

Earl Bernhardt & Pam Fortner
Tropical Isle — New Orleans, LA

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Interviewer: Rien Fertel

Transcription: Lori Lawton

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Project: French Quarter Cocktails

START INTERVIEW

[*Transcript begins at 0:02*]

Rien RF: This is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is Wednesday, February 11, 2015, just after 11:00 am. We are one week before Mardi Gras, kind of knee deep in the Carnival season, and I am in the offices of Tropical Isle on Orleans Avenue and I'm going to have the owners of the Tropical Isle enterprise introduce themselves please.

Pam Fortner: Hi, I'm Pam Fortner. My birthday is April the 3rd, born in Nashville, Tennessee, been in New Orleans since April the 4th, 1974.

Earl Bernhardt: And my name is Earl Bernhardt. I was born in Jackson, Mississippi. I never really tell the date. What I do if it's a college student or a young person, they'll ask me, "Well, how old are you?" I'll come back and say, "Well, how old is your daddy?" And whatever they say, "fifty-five, fifty-six, seventy" or whatever, I'll say, "By the way, that's exactly how old I am," and they accept it so I don't have to really tell them my true age.

RF: Thank you. I like that. I think my dad is sixty—nine years old. Pam, you said you moved to New Orleans. What brought you here when you moved?

[0:01:29]

PF: I'm a statistic. I lived in Nashville, Tennessee, used to work for the Corps of Engineers and I came to Mardi Gras in 1974 and I went back and quit the government job and moved to New Orleans and been here ever since. Worked for ten years and then the World's Fair came along, and we opened December the 15th, 1984 and the rest is history.

RF: Can you talk about that first Mardi Gras in 1974?

PF: It was just unbelievable. I met a lot of people. I've never seen anything like it. The weather was nice. The people were warm. Nashville's a great town, but I'm a city girl. I just was born in Nashville and I just loved all the people and everything, led a very, very kind of secluded — not secluded, but sheltered life and wasn't around people who drank. The food was just run of the mill Southern food, but not the spectacular food we have down here, so I moved down here on a whim.

RF: What brought you to New Orleans and when?

EB: Well, I've been coming to New Orleans ever since I was fifteen years old. The first alcoholic beverage I had was on my fifteenth birthday, which today they'd put the bartender in jail for serving me, but I was in broadcasting in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for twenty-seven years and when they announced they were going to have a World's Fair in 1984, a friend of mine that was a college roommate happened to be down here visiting with his family and they said, "Why don't we get a concession at the World's Fair." I said, "Well, that sounds like a good idea." Anyway, we ended up getting a daiquiri concession at the fair. I took a leave of absence from my broadcasting job and came down and ran the concession at the fair for six months. That's where I met my current partner, Pam Fortner. She came to work as a bartender at the Fair and after the Fair, we went into business together and it's going on our thirty-first year right now.

RF: When you say "broadcasting" — I want to kind of take the story apart, because I love this story — but when you say broadcasting, were you on the air, were you off the air, were you a DJ?

[0:03:44]

EB: Yes, I majored in radio and television at the University of Southern Mississippi and my first job was as a stringer for United Press International. That was before really television was great. Radio was the medium that everybody turned to for the news, and what they would do is send me to a hot spot. That was when all of the Civil Rights stuff was going on in Mississippi and I would take my tape recorder and get little voice excerpts and call back to Jackson, Mississippi which was the headquarters for United Press and feed them the voice clips that I had recorded. Like Ralph Abernathy of the NAACP spoke to a group in Hattiesburg after a murder that the Ku Klux Klan committed, and I got his comments and I would call him back, and they would send it out over the teletype so the news department of each radio station could read their copy and insert these voice clips.

After that, after a kind of hair-raising experience — almost got killed covering an event — I went into broadcasting at the local station as a disc jockey, and I eventually ended up owning a portion of the station, managing the station. I did a DJ show from five to nine every morning. I sold advertising. You know, when you're in media market radio, you do a little bit of everything.

So anyway, we decided—I decided to take a leave of absence for the World's Fair, went back to radio and at that time they started deregulating the licensing procedure and stations started popping up everywhere. The income in broadcasting went down and I said, "Well, it's time to do something else," and that's when I came to New Orleans full time. And we started small and we've grown to what we are today.

RF: What was that event that almost got you killed? Can you say what that is? Was it a Civil Rights event? Was it a violent event?

[0:05:48]

EB: Yes it was. I was covering—there was a Civil Rights leader called Vernon Dahmer between Hattiesburg [*Mississippi*] and Laurel [*Mississippi*]. He was instrumental in registering African Americans to vote, and of course the Ku Klux Klan didn't like that. They went in and set his house on fire and he perished in the fire, and there was a rally in downtown Hattiesburg at the black Masonic Temple, and Ralph Abernathy with the NAACP, as I recall, was the speaker and I got some voice excerpts from him. And of course this was before cell phones, I'm kind of telling my age. But I was walking back looking for a pay phone to call and I was in my news car. Well the—both sides, the Civil Rights side and the Ku Klux Klan, hated the media because each side thought we were slanted it the other way, which we weren't. But anyway, my news car was surrounded by a group of young African-American men that rocked the car, turned it over, and set it on fire with me inside of it. And the Hattiesburg police happened on the scene and got me out of the car and saved me, and that's when I found my pay phone and called United Press in Jackson and said, "This is Earl Bernhardt. I quit." And hung the phone up.

RF: Can you say a bit about — you were born in Jackson, Mississippi — can you say a bit about growing up in Jackson, maybe something about your family, what your parents did?

EB: Well, I didn't grow up in Jackson. We moved to Hattiesburg when I was in the first grade. My father worked for the Department of Agriculture. He would visit all the farmers and work with them on federal farming projects and such as that, and I went to school there in

Hattiesburg. I went to Hattiesburg High School and the University of Southern Mississippi. After that then went into local radio and then of course ended up in New Orleans.

RF: Can you explain in full, and you've done this once before, but that story about when you were fifteen, your first drink, your first visit to Bourbon Street? It's one of my favorite stories anyone has ever told me.

[0:08:04]

EB: Okay, well, you know, in Mississippi at the time you could get a driver's license at fifteen, so I was going to get my driver's license, I took the family car and my father went to work, and I got some of my friends and we went and I passed my driver's test and we said, "Hey, let's slip off and go to New Orleans. We can get back before Dad gets home and he'll never know we went." Well, the first thing we did was go to Pat O'Brien's and get a hurricane. And by about three o'clock that afternoon I was hugging a light pole. And to say the least, we were load—that night getting back to Hattiesburg, and of course I lost my brand new driver's license for it seems like I think six months and just really got in a world of trouble with my dad, but, you know, if I had it to do over again, I'd do it again. It was fun. [Laughs.]

