I'll write this jingle for him. No, that didn't happen. Same thing with the hot donuts at four. That was not planned, no. The way that worked was, see, prior to Armistice Day at the end of World War II in [19]45, prior to that, the store was still new; just been around a few years. Most of the donuts were distributed through Holsum Bread trucks to stores around here.

Jaime Cantrell: Which stores?

Mike Jones: Oh, about all of 'em. Back then-- well, if you were my age you would know-- when I was a little kid, not every family had a car. For that matter, Mama didn't drive back then.

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But because of that, people walked to neighborhood stores. And so the Holsum Bread trucks would drop off boxes here and there and everywhere at stores, and they were sold in the stores. They had some walk-in business, but not really a lot. The bread men started their routes at four, so that was when they had the donuts ready for them to go. And then, pow, here comes Armistice

Day. The only thing in that area that was not closed was us, so that was where everybody went. And it just so happens the donuts were coming out right then and people go, hey, this is cool! Why don't y'all do this all the time? That's how it started.

Jaime Cantrell: So the walk-in--

Mike Jones: Yeah. That's how the "hot at four" thing started. It was not planned. It was not executed brilliantly.

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Now, I would love to say that Granddaddy was such a genius he foresaw Elvis and Armistice Day and all of that, but no. Now, in fact, I can tell you, he would've been happy just to foresee a win at a dice game. [Laughter]

Jaime Cantrell: So you're tellin' me on Armistice Day in Shreveport, Louisiana, people were celebratin' by eatin' Southern Maid donuts?

Mike Jones: That was the only place to go.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Mike Jones: In that area, which they called West End back then--

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Mike Jones: --that now rotting, decaying, festering armpit over there was thriving back then. It was the main drag. And the neighborhoods were vibrant. People didn't yet have the habit of shooting each other. And everything else closed to celebrate Armistice Day, and they went there

simply because they were open. Had everybody else not closed, it might not have happened. I don't know. I wasn't there to see it.

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But that's what got everybody there at four right when they were coming out, so they pursued it, and it got bigger and bigger and bigger. And nowadays, we couldn't sell 'em in the store-- we couldn't pay people to take 'em in the store. I mean, do you want something that's been on a store shelf, or do you want it right off the line? Yeah, you want it right off the line. I don't know if you eat them or not. Apparently, you have ate them. Okay. Yeah. I don't recognize you as a regular.

Jaime Cantrell: No. When I first moved, I was, like, well, I'm gonna try some Southern Maid donuts. And I went to one of the other locations and it wasn't until later when I started researching that I found out that this was the original-- third original, original location.

Mike Jones: This is where they meant, yeah.

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Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. So tell me-- we've been talking about the jingle, which makes me consider sort of branding and marketing. Tell me about the color scheme, the green and the white, the design of the logo of the bread cart. Whose idea was that?

Mike Jones: Okay. Have you heard the name Hub Brando? Okay. Years ago, a man named Hub Brando-- and I did know Hub. He had an ad agency. He also played trombone. He had a band, and at one point he had a little talent show, a local talent show on TV where he would showcase the trick ponies, the guy doing card tricks, the juggler or piano player or whoever would come on and do whatever they did. And Granddaddy bought sponsorship. That was

another one of Granddaddy's old party buddies. And I elbowed up to the bar with Hub myself a few times, by the way.

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But they got this idea. Okay, this dog, Miss Merry Mary, belonged to my granny. To this day I can't stand poodles but-- [Phone ringing] I'm not getting that. But Miss Merry Mary learned a little trick by accident again. You know the old tea cart things that you roll? Okay. My granny had one of those and from time to time she would have her friends over for coffee and cake or play bridge, stuff like that, and she would roll the little tea cart out. And one day Miss Mary-- well let me go let the milk cart out. And Miss Mary does this to scope out what's on the tea cart, the tea cart rolled, and she walked with it, and they thought it was hilarious and so it got to be a thing.

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"Mary, push the cart, push the cart." She'd jump up there and she'd push it and they'd laugh. So they got idea to do this thing, and Mama made this little dress. Mama used to sew and make clothes and stuff. A lot of those old country girls did that back then.

Jaime Cantrell: And her name was Josie?

Mike Jones: Huh?

Jaime Cantrell: And her name was Josie?

Mike Jones: Yeah. Josephine.

Jaime Cantrell: Josephine?

Mike Jones: Or most people say Jo.

Jaime Cantrell: Jo. Okay.

