

PATSY FREY
Billy and Ray's Boudin – Opelousas, LA

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Date: February 19, 2009

Location: Billy and Ray's Boudin, back office

Interviewer: Mary Beth Lasseter

Length: 49 minutes

Project: Boudin Trail

[Begin Patsy Frey Interview]

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Mary Beth Lasseter: This is Mary Beth Lasseter with the Southern Foodways Alliance and today is Thursday, February 19, 2009 and I'm here in Opelousas, Louisiana; if you would please, introduce yourself. Tell me what you do.

00:00:16

Patsy Frey: I'm Patsy Frey; we own Billy and Ray's Boudin here in Opelousas and also have a store in Krotz Springs called Billy's Mini-Mart. We make boudin and cracklings and sausage.

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MBL: Let's start--just talk with information about your family. Can you tell me a little bit about where y'all are from?

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PF: I'm from Washington, Louisiana, and Billy, my husband, is from Mowata, Louisiana, which is right outside of Eunice. I've been living here in Opelousas for probably 17 years, lived in Washington you know all my life; my mom and dad you know we grew up on a farm. We used to butcher and make boudin as--as a child, so I kind of knew a lot about it and my husband knew nothing about it and wanted to start making boudin. So my dad, James Quibadeaux and my mom, Shirley, and some of my uncles helped us start making boudin, Earnest and Andrew Landry--actually my cousins should I say. **[Laughs]** They helped my husband start making

boudin and cracklings in 19--probably 1997 we started on boudin and cracklings after we opened the store in Krotz Springs.

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MBL: Tell me a little bit if you will about your parents and the farm that y'all had.

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PF: My dad has been a farmer all his life. My mom is a housewife, but we had chickens and pigs and we'd go to the field a lot. That's what we did and I used to go all the time with my dad. **[Laughs]** I was a daddy's girl I guess you should say. **[Laughs]** And still live on a farm today; we have horses. Our kids ride rodeo and they compete. And we have like seven horses on our place and you know we live on 16 acres, so countryside you know--.

00:02:34

MBL: Do your parents still live on the farm that they had when you were growing up?

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PF: Yes; yeah, they sure do.

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MBL: And what about your grandparents, the parents before them? Were they also in the farming business?

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PF: Yes; my dad--daddy was a farmer. And actually he lived next door to my grandparents, my daddy's mom and dad, yeah.

00:02:56

MBL: Let's talk a little bit about butchering animals and--and what you remember about that.

00:03:03

PF: I remember we'd get up early in the morning and dad would go out and kill the hog and we'd start just they'd cut the meat and they'd grind it and we'd cook and we'd get together with family members, all my aunts and uncles and my cousins and they'd just put these--this hog fat in a pot and start stirring and cook cracklings. And then we'd grind the meat up and make boudin and put in the casing and then we'd eat. *[Laughs]*

00:03:35

MBL: Were y'all--how did that go; were y'all butchering pigs that you knew and had named as a child or were they sort of anonymous animals?

00:03:42

PF: Sometimes they were raised you know more than likely yeah we raised them on the farm, yeah; and then they butchered them and they'd put roasts in the freezer and they'd make a backbone stew, you know. It's just the backbone of the pig I guess and make a stew out of it and that's what we'd eat for lunch. *[Laughs]*

00:04:07

MBL: So--so who all in the family was coming to this? Like how--how extended was the--the family and friends invited to something like that?

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PF: My dad's brothers. He doesn't have a brother sorry; my dad's two sisters and his aunt and his cousins that lived next door across the street from us. We'd just get--just whoever wanted to come they'd invite and everybody would just get together and have fun.

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MBL: Are they--is the--is the family farm, your parents' farm still a working farm these days?

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PF: Well--well we actually live--my dad didn't farm the land there; we just had our animals--chickens and--and pigs and stuff. And we lived there; they worked a ways from--from the house when they farmed soybeans and--and corn and it's about a 40-minute drive from where we lived, around Morganza, Louisiana.

00:05:03

MBL: So was that land that the family owned or y'all had leased it from some folks?

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PF: Yeah; he just leased. They didn't own and my brother farms it today but he still leases. He doesn't--they don't own it.

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MBL: And what kind of stuff is he farming?

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PF: Soybeans and sometimes corn, sometimes milo, but mostly soybeans.

00:05:25

MBL: Did y'all I guess--where did y'all sell the animals that you raised? Was there a local slaughterhouse that you would send them to or--or were they strictly for your family's consumption?

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PF: The slaughterhouse here in Opelousas--I think it was called *Stutz* at the time. They would--they would go there and butcher the--bring the--if we raised the calves you know they'd slaughter the calves, put the meat in the freezer, or sometimes the pig if they didn't do it you know that kind of stuff--we'd go there.

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MBL: Uh-hm; is that place still in operation?

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PF: No, no; not at all.