RF: Who were you with; a friend, a buddy?

EB: Three of my high school friends.

RF: Do you remember their names?

EB: No I don't.

RF: So you came down, what did you think of Bourbon Street? You had your drink at Pat O's [*Pat O'Brien's*], or a couple of drinks at Pat O's, but do you remember anything about the street at that time, anything about the atmosphere?

EB: Well, the atmosphere is about the same as it is today, you know. Bourbon Street is an evolving thing. You have some of the standard places like us and Pat O'Brien's and Chris Owens and some of the clubs that have been here for years, and who probably will be here for years to come. And then some of the other places kind a they change management and change themes and also—Bourbon Street basically it evolves, but it's kind of like it was back then today.

[0:09:49]

RF: I want to ask more questions later about Bourbon Street evolving, especially with—I see Rich Campanella's book on your desk — and that's what his book is all about, but I want to ask you: what did you do in those years between when you moved here in the '70s [1970s] and '84 [1984]? We'll talk about the World's Fair after that.

PF: At one point I worked for—I had been a government employee, so I got a temporary job at the Public Health Service Hospital doing just general work, administrative type work. And then I worked for three days at the hotel on Canal Street that's now a Double Tree as a waitress in the morning. And then I met Irene Stevens who is now eighty-seven. She still lives here. You might want to interview her. She tended bar for many years and she liked me and she got me a job at Barbara's King's Room. Barbara's King's Room is not around, but Barbara Richardson is still around and a lot of—all of the business people and offshore oil business people came in there and I learned how to tend bar. I had never been behind a bar before and I worked all day

and there was one insurance man who drank twelve martinis that day and I'd never made a martini before in my life.

So, it went on and I stayed there for three months and then I met other people and went to work at the Holiday Inn on Royal Street and then things—and then I went to work for Jerry McDermott. I was an EAP, an Engineering Application Processor, and I stayed there for a while. And then I traveled for a while, and then I came back and the World's Fair came and a young man who worked for the Monaghan Properties, Johnny Becker, got me a bartending job and he and Carol Monaghan worked at the World's Fair, and that's when Earl needed a manager, talked to a lot of people. The World's Fair was fascinating to work at, you saw people from all over the world, old, young, it was just fascinating. It was a six month special event and then we—he needed a manager, he talked to about twenty people and I was one of the few people that saved money, so I had money to go in business and here we are. I never dreamed we'd do it thirty years.

[0:12:08]

RF: So, when you were looking for a manager to help you run the booth at the World's Fair, you were also looking for a financial partner?

PF: No, that was different from the World's Fair. I was just an employee at the World's Fair. The same Johnny Becker got me a job at the World's Fair.

RF: As a bartender?

PF: As a bartender at the World's Fair and it turned out it was Tropical Paradise. I was ready to leave the city. I had been here for ten years and I was ready to move on and he said, "Oh, just work at the World's Fair. You can leave after that." And that never happened.

RF: So you didn't know where you would be placed, at what bar at the World's Fair?

PF: Well, no, I was hired to work for these people at the World's Fair at Tropical Paradise, but I had no idea what it was really all about, you know. I was young and didn't think about what's really going on at the World's Fair. I was just ready to leave.

RF: One more question about your time here before the World's Fair. Where did you live in the city and how often did you come to the French Quarter and specifically Bourbon Street?

PF: Well, once I moved here, I moved to 1161 Lake Avenue. It was called Peyton Place Apartments, a very nice apartment complex. Then I continued to meet people. That's when I was working for the Public Health Service Hospital. Then I met people and moved into the Quarter, up above where Checkpoint Charlie's is now, and stayed there for a while. And that's when I learned how to tend bar and moved around from there.

RF: So what was Bourbon Street like in the '70s [1970s]?

[0:13:44]

PF: Well, in the '70s I didn't come down here. I lived down on Esplanade, so I hung around Molly's at the Market, The Abby. Coop's opened up and that was kind of my neighborhood. I didn't come to Bourbon Street that much. I came down and it was exciting, but I just didn't come down here that much. I met friends down in that area. Every block in the French

Quarter is a neighborhood. There's different areas like Lower Decatur Street, Upper Decatur Street, but basically every block is a neighborhood, totally different.

RF: Can you say more about that? What do you mean by that?

PF: Well, when you live somewhere, you live in an apartment complex, of course I never lived in New York City, but when you live somewhere, you go in and out of your door and you don't have the stoop to sit on in a lot of areas, so you go where you're going. So you can go for days and not see your neighbors, and even now we can go for days and days without seeing anybody. We have a young man who lives in the same block, Ride, he's a photographer, does lots of photography, well, we saw him last night, I hadn't seen him in a month or two. And that's just the way it goes. Everybody's on the big city. It's a small big city atmosphere, so everybody is busy, busy, busy. If they walk out their door, they're going somewhere. Except we do have four legal tables out front so sometimes we set and watch the world go by.

RF: So let's talk about the World's Fair, so you applied to the World's Fair. Can you say a bit again about where you heard about the application process and how that went?

EB: Well, when I was visiting here, the announcement came out in the newspapers, the front page news, that New Orleans would have a World's Fair and we decided we wanted to try to get in it and we did get in it because one of my partners was a female so that helped, you know, get into the Fair. They originally were going to put us in the Wonder Wall in a little small cubical, which would not have been successful at all, and I was at the World's Fair office wanting to plead my case and Lindy Boggs walked in. Of course Lindy Boggs was so outgoing and just loved everybody and such a great person and she came and sat down by me and she said, "What are you doing here?" And she could tell that I was really distressed. I said, "Well, I'm a

disc jockey from Hattiesburg, I mortgaged my home to get money to come down here and open the World's Fair concession and they're going to stick me in the Wonder Wall and it's not going to be successful. And about that time — she was in charge of the USA pavilion — and they called her name and she patted me on the knee and said, "We'll talk to you later," and she walked to the back. Well, when she came out about an hour just waved at me and I thought, "Well, I didn't get any help from her." Then they called me in the back and they had a big map of the Fair. They said, "Lindy talked to us. This was going to be a flower garden under the monorail. How would you like to have that location?" And my heart just jumped out of my body I was so happy and it turned out to be one of the most successful spots in the World's Fair. To this day I thank Lindy Boggs for saving my life. She was a great lady.

[0:17:03]

RF: Did you ever get to personally thank her.

EB: Yes I did. Harry Connick, Sr. who was the District Attorney at the time, formed a political group and she was part of that group, and Pam and I were part of that group and we got to work with her on many, many issues for many years.