Mike Jones: Yeah, that's what most people say. But anyway, Mama made the little dress and the little bonnet. And they had her pushing the thing across the screen, the carriage full of donuts, and everybody thought that was just hilarious. And it got to be a thing. So they finally put it on the box, and it's still there to this day. And I learned not to change it back when we had our fiftieth anniversary.

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We decided to make a commemorative fiftieth anniversary box which did not include her, and people were going, hey, what's this! This ain't Southern Maid. Oh, no. The dog ain't on there. That's not Southern Maid. Who made these things? But once I thought about it, imagine if they changed, say, the logo to Arm & Hammer baking soda, you know, with the arm and the hammer, if they changed that and took that off and you went lookin' for it in the store, you might not find it, right? You might walk right past it; hey, where's the Arm & Hammer? They don't make it no more? And so I learned a lesson, don't do that again. And I have not done that again. Now, one time I used another dog belonging to us, me and my wife. I used her in one ad, one-time thing. But she did not push a cart, she grabbed a box with her mouth.

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We had a great Dane. And I came up- when the Mudbugs first came to town, an ad rep named Scott Muscutt showed up and he said, "Well, I'm a player but I stayed on to do this." He was a player back then. You know who Scott is, right?

Jaime Cantrell: I know of the Mudbugs, the hockey team.

Mike Jones: Yeah. Okay. Scott is Mr. Mudbugs over there.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Mike Jones: Yeah. He's been player, he's been coach, he's been GM, he's been this, he's been that. I don't know what all he's done. But anyway, Scott was the one that handled it. I said, yeah, I think I know what I'll do for that man. And I told my wife about it, "Can you take this picture?" Okay. First thing I had to do was make a plywood box to put inside of that box 'cause she would crush it, right? Second problem, gettin' her to grab ahold of it. "Come on, grab it, girl! Grab it, girl! You grab everything else around here. Can't you grab this?" And then I said, I know what I'll do. Let me go eat a couple of ribs.

0:37:02

I had some ribs. I'll slip the bone up under here. [Laughter] Okay. So I go out there, "Okay, you ready, baby? Ready to take the picture? Okay." And then she comes up, but rather than grab it she slipped her tongue up under there and sucked it out, and I went, oooh, God! Okay. I gotta stick it a little farther and grab the bone with my thumb. Finally, I got her to bite it, and it was captioned, "Gabby [sp] says mine." And I did that one time, one spot, not again.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Matter of fact, I don't know if I could find the picture at my house anymore. But in any case, that's the scoop on Miss Merry Mary and the carriage full of donuts.

Jaime Cantrell: I'm interested in going back to what you said about how the original donut distribution took place on Holsum Bread trucks and they went to various stores.

0:38:02

Mike Jones: Right. Yes. They were taken to stores.

Jaime Cantrell: And so, in the early years, it wasn't walk-in businesses?

Mike Jones: There was some, but not really a lot.

Jaime Cantrell: Right.

Mike Jones: They didn't have much.

Jaime Cantrell: Are there any other baking products that went out on those trucks from Southern...?

Mike Jones: Not that I know about.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Mike Jones: Now, routes were run, like, when I was kid up until the early [19]70s but it got to be where there wasn't any money in it. Like, say, when I was a kid, before you were around, like, now you got a whole aisle of nothing but chips, you had about half of this wall behind you of chips when I was a kid. And about the other half of cookies and cupcakes and Ding Dongs and Twinkies and all that. Nowadays, you got a whole aisle of cookies and cupcakes and Ding Dongs and stuff. So that's a lot more to compete with. Now, that didn't happen overnight. Just over time you got more, more, more, more, more. [Phone ringing]

0:39:00

Guess I better grab it. [Phone conversation]. Oh, I forgot where I was at. Oh, yeah, the stores. By about [19]73 or so that went the way of the dinosaur, route trucks did, because by then, also, there again, everybody had a car by then. Everybody.

Jaime Cantrell: And everybody has a phone. How many calls a day do you get asking when the donuts are hot?

Mike Jones: Oh, I don't know. I don't answer it every time, but I can tell you it's at least about twenty.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter] Always in the afternoon?

Mike Jones: Um-hm. And another high-volume call is, "Did y'all find a phone out there?"

[Laughter] Well, the joke around here is if people could drive their cars in here, they would leave those. They leave everything else around here. Every conceivable item has been left out here.