00:06:01

MBL: Talk to me a little bit--I'll ask you a little later about how you make boudin but how did your parents make it? Was it any different sort of how they stuffed it for example and that kind of thing?

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PF: Yeah; 'cause in those days they just had a hand-stuffer. You know you put the casing on the--on the little deal and--and you turn it, you know you'd turn the casing--well the grinder I guess you should say and--and it would--it would stuff it into the casing and you'd have to do everything by hand in you know those days.

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MBL: Were they using like the real casings or were they ordering them from somewhere else? Was your--was your grandmother washing casings?

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PF: I think so; I think at that time, yeah they did their--either they--they bought them or they did their own. I don't remember that part; I just remember them putting them on that deal--funnel; it's called like a little funnel and you put it on and then it stuffs with so much and then you have to twist it at the end so it didn't come out. You'd put some more; so it was very time-consuming.

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MBL: So how much boudin would you be making at one of these family events from--from one pig?

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PF: I would say maybe 50--100 pounds you know depending if they did one or two pigs. I don't recall but you know they--they would freeze it you know after it was cool and stuff. They'd freeze it just like we did all the other meat and--and put it up and then ever when you wanted it--it was there. We'd put so many links in a pack and--and put the waxed paper and you know freeze it up.

00:07:44

MBL: Now was this--was your family French-speaking? Did--did they have ties to that cultural heritage around here?

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PF: Yeah; my mom and dad do speak French. They do. You know they do more English you know but--and when we were growing up yes, they did speak a lot of French but we didn't--we didn't really pick it up. You know we could have but we didn't. We just went to the English part.

00:08:09

MBL: So did they speak it like conversationally with their friends at all or was it just a couple of words thrown in every--every couple sentences?

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PF: No; they spoke it with their--their in-laws and--and sisters and brothers and you know they did speak it a lot.

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MBL: And did you retain any of it or just a few words?

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PF: Some it; yeah, yeah I do. I remember some of them but not a lot.

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MBL: So I gather you don't speak it with your children today?

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PF: No; I don't. I wish I would but I don't. *[Laughs]*

00:08:41

MBL: So your family has the background that--that came from the agricultural tradition and the boudin making. Tell me what you know about your husband's family if you will.

00:08:49

PF: Well they also have--live on a farm and my father-in-law farms--farmed, and my mother-in-law was a housewife just like where I came from. My father-in-law is--was a rice farmer and also bean farmer. And today his son took over his farm and in their family they have boudin makers; Bubba Frey has a store in Mowata and he makes boudin. So it kind of comes from both sides you know. I don't think they did a lot of the butchering like we did but they did more of the--they do more of the farming with the rice--a lot, a lot of rice farming.

00:09:31

MBL: Now where--where is that family farm again?

00:09:35

PF: Mowata, Louisiana.

00:09:38

MBL: So both of your families are from the area. Tell me a little bit about how you met your husband.

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PF: Well I met him in Lake Charles, Louisiana after a rodeo at a dance hall. *[Laughs]* And we just met and--and that day forward we continued together.

00:10:02

MBL: How old were y'all when you met?

00:10:04

PF: He was *[Knock on Door]*--

00:10:08

MBL: We can--we can pause this very briefly so you can answer the door. All right; we're back. Patsy had to run out and finish making some jambalaya she was working on before the beginning of the interview. And when we left off we were talking about how you met your husband it was after a rodeo?

00:10:24

PF: Yes; we went out to the barn--cowboys and--at Lake Charles and just started dancing and then we went on from there, so--.

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MBL: Now do y'all both rodeo or--or did you at the time?

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PF: No; I never rodeo(ed). He did. He was a bronco--saddle-bronco rider and rode some bulls but his whole family is rodeo. They like to ride rodeo; his dad was inducted into the Hall of Fame a few years ago and two of his brothers went to the NFR.

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MBL: Now I don't know what the NFR is.

00:10:55

PF: National Rodeo Finals, the pro-rodeo; yeah.

00:11:02

MBL: Oh; so--so the rest is history. When did you get married? How long have y'all been married?

00:11:07

PF: We've been married 18 years January 25, 1991. We have three kids, two girls and a boy, 16, 13, and 11.

00:11:22

MBL: And do any of them--I know you said they ride; do any of them rodeo?

00:11:24

PF: Yes; they do. The high school rodeo, junior high rodeo and we do different little clubs and we got to roping(s) and barrel racing(s).

00:11:33

MBL: Is that like private organizations who are doing that or is that within the schools that they offer those programs?

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PF: Well it's through the State of Louisiana. Yeah; and--and you just go through your school. You have to be approved by the Principal and if your grades are not good you--you know can't ride, so it's a sport just like any other sport but outside of the school.

00:11:55

MBL: Well let's talk a little bit about what you did--we'll get to the store. But let's talk a little bit about what y'all did--what were your careers prior to opening the stores?