RF: Tell me about the location. Can you tell me a bit more in full about what the location was, what it looked like, the booth, what it was named?

EB: Right, well, it was called Tropical Paradise. It was kind of an octagon-shaped building. My business partner was in construction and we didn't have a lot of money. The most expensive thing we had in there was the ice machines, but he took left over material from salvaged projects and put the thing together and I think we opened it for about a \$100,000 investment, while other people invested in the millions, I guess that's why we made some

money. But we were right under the monorail at the entrance to the Italian Village, right across from the Jazz Tent, and it was really a good location. But when the fair opened, to get on the monorail, everybody would come from the opposite direction over by what is now the Convention Center. They would enter there and they would exit there. Well, they were getting a real congestion so they came to me and said, “Look,” some of the operators in my part of the fair, “we’re going to put up some money and get the exit moved over to this end of the fair. Can you go in with us?” And I said, “Well, I don’t have any money. I’d love to. It’s a great idea, but I don’t have any money.” And they said, “Well”—they came back to me and said, “Well, if you’ll let us have the exit come right by your concession, you’ll lose your freight door, but we’ll go ahead and front the money for you.” I said, “Great, they can hand the freight over the counter.” So what happened then, people waited in line in the 100 degree weather for up to an hour to get on the monorail. They were riding around for forty-five minutes and then when they got off the monorail, they came out right by a frozen drink concession and it was like built-in success.

[0:19:17]

RF: What kind of frozen drinks did you serve?

EB: We did everything with fresh fruit. We had a—you’d see your produce in grocery stores in flats, we had bananas and oranges and papayas and all of that. And we had eight bartending stations. There were eight of these big commercial blenders, and also a freezer with ice cream. And the bar backs would chop up the fruit, bring it to the bartenders that put the fresh fruit in, strawberries or whatever, a big scoop of ice cream in the mix and they were just absolutely made-from-scratch-delicious, and we made virgin drinks for the school kids because a lot of school kids came to the Fair.

RF: I recently found my photo ID from the World's Fair. I was four years old. My mom gave it to me, so somewhere I think I had one of your drinks back then.

PF: Probably so. I think I made it. I remember you.

RF: So you were bartending there?

PF: I was actually bartending. Carol Monaghan, who is a well-known person in the city, who has moved to Hawaii, got Johnny Becker and the other bartenders, I had to work in the daytime. I was not fast enough to work at night. There were these eighteen, nineteen year-old bartenders who could pick up blenders and the drink was made. It was incredible. It was kind of fun working in the day. You got to see a lot of people, the families, like I say, the people from around the world. It was quite—you know, we snapped our fingers, as bartenders, we snapped our fingers and we were giving ice or fruit whatever we needed to make these drinks and we did it for six months. It was just an incredible experience. People really—I think there are a lot of people who remember all this. It was just a fantastic thing for the city. It was the beginning of a resurgence in the city. And people loved the drinks, because they had one or two—they had a place at the World's Fair that year that had the modern machines as we know, think of frostees now, but we made them in the blenders, so they were a quality product. And also what was interesting, it was a very structured thing, we could do strawberry daiquiris, banana daiquiris, margaritas, but only two mixed drinks, either a screwdriver or a Bloody Mary. Nothing else was allowed in the stands. It was very specialized.

[0:21:39]

RF: Had you ever managed a restaurant, a bar or anything like that?

EB: Well, not per se. Part of my experience in broadcasting, I had my own advertising agency and I had quite a few clients, which included bars and restaurants and just every kind of business. So in order to be successful in an advertising agency, you really have to understand everything about the business you're working with in order to come up with a good advertising schedule. And I did the radio and newspaper and a little bit of television, but by doing that, I kind of got a sense of how most businesses were operated and what was successful and what wasn't.

RF: So how successful was the stand? Maybe you don't remember the numbers, but how would you quantify the success of that business?

EB: Well, we were one of the more successful ones. I don't remember the figures, we didn't make a lot of money during the Fair because the attendance wasn't what was expected, but based on some of what the other people did, a lot of places went bankrupt. We came out, you know, pretty well. We were able to have enough to get started in our business down here.

RF: So tell me how that came about. What was the next step?

EB: Well, the next step was I acquired a little place on Toulouse Street, the first original Tropical Isle, which we don't have anymore. We operated it for twenty-eight years before we lost our lease on that, but then we moved right across the street to 600 Bourbon and continued right along. What was the question?

RF: What was the address of the original Tropical Isle?

PF: 738 Toulouse Street. It was formerly The Levee. At that time it was owned by Jim and Carol Monaghan, called The Levee.

RF: Can you say the address again?

PF: 738 Toulouse Street. It was The Levee. Can we jump to another great story that came from that?

RF: I'd love that.

[0:23:43]

PF: Okay, so that was The Levee and we opened December 15th of '84 [1984]. I continued to work in the daytime because it's hard to get bartenders, you know, they wanted the busy time, so I was tending bar in March, a rainy afternoon day, and eighteen men walked in from Chicago, the Foley Family and Friends: Jeremiah Foley and his sons and their friends. And they just wanted drinks. So they drank for about an hour. And Chicago people, we love the Chicago people, but they're loud, they're like New Yorkers, they're loud when talking. About an hour later they said, "Where's the dart board?" I said, "We don't have one." They said, "Okay, give us another drink." And that group of people come back every year since 1985.

RF: This was at the original Toulouse location?

PF: 738 Toulouse Street.

RF: So tell me about the Monaghan's because that name keeps popping up. Jim and Carol Monaghan, you were close to them?

PF: Well, I wasn't close to him, but I did work for him and Earl met him. They were just part of the people Molly's at the Market that used to be a very media-oriented bar, and Jim Monaghan was a character. Carol was kind of quiet, but she was, you know, behind the scenes working it. And that's kind of where we got our start. Had she not worked for Earl at the World's

Fair, he probably wouldn't have gotten a hold of that particular location. So, that's why they come up and we are still in touch with her. So, you know, it's just history.

RF: Tell me about the concept of the original Tropical Isle on Toulouse.

EB: Well, we thought since our concession at the Fair was so popular that if we opened up in the Quarter we would just have instant success. And that didn't happen. You know, people think just because it's Bourbon Street if you open up, the business is going to flow in, and that's not true. You have to have an angle, something to draw the people in, and we struggled at first, and then we decided well, we needed to come up with something, so every Friday and Saturday, we'd look toward Bourbon Street and everybody was carrying a Hurricane, and we said, "We have got to tap into that market." That's when the beginning of the experimentation and so forth to develop the Hand Grenade started, and of course once we got it started and marketed it we were successful with it. And you see what it is today: it's the number one drink in the French Quarter. We just sell tons of them.