0:40:00

Jaime Cantrell: So I read somewhere, and I'm curious if you know anything more about it, that some of the other Southern Maid baking products, not just donuts but flour, for example, and pancake mix, was made and was-- I'm gonna ask Lon about it, too.

Mike Jones: You'll have to because I'm not aware of that.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah. Do you know of any businesses in Shreveport that are still open that carried the donuts during those early years or . . . ?

Mike Jones: No. I was not involved in it.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah.

Mike Jones: I know that they were delivered to, for instance, LSU, the base, but really not much more. Not that much more at all. Various places like downtown. But see, I wasn't involved.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Mike Jones: But I don't know if any of 'em are still around or not.

0:41:01

Not very many places, period, are still around that were around back then. Like-- well, like I said earlier, Herby-K's was here, and one of my regular stops, Maggio's Grocery. When I was a kid, Mama used to send us down there. People don't believe me when I tell 'em this. Once I got old enough to walk that two blocks to Maggio's, Mama would call up there and, hey, Joe, hey, Charlie, hey, Sam, I need this, this, this and this. How much is that? And they would tell her. I'd walk in with the money, and they'd give me the bag and I'd carry it home. But there and Fertitta's, where I got my meatball sandwich earlier-- you ever go to Fertitta's, great meatball sandwich-- they were around. But they made stuff there, too, of course.

0:42:01

I went there when I was a kid. I thought it was so cool, all those old chairs and those old tables they had.

Jaime Cantrell: It's still cool.

Mike Jones: Oh, yeah. Then it was still actually a store back then, too. Right now they mostly just make the stuff there. But, yeah, it's still cool, but it was a lot cooler then, though, when I was a little kid.

Jaime Cantrell: Tell me about the production.

Mike Jones: Well, we go back there, we mix up dough, we cut out donuts, and we cook 'em and sell 'em. There you go. To give you a *Reader's Digest* condensed version of it. First off, it just, like, say you were gonna make rolls. Have you ever made any kind of bread or-- oh, you can cook?

Jaime Cantrell: I can cook.

Mike Jones: Hey, great! Okay. You first mix your dough, and then it has to rise in the pot just like if you were making rolls at your house. Then you take it out and you roll it up into rolls, and that sits on the table.

0:43:00

And it has to rise there. Then we roll it out.

Jaime Cantrell: Just some Saran wrap cover?

Mike Jones: Yeah. Well, you don't have to do that, but you can. That's how you speed it up, you can do that. But you control the rate of growth with temperature mostly. But that'll hold it in and speed it up a little bit. Then you roll it out, then you cut it, then they go into proof boxes which are heated, then they rise for a third time, and then, finally, you fry 'em. That's the last part there. That's the quick part. From start to finish takes about two hours.

Jaime Cantrell: For how many?

Mike Jones: Huh?

Jaime Cantrell: How many?

Mike Jones: Depend on how much dough we makin'. Typically, we make a fifty-pound bag full. Flour comes in fifty-pound bags. The whole bag. Sometimes the bag plus a couple of more doughs, as we call them, which is sixteen pounds of flour. Sometimes more, but usually just that.

0:44:02

And a bag, that fifty-pound bag will get you about seventy-five dozen. And they are fried out at the rate of-- well maximum a hundred and twenty dozen per hour, but very rarely do you go full tilt for very long. But when you need it, you need it really, 'cause that's what we're geared to, spit out all of 'em we can as fast as we can, 'cause that's what people want. So we try to give 'em what they want, which is sugar, more than anything-- as much as anything that is. That's why people come here. And we lose a lot of customers to doctors-- doctor's orders, I mean.

Jaime Cantrell: Sure, sure.

Mike Jones: Oh, yeah. There's been a many a customer that we quit seeing, and then they come back in, well, the doctor lowered the boom on me, so I'm not supposed to be here.

Jaime Cantrell: But they come in?

0:45:00

Mike Jones: Well, just not as often a lot of times. Many of them I know personally, like I'm sure you know the name Bob Griffin. Bob was here about once a week for years and years and years. And then we quit seeing him. And then I got word, oh, Bob had bypass surgery. Oh, well, won't be seein' him for a while, and I didn't. And I didn't see him here often, either. And one thing I really regret as far as marketing, a couple of years ago I heard a commercial for Rhino Coffee. Bob did it. Did you hear that? Bob did a commercial for Rhino Coffee and I heard that I

went, well, hey, I'm gonna beg Bob to do me one. I've known Bob since the early [19]80s. By the way, I met him in a bar when I was playing a gig.