00:12:06

PF: Well when I met my husband he was working for PPG out of Lake Charles. He has a degree in Construction Management. And then he moved on to work in Vicksburg, Mississippi--.

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MBL: Where--where I live; we were talking about that earlier.

00:12:22

PF: And at the time I'd go and you know--I'd meet him up there on--sometimes on weekends and--and we'd visit. And then he decided to propose in Vicksburg, so we--.

00:12:37

MBL: Right there at that beautiful view of the river?

00:12:39

PF: Yes. [*Laughs*] And then I worked for Macro Oil here in Lafayette as an Accounts Receivable Clerk and did that for years. And then after we got married, we were going to move to Lake--to Vicksburg and then he got transferred to Lake Charles, so then I had to quit Macro and go onto Lake Charles. And I stayed home for a little bit and then worked at a bank. And then I started having children. [*Laughs*] So then I became a housewife and after the second daughter was born is when we opened our first store in Krotz Springs in 1995.

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MBL: Tell me about opening that store. How did you decide to do it?

00:13:24

PF: Well my husband always wanted his own business and one day my dad asked him if he wanted a store; there was one that was closed down in Krotz Springs, so I really didn't want that but he did. And he was tired of going back and forth. We lived in Lafayette then and he would drive to Baton--to Lake Charles. We moved on back; we have rental property so we moved into one of our townhouses. And he got kind of tired of that and just wanted his own business. So he and my dad went and looked at it and it just so happened a man named Jim [Duplichain] who has--who had an oil Shell--oil refinery company in Eunice, boat plant, approached us and he actually co-signed for us to open this store with the gas pumps and--and helped us out through the bank along with my dad. My dad helped us out with the money and we paid him back and that's kind of how we got started.

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And then about a year or two after we were in the convenience store business things wasn't real good 'cause we wasn't from Krotz Springs. It was kind of hard to get our business up and running. My husband said well we're going to make boudin. And I was like well I don't know if that will work. And he was like well we're going to try it. And of course I didn't want to do it. And he did so we did it and it's been a hit ever since.

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MBL: So when y'all first opened that store it was a straight convenience store, just gas and chips?

00:15:01

PF: Yes; gas, chips, we have a little diner on the side--cooked hamburgers and fried chicken and stuff like that. And then as the time went on we put a hot-box in the front of the store and the diner would cook food and put it in the hot-box. Well when we started with the boudin we got approached by Crispy Crunchy, who is a breading company and they do fried chicken. Well we started buying their breading and they showed us how to do boudin balls. And after they showed us how to do boudin balls with their breading, we decided well we can make our own breading with our own seasoning. So we now make our own breading with our own seasoning and we fry boudin balls. And that has been a hit ever since.

00:15:47

MBL: When y'all first started serving the hot foods in this first convenience store, were--were you working there or were you--were you doing the cooking or had y'all hired some folks to do that?

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PF: No; we hired people to cook. Now my husband would make the boudin--him and some other guys made boudin. It wasn't very much you know; we'd do a little bit each time. As we'd run out we'd make some more. And then they started with the cracklings, with one little pot and my dad and my cousins, you know Earnest and Andrew Landry helped him with that too, showed him how to cook cracklings and again that was a hit. *[Laughs]* So we've been very fortunate and very lucky.

00:16:32

MBL: So how was he doing that; was he coming in and--and cooking in the mornings before the store opened or cooking while he worked in the store? What was that day like?

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PF: Just you know get up early; get there; start cooking you know and then put it out. And if you ran out then you'd cook some more, or if it was too late in the day you'd just wait until the next morning and cook some more. And then eventually he got people hired on and showed them how to do it and then that's how we got started with our other employees you know. But at the time our store in Krotz Springs was a 24-hour store and I can remember nights where he would have to stay for 24-hours. I would have to stay or you know whatever--vice-versa. And my sister ended up moving here to Opelousas so she baby-sat my kids.

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MBL: Oh.

00:17:19

PF: And my two girls and while I worked at the store.

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MBL: So we should say that at the time the--the store was operating y'all were commuting to the store. How far a drive was that?

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PF: About 20 miles one way.

00:17:33

MBL: And you said your father helped get it started. Was he working at the store as well or was he more of an advisor with the boudin?

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PF: No, just an advisor; yeah he worked on just farming at the time. He's retired now but he was farming at the time.

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MBL: Let's--

00:17:48

PF: Used to pass in front of the store every day to go to the farm.

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MBL: Oh okay.

00:17:51

PF: So it was kind of convenient you know.

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MBL: He could stop in and make sure the boudin was being made?

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PF: I guess; yeah. *[Laughs]*

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MBL: Well talk to me a little bit about developing--?