[0:26:16]

RF: Well, it's one of the most famous drinks in the world. Can you tell me about the start of that drink?

EB: Well, Pam and I kind of have two different takes on how it started, but basically we started experimenting in the bar, mixing different concoctions, and it took us a number of weeks to come up with something we were satisfied with. And at first we made it from scratch, it had quite a few ingredients in it. And as the drink became more popular, we couldn't keep up with it, so originally, to make our volume better, we came up with a powder which didn't work because it was hard to dissolve it, and then we teamed up with a company here in town called National

Fruit Flavor and we developed a concentrate. So in the back of our bar, in our walk-in cooler, we have big vats and the bar backs take the concentrate and the water and the alcohol and mix it up and then it's pumped through refrigerated lines to each bartending station. So anyway, that's the way the Hand Grenade came about.

RF: What's your story?

PF: Well, my story is that we were talking about this, and I can involve his story too, when we first started, the drink was the Tropical Itch that had been served at the World's Fair. In fact, we have the trademark on the Tropical Itch, but too many people were already serving it. So, we went to the store, we were so little, remember it was just a tiny room, what?

EB: One thousand square feet and that included the bathrooms.

RF: Can you say that again?

[0:27:59]

EB: A thousand square feet and that included the bathrooms, so—.

PF: So that meant it was a small bar, so—and we started out and neither one of us had a lot of money, I didn't, but I had enough to, you know, buy everything we needed in there. So we went to the store to buy the back scratchers. At the time we had like the eighteen-inch back scratchers, the long ones, or whatever, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-inches, and so we were wandering around and we looked and there were toy hand grenades. They were gray, but you know, there a toy in the Mardi Gras store where beads are sold, so we said, "Oh, wow, we ought to make up a drink to go with that." In fact, we had somebody that tended bar for us back then who wore fatigues to work. You know, somehow that got in our head and we saw the toy hand

grenade and we made the drink to go with that and we thought it should be strong and green and here we are now. I call the drink, the color, is the Hand Grenade. It's Hand Grenade green.

RF: Why green?

PF: Army, Hand Grenade. That's how my mind went. I don't know how Earl's mind went.

EB: Yeah, I agree with that wholeheartedly that that's why we came up. And at first our logo was a—what's the combat guy that does all the movies?

RF: John Wayne?

EB: No, Rambo, Rambo. That's who I was trying to think of: a Rambo-looking character and then we had an artist that came up with our current Hand Grenade Man and that became our logo and it became very popular. In fact, we have a suit that a guy gets in and stands out in front of the bar, the Hand Grenade Man. And we have a big exploding hand grenade in the bar and we've just kind of milked the concept for all it's worth.

[0:29:55]

RF: Did they originally come in those foot-long plastic—?

PF: They originally came in a stadium cup that started out with the John Wayne-type person and then ended up with a Rambo-type person and then ended up with the Hand Grenade Man looking as we have now. That was the white stadium cup with printed, multi-colored print around it and then came the hand grenade about—as we know it now, a little while later. I forget what year we came up with what we have now.

RF: But you had that designed, that cup?

PF: Yeah, we've had that design for a long time, what, twenty-eight years or thirty years.
A long time.

EB: The Hand Grenade kind of evolved at first until we got it to where it is today and we've had that concept for years and years and years, so—and then you're right, it is famous all over the world. One of the smartest things we did was we trademarked the name “Hand Grenade” and “Grenade” right in the—shortly after we started, and now everybody wants to copy it, and we send them a cease and desist letter. In fact, we're in a law suit right now with a company that tried to take off on the name grenade and they called it “gurnade.” G-U-R-R— Anyway, that's not going to fly, so we just do everything we can to protect our trademark and it makes it really appealing. People know the only place they can get this drink is at our places in New Orleans. It's kind of like years ago when you couldn't get Coors beer here in the South and somebody'd go to Colorado and bring back a case of Coors beer and everybody thought that was the greatest thing in the world. It's kind of that exclusivity that makes it popular.

RF: What does your trademark cover, just alcoholic beverages with “grenade”?

[0:31:47]

EB: It covers alcoholic beverages in the name of “grenade” or “hand grenade.” It's also beverages because we have a grenade energy drink.

RF: Do you know how many cease and desist letters you've had to send over the years?

EB: It's been hundreds. It has been hundreds. People don't—bar owners don't realize that they can't serve it. And, you know, we have a lot of them at Mardi Gras who want to have

Mardi Gras parties and they'll advertise that they're going to serve a Hand Grenade and we'll send them a cease and desist letter. We have a thing on our website and in all of our bars that if anybody sees a bar selling a drink called a "hand grenade" or a "grenade" and they report it with documentation, they get a \$250 reward. And we've given out a lot of rewards.

RF: So at what point did you know or think that the Hand Grenade would become as popular and as tied to New Orleans as the Hurricane?

EB: Well, when sales got to that point. One thing we did to make the bar popular and that helped sell the drink is we came up with what's known today as Trop Rock music. We had a musician called Al Miller that—he knew every Jimmy Buffet song in the world and we started that type of music and it really clicked with the Tulane and—college students and they started coming out to the bar in droves and that helped make the bar and the drink popular.

PF: Something that was fascinating to me, I loved the people and I would stay there day after day and for the first three years, never went on a vacation. And at the original Tropical Isle 738 Toulouse Street on Friday and Saturday, we would have the fraternities come in from Tulane and on Wednesday and Thursday it would be the college students from UNO. It was kind of interesting how that evolved. They just picked their special nights and so that made it fun and we still stay in touch with some of those people. They've gone on to do some very interesting things. We, you know—they come back to see us. We have one person is a translator in Arabic, I mean that's pretty—that's quite an achievement. When we can't understand it at all and she translates it. And we have some lawyers and doctors, and now we have people who get engaged in there and they come back and they come back and they tell us about their wedding and they tell us

about the babies when they're born. We're in our thirty-first year, so we have a lot that goes back through that, but talking—

[034:32]

I can go to Australia and run into people and people say—and run into a band because we've had musicians in our place, and we've had—when they come in for the Jazz Fest or French Quarter Festival, they come by and maybe they play for us. And you run into people around the world. And most people around the world, we are known around the world. So, that's—. We've worked very hard to make it happen. It didn't just come to us. I think some people now say, “Well, look, they were lucky.” But we spent day and night there for several years.

RF: Were you both tending bar, or were you behind the bar—?

PF: I tended bar for the first three years and then it became so, you know—the paperwork, I was doing all the paperwork. I was doing the accounting. I was doing the taxes, the city and state taxes. A lot of people don't realize that people in business do a lot more behind the scenes. We pay city and state taxes every month and yearly, of course everybody has to do that, but monthly, city, and state. That's a lot, a lot of paperwork.