0:46:01

My old man introduced me to him. But anyway, I gotta get Bob to do this one. I'm sure he'll do one. I don't care how much money he wants. But I kept putting it off and putting it off and putting it off. And then he died. And I said, well, it's just as well because I wouldn't have run it long 'cause once Bob died, I would've pulled it out of respect for my old buddy. But I really regret that I didn't get Bob to do this commercial. I would like that much more than Elvis, 'cause Elvis was not my friend. I did not know him. Bob was my friend, and I did know him quite well for many years. Best guy in the world, and that's why I would've wanted it. And also, Elvis was that poor, struggling guy back then. I do know about that, trying to feed yourself playing music.

0:47:00

I can tell you a lot about that. And I know what it's like to be on that level and scrimping and scrounging and just trying anything you can. And then, years later, somebody wants to exploit that. Well, you ever eat anybody else's snot? I haven't either, but I think that's about how it would feel, somebody milking that off of you. I wouldn't appreciate it. I wouldn't play the Elvis commercial if I had it. I would play it for you or anybody else just so you could hear it, but I would not try--

Jaime Cantrell: Profit.

Mike Jones: -- to make money off of it. For one thing, the Elvis estate probably would not take kindly to it, and they would probably be extremely hostile to it, and so there would be my lawyer

against a legal department with the most savage pit bulls to be found attacking him and me and us.

0:48:05

And it wouldn't be worth the battle. And I know I would have one. I'm quite sure I would have one. Nor will I try to tell 'em I'm his illegitimate son.

Jaime Cantrell: [Laughter] They got plenty of those.

Mike Jones: Yeah. Well, but I asked a man, a knowledgeable man, about that, did any of those people get anywhere with it? And he said no, but in the early [19]60s a check came to him and said yours. And they paid her off-- they paid her a one-time lump payment of five thousand, and she agreed not to pursue it any further. Which five thousand in the early [19]60s was a pretty good chunk of change.

0:49:00

Jaime Cantrell: But aside from that, none of those other people that claimed to be his son or his daughter or whatever, none of them got anywhere with it. But a whole bunch of 'em came out saying they were. And one woman that I knew to be a nut job told me that he was the real father of convicted multiple murderer Danny Rolling, if you've ever heard that name. He was from here. He killed three people here and four down in Gainesville, and he was an all-around criminal, too. I met the guy twice, by the way, before he had his career. But he wasn't scary at all. There was a guy I worked with that introduced me to him. He said, "Danny's a little weird. He did too much acid when he was in the Navy." And that's how he struck me. He struck me as a guy that did too much acid, not a possible murderer, rapist, and whatever else he was.

0:50:01

Jaime Cantrell: Well, as a musician, even if you had the recording, you wouldn't play it out of loyalty to the place and time it was created in?

Mike Jones: That and so I wouldn't get eaten alive by the Elvis estate lawyers.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Mike Jones: And we would. And it wouldn't be just me, either. The entire franchise, guys like Juan, would catch holy, royal, thirty-two flavors of hell. I have no doubt of that. And like I said, no, I would be respectful and let the dead rest, just like I said with Bob.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, before we end, is there anything that you wanted to touch on or share that maybe we didn't get to, something about Southern Maid and its history or the business or about your family?

0:51:00

Mike Jones: Well, I did tell you this I'm proud of, 'cause we sold tickets to see the Stones.

Jaime Cantrell: Yeah!

Mike Jones: Look at the price, four-fifty.

Jaime Cantrell: Tell me what I'm lookin' at.

Mike Jones: Okay. In [19]65 the Stones came here. You did not have Ticketmaster back then so whoever would sell 'em, that's where they sold 'em. It has us, Stan's Record Shop, which I bought a bunch of tickets at Stan's. Lee Martin's was a men's clothing store. But, like I said, whoever would sell 'em sold 'em for four-fifty. How do you like that? Or about one-tenth of what

I paid to see 'em twenty-five years later in [19]89. I paid forty-something, I can't remember what, and I had to go to Dallas.

Jaime Cantrell: But they played at the Hirsch?

Mike Jones: Yes. That was their second US tour. And Brian Jones was still alive then.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, how did y'all get involved-- how did Southern Maid-- was this Bruce, your grandfather?

Mike Jones: Yeah, um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: Okay.