00:18:02

PF: Well just kind of started on our--you know on with the help and they knew how to make the boudin so they showed him what kind of meat, how--you know about how much meat, liver, grinding the meat and the seasoning is just a blend of seasoning that we came up with you know. Really just you know grinding it up; cooking it and grinding it up and seasoning it and stuffing it.

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MBL: So is it a family recipe that y'all duplicate exactly each time or do you tweak it as you go?

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PF: No; we have a recipe that we follow here from--from the--not the very first day but like when we started, my husband--we'd make some and we'd taste it. And then we'd give it to the public and we'd ask different people and then we'd go back and tweak it you know 'til we got to the recipe that we have now.

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MBL: At this first store, about how much boudin do you think you were selling or making a week?

00:19:05

PF: Hmm; probably maybe 50 pounds a week when we first started and it gradually started getting you know--getting better as the time went on. Then when we bought the Opelousas store in '97 we started making more but the man that we bought the store from here, we bought his recipe which is Ray's boudin. And then we put our boudin here so we actually have a mild and a spicy. Ray's is the mild; ours is called the spicy.

00:19:43

MBL: Okay; the--the first store that you opened it is still in operation; am I correct?

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PF: Yes.

00:19:49

MBL: Are we--are--are you making the boudin on location there or are y'all making it here now and driving it out?

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PF: We make it here now; we have a bigger kitchen and bigger facility and we drive it over there every day, seven days a week.

00:20:02

MBL: Let's talk a little bit--I know before the interview we were chatting about the history of you buying this new store in Opelousas. Tell me a little bit about the story of how your husband convinced you to buy it and your memories of the store.

00:20:18

PF: Well he approached me about buying another store. And at the time I was like no. It's so funny because I was either pregnant or moving or pregnant and buying a business. And for the--this store, I was pregnant for my little boy and I was like no; you know not another store. And then he talked me into it and that's kind of how I can remember when our stores opened 'cause my second little girl was a baby, born in March and we opened there in August and then my little boy was not born yet here at this store and I think we bought this store in '97. He was born in July; yes he was born in July and we opened in August. So that's how I can remember how many years and he's 11; we've been here 11 years. **[Laughs]** Well anyway so we got through all that and he convinced me and I said no; I don't want to buy it. It's--it's not busy. I don't see any cars there. I--I don't want to buy that store--not in a good location you know all this or whatever. But little did I know it is in a very good location and it--it was worth every penny. **[Laughs]**

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MBL: Now was this store operating strictly as a convenience store at that time or was it also selling hot food?

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PF: When we bought it, it was actually a grocery store with just his boudin, just Ray's boudin--no cracklings, no boudin balls, no sausage. When we bought it they had lots of groceries 'cause

it--it's located more--more or less by a neighborhood project sort of deal. In fact when I was growing up my grandparents lived behind this store in the projects and I would walk on Sundays or whatever day--my cousins and I and we'd come get candy here and you know we now own it, so it's really--it--it--I can't believe it you know. I just couldn't believe that this was the store I would come to and now I own it. But anyway, we kind of turned it around after we bought it. Took out all the groceries 'cause it really wasn't worthwhile. Wal-Mart had come into town and you know people were going to Wal-Mart and it just wasn't worth the little bit of groceries that he had in here.

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So we took all that out; we added video poker. We added boudin balls. We added sausage and cracklings. And so we've been doing that here at this store for 11 years.

00:22:41

MBL: This store I have to say from having been here this morning and on a couple of other occasions it is wrapped up with customers all the time that I'm here. Give me a sense of what kind of volume you do and are people coming in or driving through? What's that--that like?

00:22:57

PF: Well they kind of come from all over. We get people from Texas, Mississippi, Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, Alexandria--just everywhere and thank God you know we just feel like we have a good product and hopefully one day we are working on going commercial. So hopefully in a year or so we will have a commercial plant built and we will try to go commercial.

00:23:26

MBL: And when you go commercial would you go commercial with both kinds of boudin, both Ray's and Billy's or just one?

00:23:33

PF: No; we--we're not allowed to go commercial with Ray's. We're only going to go commercial with Billy's. We bought--when we bought his recipe we had a non-compete clause for seven years. It just so happened after the seven years he did reopen and they say that the recipe is different. It's supposed to be 'cause we bought it, you know but who's to say. I mean and you know there is enough to go around, so--. I don't wish anybody bad.

00:24:00

MBL: Now is the--the Ray's that has reopened is that here in Opelousas or somewhere else in the State?

00:24:06

PF: No; it's in Opelousas off of Highway 182 and a lot of them get them confused, but I think we know now--everybody pretty much knows now you know the old owner is on the other end and we're here and we're actually located across from the Farmer's Market here in Opelousas and it--it's a good attraction for us and a good attraction for them and we kind of work together. And when they have something going on you know they'll come in and they send people here and they get their boudin and cracklings you know so it works out. And they're actually--on the side of us they're building a bus parking for the tourists and doing a neat walkway. That should be done in a few months, so--.