RF: When you came up with the recipe for the Hand Grenade — and I'm not trying to give the ingredient list or anything — but what kind of—did you know in your mind what kind of flavor profile you wanted? Did you know what notes you wanted to hit? How did you do that?

[0:35:46]

EB: Well we wanted it to—we decided we wanted it to have a melon flavor, which turned out to be very popular and we wanted it to be strong. One thing about it is with all of the fructose sugars in it, it hits you pretty quick and people like to get a good buzz off of it. We tell them don't drink too many because it takes a while for it to catch up with you. But the mix of the drink has been very popular. Since then we've come up with a skinny version, which is lower sugar for people on a diet or diabetics or whatever. Of course diabetics probably shouldn't drink, but I do. I do. But we have it frozen or on the rocks, and we just recently came up with something new, a hand grenade martini, which is getting to be very popular.

RF: Who drinks the Hand Grenade martini?

EB: We sell it in our restaurant down here. People that would be a regular martini drinker would try it. It's kind of a cross section. Not too many of the real younger drinkers drink it, more middle aged and older that are accustomed to drinking martinis, but it's just across the board.

RF: And what makes it a Hand Grenade martini?

EB: Well, because it tastes like a Hand Grenade. [Laughter.] We have green maraschino cherries in it and it's the color of the Hand Grenade and it's strong.

RF: Do you think you have a knack for marketing? I want to kind of go through all the marketing things you do, especially the commercials and everything else. You can get Hand Grenade peanuts and different flavored things.

EB: Oh yeah, we even have a Hand Grenade-flavored condom [Laughter], which gets a lot of laughs. People will buy them to take home as a joke. I don't know how many people

actually use them. I don't ask that question. It's kind of embarrassing. But we have Hand Grenade hot sauce. We've got a whole bunch of Hand Grenade products and they buy them in the bars, we ship them out. We do a lot of shipping of the mixes and so forth. But—

[0:37:57]

RF: Well tell me about the commercials. What about the first—you're famous for your commercials. I love the commercials. I watch them on YouTube. Tell me about the commercials, the first commercial, and how it got started.

EB: Well of course my background in broadcasting and advertising has certainly helped me. I just applied what I knew and what I worked in my other jobs to marketing the Hand Grenade and fortunately it was successful and I found that people like comical-type commercials. They pay more attention to them. The latest one we have has a lot of animation in it. It's a Mardi Gras float going down the street and the riders on the float are little hand grenade cups with arms throwing their beads, you know. We had a spot where we were in the jungle and that's the chief of the Bula Bula Tribe trying a Hand Grenade for the first time. It's just—we just do silly, funny things, but people really like them, you know? And the cornier the better.

RF: How long have you been doing the commercials?

EB: Oh, we've been doing commercials for years. I don't remember when we first started, but we do a combination of print media and television and, you know, people say, "Why do you keep advertising? It's so popular." Well, why does Coke keep advertising? Or Budweiser keep advertising? If you don't keep your name out there, you'll fall from grace, so we have a very extensive advertising program.

RF: And you're both in the commercials, in every commercial. Do you like being in the commercials?

[0:39:34]

PF: We invented the Hand Grenade. It all goes back to us and so we let people know. We like our customers. I can't say that some businesses don't care if you come back. We like our customers. We have customers that come back year after year. I told you about the one group of people, they'll be here in a month. They'll be here for St. Patty's Day again. And people come down here and we have bartenders who can remember five years later what somebody drinks. "Oh, hi!" They may not remember the name, but they know what they drink and people like that kind of recognition. We have music at our bars. People enjoy music. Music is an international language, so all that adds up to it. And, you know, that's why we advertise. We still go in our bars. We've had a few people come in. We've had the Nicholas Cage, we've had Ditka, and, you know, we appreciate our customers. We appreciate where we are. We work hard and we play hard and we still manage it.

RF: How does it make you feel to have repeat customers coming for thirty years?

EB: Well, naturally, we feel good about it. I don't know if you've noticed our price structure, but we're not quite as high as some of the other bars on Bourbon Street, and there's a very good reason for that. You know, if you charge an outrageous price, somebody will come in and drink one drink and leave. If it's a little more reasonable, they'll sit there and drink four or five drinks, which I would rather have that, and the customers get a real good rapport with the bartenders. We have bartenders that have been with us a long time. Marty Lackey, who was at the original Tropical Isle, has been with us — what Pam? — for twenty-six years. And we have

some long-term bartenders. And then of course people maybe just come to New Orleans once a year, but they do develop some sort of rapport with the bartender, “Oh, I saw you last year.” You know, it just works out for us. We like to think we’re good people to work for.

RF: I did some research. I was looking at old issues of the Picayune and I found a story about the Chicken Man. Can you tell me about the Chicken Man? I think he’s kind of a forgotten character in New Orleans history, but it seems so interesting.

[0:41:51]

EB: The Chicken Man was a real character. He would stand on Bourbon Street and he had a big staff and there were chicken feet on that staff, and they were lucky chicken feet. If you tipped him, he’d give you a lucky chicken foot, he’d tell your fortune and he was just a real character. Well, we were out of town and I got back in town and turned on the TV, the news, and they said the Chicken Man had passed away and that they were going to have to send his body to Potters Field because nobody stepped up for the funeral so I called the Charbonnet Funeral Home, the black funeral home here in the Quarter, and I said, “We want to bury the Chicken Man.” Well, we had the first jazz voodoo funeral that was ever held in the city, and supposedly he was, you know, had roots in voodoo. I don’t know whether he did or not, but that was what was claimed. But, we had the horse-drawn hearse that they have at Charbonnet, with his casket in it and white horses pulling the hearse and they went to the voodoo shop on Rampart Street, which was there at the time, and voodoo priestesses did a voodoo ceremony over the casket with snakes, and I remember his favorite drink was gin, and each of the voodoo princesses would take a mouthful of gin and spit it on the casket so he would have that drink in the hereafter. But anyway, it got coverage all over the world. I mean it was in the newspaper in Paris, France of all

things. It was on the front page of metro section of *The New York Times*. I mean this really just caught people's imagination. We didn't realize how it was going to snowball, we just wanted to bury the Chicken Man and it just was amazing. I mean reporters came from everywhere to check on the event. It was something.

RF: One of the papers also said that he blessed one of your bars when you opened. Is that true?

[0:43:55]

EB: Yes, it is true, and I'm not superstitious, but I'm thinking I believe this. He would come in the bars, or in a bar, and came in our bar and he had these magical ashes, and he would go to each wall and, with his finger in the ash, paint a cross. He did it on all four walls of the bar and blessed it and whether it was that or just a fluke, that's when our business started picking up, so I'm going to give the Chicken Man credit that his magic worked.