Mike Jones: He was runnin' it at the time. I guess they just approached him and said-- 'cause, see, this town was much smaller then.

0:52:05

Not near as many people. I guess the guy involved said, hey, Bruce, would you sell 'em in your store? Yeah, sure. Because they got a piece of it, too. Obviously, they had to give them a piece of it. [Phone ringing] If you're unavailable, I am. That's how I view that. But he just did. Now, he may have sold tickets to other shows, I don't know. Now, of course, in [19]65 I was a seven-year-old kid and, of course, I wouldn't have been at the show. Now, a friend of mine my age was. He went with an older cousin. Which I had an older cousin, but she didn't take me with her.

[Phone ringing] [Phone conversation]

0:53:01

Well, actually, that was legitimate. Every year we donate to AMVETS. I was not in the service myself. But, really, no, I think you've covered enough, or that's enough for one thing. As far as other little trivia, well, once I've sat down and thought awhile when you've been gone a couple hours, hey, why didn't I tell her that, is what'll happen.

Jaime Cantrell: Well, I can promise you if that happens let's get in touch and we'll do a follow-up interview, and you can think about what maybe strikes your memory in the time after we've spoken.

0:54:02

But thank you so much for you time today.

Mike Jones: Sure. Oh, no problem. Glad to do it. I hope it helps somebody. Only thing, it won't be a sensational expose. Probably be about like a thing about 20 years ago where-- you know who Jack Benny was? Well, he was one of the old-school guys, actor, comedian, stuff like that, show-host-type guy. And his daughter wrote a book about him, and she said it probably won't sell very good like the book on Joan Crawford and the book on Bing Crosby that showed what horrible people they were. She said, it won't sell like that because he was a model husband, a model father, treated us well, took good care of us, and it's just gonna be boring. [Laughter] So that's kind of about what we got here. Nothing crazy.

0:55:00

I have not been arrested multiple times. Oh, I did get thrown in the drunk tank when I was in Ruston.

Jaime Cantrell: But people love Southern Maid, and they remember it.

Mike Jones: That's the idea. Yeah.

Jaime Cantrell: And they want to remember it because there's the generations of people who've been comin' here, there's the generations of employees, and then there's the families.

Mike Jones: Yep, um-hm.

Jaime Cantrell: So it's tied into the history Shreveport.

Mike Jones: Oh, very much so. Oh, yeah. In fact, a guy named Steve Smith came by about a month ago. He was doing a book on stuff that used to be around. This might be pertinent. Back in the late [19]40s, early [19]50s, something like that, they came up with an idea to sell ice cream and donuts on a truck. When I was a kid, you had the ice cream truck coming by, and that was a big deal for us. You could run out there with your dime or get a popsicle or whatever.

0:55:59

Jaime Cantrell: They still come around in Highland. I'll hear it every now and then.

Mike Jones: Really?

Jaime Cantrell: Uh-huh.

Mike Jones: Hmm. I haven't seen one in a thousand years. But I only saw 'em when we lived in town. Out in the country you don't see 'em.

Jaime Cantrell: So they sold donuts on the ice cream truck?

Mike Jones: Yeah, for a time. They called it the Melody Men. In the stack of scrap pictures up there there's a picture of one of the trucks. But Steve told me he wanted-- that was what he was interested in was that picture, and he had done some research and it was Granddaddy, a Foremost

guy, and another guy that went in on it. And they were constantly looking for drivers 'cause they couldn't keep drivers. But the picture of the truck shows, like, an Army Jeep. The driver was fully exposed, no cover, nothing, in the middle of the summer selling ice cream and donuts with the sun pounding down on you. Now, back then nobody had air conditioning anyway, but no air conditioning is one thing; out in full sun is another.

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How long can you do that?

Jaime Cantrell: How long will the ice cream and the donuts last? [Laughter]

Mike Jones: Well, they got the cooler back there for that. There was a freezer. But the poor driver was completely exposed with the sun beating him to death. I wouldn't imagine-- I don't think I would do that very long, either. That was probably pretty tough.

Jaime Cantrell: So that's why it ended?

Mike Jones: I would imagine. I don't know how long they did it, but they did it for some period of time.

Jaime Cantrell: In the early . . .

Mike Jones: At some point in the [19]40s.

Jaime Cantrell: Um-hm.

Mike Jones: Somewhere around in there. But it went south.

Jaime Cantrell: Thank you so much.

Mike Jones: Sure. No problem.

[End]