00:24:51

MBL: Now what's a typical day like here in terms of your customer volume? When are you getting the most traffic?

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PF: The most traffic we get in the mornings 'til up about--'til about 2 o'clock. They're just in and out of here all day long you know. Our slow time is 2:00 to 4:00 and after about 4:30 they start coming back. We stay open 'til 6:00. We're open from 7:30 in the morning 'til 6:00 in the afternoon. But--but people eat it all day long every day; it doesn't matter if it's breakfast, lunch, snack, supper. I mean they're just in here all day every day.

00:25:30

MBL: Now are most people buying it hot and eating it to go or do you sell it packaged?

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PF: We do sell it packaged. We sell it in three-pound packs, vacuum-packed bags either chilled or frozen. We sell it any way they want it; a lot of it hot--most, the majority it's hot. People on the road--finger foods; we have a drive-thru that helps. They come to the drive-thru and we get them in and out of here you know. But a lot of people come with their ice chest and they load up. If they're from out of town they get it frozen, you know and it's all vacuum-packed and ready to go.

00:26:08

MBL: Let's talk about how much boudin you sell at this store as compared to what you started out with in your first store. What's your volume like these days?

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PF: Well it's hard to say. Some days we'll sell 200 pounds a day; some days we'll sell 500 pounds a day. It all depends on what day of the week it is. Our weekends are busier. It depends if it's a holiday. If it's a holiday we're very, very busy especially Thanksgiving is our biggest day of the year. Thanksgiving for some reason has just you know always been a big day. We have them lined up outside. They're very patient; we get them in and out of here as fast as we can you know. And they wait. *[Laughs]*

00:26:54

MBL: So you're open on Thanksgiving Day or are people shopping the day before?

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PF: It's the day before. We're closed Thanksgiving Day, Easter, the major holidays--all day Christmas, all day for Thanksgiving and Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day; we--we take some--some time off and give our--. We--we take a lot of time off lately 'cause we kind of have our employees that we can trust now. We feel like you know they're doing a great job and it's only fair that they get a day off too. So we do the holidays that we think are most important and we just close.

00:27:29

MBL: Let's talk a little bit about your employees. How many people are working here and--and what are the different roles? Does everybody know how to make the boudin or--?

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PF: No; we have--we have two people who actually make the boudin. They--they--they boil the meat and--and stuff it and grind it and you know that kind of thing. And they work--normal days for them are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Holidays sometimes we make it every day; it just depends how busy we are and if we--we need to keep it up. We try to make it you know just those four days, so you know we give them some time off and a break you know 'cause it's hard work but sometimes they have to work five or six days a week you know. But it's nothing for them to make probably 1,000 pounds a day or more. And then we do boudin balls, so--and sausage and we smoke boudin, so you know we--there's a lot you know. It's a lot but they're doing a good job.

00:28:37

MBL: Hmm; and how many ladies do you have working up at the front?

00:28:42

PF: At this store I have let's see I have about total employees here; I have about 12, just different shifts you know different times of the day. They come in; some work 12-hours a day. They choose to work 12 hours and be off the next day you know. They just pretty much work all together.

00:29:06

MBL: So this is sort of a small physical space but it's a big operation in terms of employees and volume?

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PF: Yes; it is. It's getting--it's getting bigger as the days go on. We're--we're getting bigger and bigger. We've been approached to sell our boudin at the casino here in Opelousas, Evangeline Downs and we--we can't until we go commercial but they've already been approved to put our boudin there. So just as soon as we get our commercial plant up and running we're going to be at the casino and racetrack here in Opelousas.

00:29:40

MBL: Did y'all ever anticipate it would get this big?

00:29:41

PF: No, no; never dreamed--*[Laughs]*--never dreamed. But my husband has big dreams, which I'm very fortunate you know and--and he's not scared to do anything, which I am. But I'm getting better 'cause most of the time he's right when he has a good feel for it you know. So--but we've been very lucky and very fortunate; we've been very blessed. We're very young and you know we have a lot.

00:30:11

MBL: So do y'all have roles in this business? Is--is one of you the cooker versus the manager versus the business manager or do y'all share that equally?

00:30:22

PF: Hmm; we share it equally you know. I do most of the paperwork with a friend of mine who has been with me for a very long time. She was--we've been friends since eighth grade and she works for an attorney. She's a paralegal but she doesn't have any kids and she just likes to work. So she comes in--in the morning and she does my paperwork and my banking and we just do paperwork together, you know so it's a big help for me if I can't get here with my kids. And so she and I do the paperwork you know here together and my husband kind of oversees almost everything you know with the boudin, the cracklings, if something is not right, if we have you know a mess-up or whatever. And of course he rearranges and fixes things, **[Laughs]** so no; we just--we--we don't--we don't say well you do this. I do this--now I don't fix anything. I'll call somebody. He--he wants to fix his own stuff but I don't, so we just kind of share it.