RF: So how many locations do you have now?

EB: Alright, we have five night clubs, which are the three Tropical Isles, which features the Trop Rock music, which is kind of a relatively new form of music. It's like Jimmy Buffet and rap and reggae and country kind of all mixed together. And we have that at the three Tropical Isles, which is a very popular form of music now, especially with all the Parrotheads around the world, Jimmy Buffet fans.

And then we have the Bayou Club, which is Cajun-Zydeco music, and Cajun-Zydeco is kind of dying art here in Louisiana, but there a lot of people that are trying to keep it alive and this band actually will sing in English and in Cajun-French. And then we have the Funky Pirate

Blues Club, which features Big Al Carson who has been with us for years. Big Al is “500 pounds of pure blues,” we call him. He’s a big guy, but he can just like put on a show like you wouldn’t believe. The people just love him. So—.

And then we have our restaurant the Orleans Grapevine, which is thirteen years old, and it’s in the top—this week I think it was number eight on Trip Advisor ahead of all the major restaurants here in New Orleans, and we’re just really pleased with that. We’ve just been blessed. That’s all I can say. We just absolutely have been blessed in what we do.

RF: How have you see Bourbon Street change in the past thirty years?

[0:45:58]

PF: It changes and stays the same. The music has changed. The crowds, as they get older, people change their way of doing. Maybe the people who like the jazz don’t generally drink as much. We flow with the things. One thing that we have seen, there’s a smoking issue that came up this year. I, as a business owner, I would like to be able to sell something and have people enjoy something that’s legal. Cigarettes at this point are legal. People under eighteen can’t have them, but then you go on, people don’t smoke as much as they used to. It’s a natural thing; people don’t eat as much fat meats, steak, and things like that. People are changing and that’s how people change, they’re healthier. We have a lot of runs that come through New Orleans, so people come, they eat their pasta, they have a few drinks, and they run around the city. People are more health conscious. People don’t drink and drive like that used to, it’s illegal for one thing, but they have that responsibility. So people come—people can come to the French Quarter and everybody can walk and have a drink and relax. It’s not just about drinking, it’s about socializing. Anybody can eat at home, anybody can drink at home, it’s just socializing. It’s a big

social event. I think that the French Quarter is much like Washington, D.C. and the Vatican. People have a right to come to a historic area in their country, and they come from around the world. There's something about the ambiance of the French Quarter and the City of New Orleans and the state, the Cajuns, there's something special and people mimic it all over the world. Every city in every country you go to has a Cajun restaurant. It may not taste good, but they have it.

RF: You're absolutely right. Tell me your thoughts on Bourbon Street over the years.

[0:47:49]

EB: Well, back in the '60s and '70s, Bourbon Street was pretty much under the control of the mafia, the Jewish mafia. They owned all the clubs down here. That was when all the burlesque women were so famous: the Cat Girl. I remember at the 544 Club they had the Champagne Girl that would climb up a ladder and get into a glass, a huge glass of champagne on stage and strip. That club had an orchestra pit, they had comedians that would come out. I mean it was really a Vaudeville-type show. People wore suits, the ladies dresses. Of course you don't see that today, but it has changed drastically since then. You didn't have any crime problems in the Quarter, because if there was like these gutter punks that hang out and bother people, the mafia would give them one chance to leave, and if they didn't, they would be in serious trouble. The Quarter was safe then and of course, you know, they did some bad things too, but not to the tourists that came down here, but it's evolved from that into what it is today. It's more of a laissez faire attitude, you know, and raise hell in the streets and throw beads and show your you know what.

RF: One quick question. Did you see the Champagne Girl?

EB: Yes, I did. I absolutely did. You'd go in there and you'd get an expensive drink in a little bitty tiny cup and it was barely enough liquor in there to color the water, but that's what you did. But they would put on quite a lot of shows. There were some movies made about the street then. What was the girl that had an affair with the governor? You know, all of that was going on at that time. It was really a colorful time.

[0:49:44]

RF: So, we were talking about Richard Campanella's book before. A lot of people around the world think of the French Quarter and Bourbon Street as almost the same thing and they think of it as the pictures that are most famous, so drinking and the craziness. Other people might say that the French Quarter and maybe even Bourbon Street can be family friendly. It's a different place than what you see in pictures. What would you say to that? Or how would you answer that?

PF: People come to Bourbon Street looking for music. They look for the jazz. What people have to realize is that times have changed. The music has changed. The, you know, the big band era has passed and people do that as a specialty, but it can't—it's not exactly a family—it depends on what the family is. It's adult families and their children. We make everyone be twenty-one to come in our club, so it's an adult family affair. We have—. I've performed weddings for people. The family came. The kids turned twenty-one. They came in from Petaluma, California, and I performed the wedding ceremony on top of Al's balcony a couple of years ago. They have to be twenty-one. The people from Chicago, they make their family members be twenty-one before they get to come and now the grandkids come. Jeremiah was here and now the grandkids are here and they come back every year and bring more friends.

RF: What would you say to people, there's a lot that I'm friends with, who say that Bourbon Street is not the real New Orleans?

PF: Well I don't know how they can say that. Ask those people what is the real New Orleans. New Orleans as a whole; its music, its food, its camaraderie, it's eclectic. I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. I tell everybody; I grew up non-ethnic. When I grew up, I didn't know Catholics, I didn't know Jews, I didn't know Irish people, I just, I was mid-America and so in that way this is a melting pot. People come down here and I'm not getting the right word that I really want to say, but there's just an ambiance.

[0:51:55]

I mean, we have the most famous church in the world a half a block from where we're sitting right now and that's Saint Louis Cathedral. I'm not Catholic, but I consider that my church. If I really need a silent moment, I go sit in the back of the Cathedral and calm down. You can see the river. You have the river boats. You have the Aquarium. You have the street car. You know, how many cities have street cars? Not many. People resent Bourbon Street and they shouldn't. You don't have to come here, but it's here if you want to come, and it's just an excitement, a nighttime excitement.

RF: Why do you think people resent Bourbon Street?

EB: Well, I don't think the public in general does. I think some of the residential groups like VCPORA, I call them the terrorist group of the French Quarter. They don't think that people should be able to have music and there shouldn't be clubs on Bourbon Street, people shouldn't walk around with a drink. They want the Quarter to just be quiet, and the only thing to see here are the old buildings, which eventually will fall down if we don't have revenue to keep them up.

They don't realize how expensive it is. Like this building you're sitting in, it's just a constant outflow of money to keep this thing together, you know. If we didn't, it would collapse. So it takes the tax money from Bourbon Street, which is a big part of the city budget, to keep the city going, but it's just some of these residents that just—I don't know why they moved here. They could go live out in the country or something if they don't like music and people, but that's the ones that resent Bourbon Street. Bourbon Street is part of the overall New Orleans experience. There's more to see than Bourbon Street. Come to New Orleans, see the streets, see the rest of the city, and you'll go away with a sense of accomplishment that you saw it all, you did it all.

RF: So is Bourbon Street part of the real New Orleans?

[0:53:59]

EB: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's part of the real New Orleans. It's a, you know, really the music here—we have won for the past I don't know how many years the Best of the Beat Award for having the best music on Bourbon Street. We try to do the best. We try to present the best cocktails, the best atmosphere, nightclubs, the best music, and I think that's one part of Bourbon Street being successful. I can't say Bourbon Street is all New Orleans, it's just part of the whole picture. New Orleans is quite a complicated place and a lot of stuff to see, and Bourbon Street is just one part of it, and most people, when they come to the city, do come to Bourbon Street at least once.

RF: I want to ask a question about the World's Fair. So y'all worked together, you all met in the booth for the first time and then you became business partners in Tropical Isle. Is this a partnership in another way?

PF: No, we're business partners. We go different ways. We go a lot of places together. We're always promoting. No matter where we go, we're promoting. We give out our cards. We invite the city. I've traveled to Australia for several years, been into Canada, we've been to Europe and where we go, we give out cards, but where we go we don't just talk about our places, we talk about the city. There is something to come and see. We don't just promote our businesses, but yes, of course we promote our business, but in turn, that helps other people. I mean there are bookstores in the French Quarter. It's just a great place to come. You can walk everywhere. It's a part—. A lot of people never have the opportunity to go to Europe. It's very European, very, very European. It's a teeny tiny area with a huge reputation. I tell people it's like thumbnail size of New York City and I love New York City it's just huge. It's, you know—I love the Super Dome being here. People can walk to and from the Super Dome. That's amazing! Instead of having, you know, in the snow to get out and take a street car, take a cab, they can walk to and from. So, it's just a huge, wonderful city.

[0:56:19]

RF: But you're not married?

PF: No. No. Business partners.

RF: Do you share custody of the dogs?

PF: Well, they're the mascots. They're the mascots of the office. Actually the dogs, Mickey and Mitsy, little five-pound poodles, they help the employees. We get under a lot of stress. We've grown so slowly, we still run our business kind of like a mom and pop operation some days, but they get to relax a minute when the dogs bark at them and it calms them down. And sometimes we set outside in front of the Orleans Grapevine and people are like, "Oh, do

they bite?” “Oh, can I pet them?” “Awe, I left my dog at home. I miss my dog so much.” So they’re the mascots and they liked you. That was good.

RF: That’s good! I need to ask a question about one more drink. The Shark Attack which I think is becoming a little more popular now. It seems to be riding the wave of popularity. Can you tell me about the Shark Attack drink?

EB: Well, what we do with the Shark Attack, it’s basically, if you want to describe what it tastes like, it tastes like a Tom Collins, but the thing is is all of the hoopla that goes with it. When we make the Shark Attack, the bartenders blow the whistle and ring the bell. We’ve got some audio at Tropical Isle Bourbon that came from the movie Jaws. It’s the Jaws music and it says, “Warning, a great white shark has been sighted. Get out of the water!” But anyway, the little plastic shark that we have is about eight inches long and it’s filled with grenadine, and the bartender puts a little alligator on top of the drink and when he sets it in front of the customer, he pushes the shark into the drink, the alligator goes up in his mouth and all that grenadine comes out like blood and everybody just gets a big kick out of it. It’s just a big show.

[0:58:18]

RF: Did you write the show? Did you create it?

EB: Well what we did, you know, there’s no new ideas, just like everybody tries to steal the Hand Grenade, we’ll steal something if we can. We got the idea from another bar. We just expanded on it, added all the theatrics to it and made it what it is.

RF: So they had a shark and a drink called the “Shark Attack”?

EB: Yeah, they just set it on the bar and there was a little plastic shark in it, and I said, “Gosh, we can improve on that and make it a dramatic thing. And we did.”

RF: Do you remember the name of the bar?

EB: Yeah, but I’m not going to say.

RF: That’s fair. That’s fair.

PF: And I have fun with it because sometimes the parents will come in because we have a wonderful city that you can enjoy, you can walk around with your drink and see everything, and that way with having drinks that can be taken on the street, they can walk – parents can enjoy their adult beverages and then the children can come along. Well, if I see them out on the street every once in a while I’ll get one and say, “Do you want me to fix you a drink?” And that’s the only drink that we have of our specialty drinks that we can serve non-alcoholic, so I can give that, and then they’ve got a toy. Kids get bored really quickly, so that entertains them. It’s very interesting, you know, adults are just big kids. Adults like the toy hand grenades, they like the sharks. It’s very interesting where people put the sharks and how they display them sometimes. You hear people come back and they talk and they say, “Oh yeah, I was here last year and in my office I have Hand Grenades above the ledge where I work.” So that’s all fun.

[0:59:55]

RF: I wanted to ask that next; the drinks that you serve are really adult beverages, right, but they come, you know, in plastic containers and they’re funny shaped and they have toys in them sometimes. Do you make drinking fun or is drinking supposed to be fun all the time?

PF: Why not fun? Why do people drink? They drink because it relaxes them, they socialize, and the toys are just an added attraction. It gives them something to play with while they're drinking. If they play with their toys then they're not smoking maybe.

RF: Do you ever run across people who treat it too seriously or think it's not fun?

PF: Well, that might be somebody—I mean no, because those people I wouldn't be talking to. They've be very quiet anyway. It's just the people—you know, people come up and they want to take our photographs because we did invent the Hand Grenade. So sometimes, you know, we give back to people that they come in. We appreciate our customers and they enjoy being noticed and they come in groups and they come back in groups and they tell people. It's word of mouth. There's so much. There's piano players in New Orleans, in the French Quarter, and guitar, there's all kinds of music. It's not just one genre. There's something to appeal to everybody and they shop, they can come to a tiny area. This is a little city in the French Quarter. It's a special city. They can shop, they can eat, they can drink, they can site see, they can go to church. You know, we've things coming up. We've got the French Quarter Festival coming up. We've got Jazz Fest coming up, and lately the Saint Louis Cathedral has been having more musical events at night for people to enjoy which is, you know, really great that they're sharing our history.

RF: Have you read Richard Campanella's new book on Bourbon Street?

[1:01:56]

EB: Yeah.