00:31:23

MBL: And today I should mention he's not here in this interview 'cause he's installing a--a bigger fryer. Is that what's going on?

00:31:29

PF: Yes; we've been frying out of a tabletop fryer for years with our boudin balls and they're--they're really a big hit, so we just bought a double deep-fat fryer that we can install here to try and sell more boudin balls. **[Laughs]**

00:31:46

MBL: Well let's talk a little bit about the boudin and all of its forms here in this store. Can you describe for me--first of all I guess various things that y'all offer? You had mentioned sausage and boudin balls, jambalaya--.

00:32:00

PF: Yes; we don't offer the jambalaya here. What happened with the jambalaya is--is we made it for a festival. We--we used to be in the Crackling Festival in Port Barre. That's how we got a lot of our advertising. We did the Crackling Festival for years. And we won first place in the cracklings four years. And it--it was a good thing to do; it gave us a lot of advertisement. It was very hard work. It was for a weekend. We--we went out there and cooked cracklings and--and sold cracklings and boudin balls and boudin and jambalaya and that's how we got started with jambalaya.

00:32:41

Well we make it for festivals now; people who need it for functions like 4-H, the put on a little 4-H show, we donate it, so they can make money. My kids are in rodeo clubs and I make it so we donate it to the rodeo clubs to make money for the kids. Now we're trying to get it into our stores to sell 'cause it is really good. It just so happens you came on a day where I had to make it for a function and we are you know trying, but again it--it's another thing to cook and another thing to do and so you got to fit it in on a day when you're not making boudin. **[Laughs]** So it--it's really good; it's a recipe that I came up with, so it's--it's kind of a good thing for me to say I--I contributed you know to the store. If I can ever get it in the two stores to sell I think it would be a hit.

00:33:36

MBL: Now is it a very spicy jambalaya?

00:33:38

PF: It's--it's pretty spicy; yeah, yeah. You can make it as spicy as you want and mild as you want, you know but we have a certain recipe that I use and then I'll throw in a little bit here and there. **[Laughs]** And but he always fusses at me; Billy fusses at me. Why don't you measure--measure? And I was like well that's not how I taught. My mom taught me just to throw it in and so that's how I cook. **[Laughs]**

00:33:58

MBL: Let's talk about the other things that you offer, the boudin and--and did you say you make sausage?

00:34:04

PF: Yes; we make pure pork sausage. That's a family recipe that my husband got and just kind of added little things here and there. We--we sell somewhat--some of it; we don't--it's not a big, big hit like the boudin is but people are starting to ask about it more and more, so we probably make sausage--we probably make about 100 pounds a week of sausage. And we may sell it in a week; we may sell it in two weeks, so--.

00:34:34

MBL: Is it smoked sausage or fresh--?

00:34:35

PF: Yes; smoked sausage.

00:34:36

MBL: Where are y'all smoking it?

00:34:38

PF: We have a smokehouse out back.

00:34:40

MBL: Out back of this store?

00:34:42

PF: Yes; and we also smoke boudin. We do smoke boudin too; we put the--the tray of boudin in the smoker and we sell smoked boudin--very good.

00:34:51

MBL: Let's talk about the two different kinds of boudin you offer. Can you describe the difference in flavors?

00:34:57

PF: Sure; the Ray's boudin, the one we bought here, it has lots of rice and a lot of liver and not--not as much meat. The Billy's has lots of meat, a little--little less rice and a little liver and more spice.

00:35:19

MBL: What is the--I guess the--the rationale behind buying Ray's recipe when you had one of your own? Were you just wanting to keep consistency for the customers who would be returning to the store or was it a--a different kind of boudin that y'all really took to?

00:35:35

PF: No, no; we didn't buy it for the boudin. We bought it for the store and the location. He was ready to get out and wanted to sell his recipe. And frankly I didn't like it--at the time when he was making it, I didn't care for it because it had a different taste and I think he used a--a cheaper meat, a different kind of meat. But we--we wanted another store to promote our product so we had to keep it as Ray's because this was a very known place, a very well known place for boudin. I mean everybody came to Ray's; everybody did. There just wasn't--this was the only place here at the time to buy boudin. So we--my husband was like I want to buy it for the name and for the location. And so we did and everybody was like well why are you selling his boudin, you know? And I was like well we can't get rid of it 'cause it's been here for 30 years, so we're just going to sell his and ours, so we made both.

00:36:31

And now we put Boston--strictly Boston butt. I don't know what the man was putting in it before but we changed that part of it and it's really good. It--it's a very good boudin too.

00:36:44

MBL: Let's talk about the ingredients that you use in the boudin. What goes in it and where do you get it from?

00:36:52

PF: I--we get our--our meat from Prejean's Wholesale Meats here in Carencro. We get our produce from CA Guidry and also Doyle--green onions and onions and bell pepper, seasoning. We get all our seasoning from Cargill here in Opelousas and that's about it.

00:37:21

MBL: Are the seasonings you're using--are you buying like a can of red pepper and a--a can of onion salt or are you having them mix it for you according to recipes?

00:37:29

PF: Well we used to have it mixed for us but we started mixing it ourselves. We have our own recipe that we mix ourselves and we buy it--in the pepper--in the cases and we--our--our seasoning goes by weight. And--and we do so much, so much, and then we you know mix it altogether and put it in the--in the boudin--in the broth. You have to put it in the--we use the broth. When you boil the meat you have to use the--the water that you boiled it in as your broth.

00:38:00

MBL: Now when you are boiling this meat are you--you're boiling it with the spices and are you also boiling it with the peppers and onions at that time or do you add those later?

00:38:08

PF: No; you boil it altogether.

00:38:10

MBL: If you could for--for people who don't have a background in it, can you describe maybe the process of making boudin from start to finish? I'm--I'm assuming it starts when--when the meat arrives in the cases from Prejean's and you have all your spices on hand and then--.

00:38:26

PF: Yeah; you--you have to boil your meat and put your--your onions and bell peppers and then you have to grind it and then you mix it up with your seasoning and your rice and you stuff it.

00:38:42

MBL: What sort of rice are you using? I know that there are preferences in different parts of the State--short-grain, long-grain; what--what do y'all like?

00:38:50

PF: I think--I think it's medium-grain; I'm not--I can't remember right off but I want to say it is medium-grain.

00:38:58

MBL: And it's not from your father-in-law's farm I guess? [*Laughs*]

00:39:00

PF: No; [*Laughs*] no it's not. It's from Hank's Warehouse out in Rayne.

00:39:08

MBL: Which reminds me--you said Hank's; talk to me about the casings that you use. Where--
where are you getting them from?

00:39:13

PF: We get our casings from Frank's Casings out of--I can't remember the name of the place. I
don't know.

00:39:28

MBL: Are they natural casings do you know or are they the synthetic kind?

00:39:31

PF: I think it's the natural; yeah, yeah the natural. I don't know if it's Frank's Casing; don't--
don't quote me on that. I don't remember the name of the place where we get them. We get it
like a big barrel. I mean it lasts a few months and then we get another big barrel in, so we get it
by the barrels; uh-hm.

00:39:50

MBL: Oh okay. I'm going to look back over my questions here just to make sure that I--I touch
on all the things we want to in the interview. Let's talk a little bit about the business of running
your own business, especially a boudin business here. You're working long hours obviously but
how did you--how do you feel about it? Are you glad you came to it; is it something that you
think will continue with your family or do you envision selling it when you retire?

00:40:22

PF: No; well when we first started it was--it was very long hours. We put in a lot of long hours you know but when we bought the store, my husband had promised to--to me but he wouldn't be married to it because his mother didn't want him to buy it either, because he would be married to it. [*Knock on Door*] And so he made a promise that he would eventually get managers to run them and--and you know we'd oversee it and that's what--what we have done. And it has worked, fortunately; we--like I say we're very blessed--blessed and God has blessed us you know to be able to do that. So we can work when we want now; we can oversee it and it's--it's nice.

00:41:07

MBL: Okay; well I'm going to pause it so you can answer the knock at the door. So we're going to pick back up and talking about your children and the family tradition of this store. How do you see it going forward or what would be your wish for it going forward?

00:41:23

PF: Well I can't speak for my husband but I--I hope that my kids will take an interest in it and carry on the--the tradition. It has been very successful for us and hopefully it can be successful for them if they're interested in it.

00:41:41

MBL: Meat stores like this--boudin stores are--are traditions around this area; are there a bunch of them around here or how do y'all fit in the Opelousas scene?

00:41:50

PF: Yes; they have a few. It seemed like when we got into the business they didn't have that many but lots of people are starting to want to make boudin and cracklings now for some reason. But it's just a good lunch, snack, fills you up, tasty, not all that health I don't think but **[Laughs]** it's good.

00:42:13

MBL: We were talking a little bit earlier about boudin balls. Tell me about those--how they compare to the boudin links.

00:42:20

PF: All the boudin ball is--is--is meat and the rice, balled up; it's boudin without the casing and you dip it in the batter and you fry it. We do ours in a--a wet batter and a dry batter. And we fry it. And it's good finger food. Boudin is in the casing; you know you have to eat it out of the casing. And throw the casing away--some people eat the casing; so it's to each his own. But that's the difference between boudin and boudin balls.

00:42:54

MBL: How do they compare price-wise? What--what is the cost of somebody buying boudin?