RF: What did you think about it or what did you learn about this place, about Bourbon Street, that you found really most fascinating?

EB: Well, I've been here so long I don't think I really learned anything I didn't already know. I think it's a well written book. I appreciate the nice things he said about us in the book and if somebody really wants to understand Bourbon Street from the get go on up until today, I suggest they read the book. It's very good, well written.

RF: Just a couple more questions. You mentioned the Tropical Itch, which is a drink that I think y'all still serve but it's not as popular as a lot of other drinks. Can you explain what a Tropical Itch is?

PF: A Tropical Itch is basically a fruit punch, but it comes with a back scratcher still. It's only an eight-inch back scratcher, but it's still a toy, and, you know, it tastes good. And people—. In fact, right now we have some green tea in it, so that even makes it good for you. Then we have the Horny Gator that is called the Happy Gator at the French Quarter Festival, and it's a vodka pineapple-flavored type drink. It's a Hand Grenade that's a secret. People like a rum punch. If they want a stronger drink, they do the Hand Grenade, but it still sells quite a bit.

EB: We have sign in our bars that's a picture of a Hurricane with a big circle and a slash through it and it says, "We do not serve Hurricanes. But if somebody has a taste for one, the Tropical Itch is probably the closest thing to it."

RF: So you both are wearing gold hand grenade-shaped pendants. How has the Hand Grenade, kind of, become part of you?

EB: Well, we wear these because we are the Hand Grenade people. These are solid gold and we like to wear clothes with our logos on the back and we just like to be walking advertisements.

[1:03:56]

RF: And you mentioned the Hand Grenade green, and last time I talked to you you said how you really love that color and you, kind of, surround yourself with that color. Can you say more about that?

PF: Well, I just do. That's the color of the drink. Jackie Clarkson used to wear red all the time, she was our city council person. Well, I wear a lot of green. When I don't wear green, people say, "Why don't you have green on?" It's become a trademark. My car is Hand Grenade green. You've got to wear something, so you may as well—in the wintertime I wear a lot of black. In the summertime I'm very brightly dressed, a lot of white and green and colors. I like colors. Life is not in black and white. I do not like black and white photographs. Life is color, to me.

RF: I love that. What is the future of, kind of, the mini empire that you've built? What happens next?

EB: Well, that's a good question. This is something that we have been discussing. We're not getting any younger and of course we enjoy what we're doing, and I want to keep doing this until I fall over one day, but unfortunately we don't have any family that can take over. Pam has no children. I have three grown daughters that are not interested in taking over the business, so right now it's kind of—we're trying to make a decision about what the future's going to be. We don't know yet.

RF: What do you hope?

PF: What do I what?

RF: Do you hope that the bars continue forever, right?

EB: Right, well, yeah. Eventually we'll have to have somebody to take them over, sell them or lease them or something. After Mardi Gras I have a plan to meet with our attorney to try to come up with a future plan.

[1:05:55]

RF: Alright, so one more question. We are almost to Mardi Gras. We're a week away. How do you prepare for Mardi Gras? Can you prepare for Mardi Gras? Do you love or hate Mardi Gras?

PF: I like Mardi Gras. It brings people in. It makes us tired. There's a lot of pressure. We've got to make sure we have enough staff. We have to have money just to make change. We have to buy food because we do have New Orleans Grapevine, we've got to get the food in. We've got to have ice, which nobody thinks about. You've got to have plenty of ice. You've got to have ice delivered every morning. You've got to have the product in. You've got to have your alcohol in. And it gets pretty overwhelming even to us, but no, we like it and it's good for the city. It is good for the city and, so, we're part of it.

RF: And your thoughts on Carnival?

EB: Well, it's stressful, but the main thing is you don't want to run out of anything. We have a stock clerk, I guess you'd call him, that's—Larry's been with us for twenty-three or twenty-four years, and he pretty much knows what it's going to take to get us through. Right

now all of our store rooms are just packed to the ceiling with all of our supplies, all of our alcohol, and of course, you know, you can get emergency deliveries if you need them, but usually, after Mardi Gras is over, we still have stuff left over because we overstock just so we don't run out. So after all these years we pretty much learned the routine, but it's still stressful.

RF: Alright, well I want to thank you all very much.

PF: Anybody you talk to, like, it is a laissez faire place, but there are rules. People sometimes leave their brains at the airport or the state line. There are certain things they need not—. They shouldn't get too drunk. There's responsible drinking. And men or women should never show their parts below their waist, and some people don't believe that and the police will take them to jail. So I wish that we could get across to people: don't do anything in this city you wouldn't do in your own city. I know that some people come here and they think they can do drugs. Drugs are illegal, folks, and they should not do them.

[1:08:12]

RF: Do you still see crazy things, not just at Mardi Gras, but all the time?

PF: Periodically something happens because it's a visible area and everybody is walking around. It's much like New York City. Yes, there are some crazies. I guess we'll have the naked cowboy come in.

RF: But do you think Bourbon Street is any dirtier, more sinful, whatever, blah, blah, blah than anywhere else like Vegas or New York?

PF: No, I think we live in glass bowls down here, but be not judged, people shouldn't be judgmental. If they don't like it, they don't have to come here and what people do here for the

most part is just friendly stress relief. I call it a stress relief area. Stress relief. Like I say, it's not just about eating and drinking. They come here because who knows what's happening to them and people need to smile at people because you never know what somebody else is going through. Cancer is so prevalent in this country now and the world, and you never know, maybe they're just here to feel good. Maybe they have one day here, but it's a feel good city. It is a feel good city.

RF: What are your thoughts on New Orleans, on the city?

EB: Well, there's an event in Key West called Fantasy Fest and we go to Key West a lot and people have commented; "Well, there's a lot more nudity at Fantasy Fest than there is at Mardi Gras," and I tend to agree with that. You'll see a lot more of that in Key West than you will here. The police kind of turn their heads when the girls are on the balcony flashing, but, you know, they don't let it go too far. So, you know, I think it's within reason.

[1:09:59]

PF: Do you want to see something funny? That has been in this Arthur Hardy's *Mardi Gras Guide* for like the last three or four years. The people from Rouses Grocery Store said, "Miss Pam! Miss Pam! You're in the magazine! You're in the magazine!" I said, "What are you talking about?" Isn't that funny?

[*Phone rings*]

That was a long time. We talked a lot.

RF: We did. I just want to get some ambiance noise. We like to do that.

EB: I was trying to find that current commercial. I wanted you to see it.

RF: How many have you made, do you know?

PF: No, I don't know. We get to do fun things. That's pretty funny. I never would have seen that little tiny—.

[1:11:55]

END OF INTERVIEW