00:42:59

PF: The cost of boudin, we are now at \$3.89 a pound and the boudin balls are 99-cents a piece; so it all depends what you're hungry for. If you're hungry for the fried food that day or if you're hungry for just the meat and the rice, but we sell a lot of it.

00:43:18

MBL: Do you sell more of one than the other and I know there are differences between your two stores but--?

00:43:22

PF: It's hard to tell you know. Just some days we sell more boudin balls than boudin and some days we sell more boudin than boudin balls. So it's just really hard to tell and how busy the--the day is and where the people are coming from. We are actually right next to a funeral home, which keeps us very busy also. We have a lot of people from Texas that come in and get a lot of our boudin especially when a funeral is going on.

00:43:57

MBL: Let's talk a little bit about popularity of your boudin. I have seen awards on your walls; tell me about that.

00:44:04

PF: Well we--when we first started we do the Crackling Festival in Port Barre. We got a bunch of trophies for winning first in cracklings--of first and second, you know throughout the years. Also we won the last two years; we won the best boudin around by a busload of guys who come in every Mardi Gras, the weekend before Mardi Gras. And I'm not sure of the name of the--of the place or the people--

00:44:35

MBL: I think it's called *Boudin for Peace*. We've also done some interviews with them but *Boudin for Peace*.

00:44:40

PF: Okay; and they actually came in again and--and awarded us with the plague. They--they get--they come on a bus at 7:30 in the morning right when--when we open and they have--they just boudin hop. And then they end up at Fred's in Mamou which is the place to go around Mardi Gras. So they said that they feel that we have the best product and they like it a lot, so they come every year and give us some business and usually that's one of their stops.

00:45:11

MBL: What is Fred's in Mamou? Is it--is it a food store or--?

00:45:15

PF: No; Fred's is a dance hall [*Laughs*]. They have a band and it's a bar and it's just a good time.

00:45:23

MBL: I heard of it; I just couldn't quite remember. Let's--let's talk about the fancy bag that I got my boudin in today. I ordered a boudin link and it came in a little paper tray in a white bag that has a stamp on it that says Billy's Boudin at Ray's, Opelousas, Louisiana with your logo. Are y'all stamping all those bags by hand back there? [*Laughs*]

00:45:43

PF: Yes; we are. We have a blue stamp for the Billy's and a red stamp for the Ray's. It has been something that Mr. Ray did when we first bought the store. It's kind of advertisement you know for us when people take it and they say where you got that boudin? You know well it comes from Billy's; it's Billy's but it's--it's at Ray's and so we--we have stickers that we put on the boxes and they take it to parties and stuff. And we have a sticker for Billy's and a sticker for Ray's and Ray's is actually a boudin man with the two little guns that are firing and Billy's is a pig in a pot, just some logos we came up with. The boudin man has always been here for years--with Mr. Ray and we came up with the pig in the pot.

00:46:28

MBL: They're cute; I like them a lot. Let's talk--you are around the stuff all day every day; do you eat it? And does your husband eat it?

00:46:38

PF: I eat it. My husband--no; he used to eat it when he first started making it and he just made it so much he just doesn't like it anymore. He'll eat cracklings every now and again to make sure that they're cooking them right and that they you know--you can pretty much tell when you look at them but he'll eat them every now and then but no more boudin. *[Laughs]*

00:47:03

MBL: How's your cholesterol level?

00:47:06

PF: I guess okay. *[Laughs]* I haven't checked it in a while. *[Laughs]* But I don't eat it every day--not every day. I--I'm starting to get where I have to be really hungry for it, you know to eat it. I--I don't come every single day. Most of the time I do but not every single day; if--if you know--but I have other people that work for me that watch so--. And like I said before, I have very good employees I feel--that they're here to look out for us and not you know--we're kind of like a family.

00:47:37

MBL: Well as we wrap this up are there any other thoughts on boudin or this chosen profession that's--would--would you do it all again?

00:47:48

PF: Yes; I would. There are times where sometimes I wish you know I did have a normal job. But there are times where I'm glad I don't. I get to be with my kids any time I want; I get to go to any kind of function they have. I don't have to answer to anyone. If we want to take off for a week or two like we do sometimes when we go to rodeo finals; my daughter has made it to the National Rodeo Finals and we were able to go. Both my daughters have made it; one has made it in junior high one year and--they both made it in junior high. I have a daughter who's in high school and hoping she'll make it this year to the High School Finals, which is in Farmington, New Mexico. And so we were able to do a lot; we--we are very family oriented and we are always with our children, so that--that's the benefits of having your own business.

00:48:45

MBL: Well thank you very much for all your time today. I do appreciate it.

Interview of: Patsy Frey of Billy and Ray's Boudin
Interviewer: Mary Beth Lasseter
Interview Date: February 19, 2009

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00:48:47

PF: You're welcome.

00:48:48

[End Patsy Frey Interview]