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Andrew Huse: Well, today is November 11, 2008. My name is Andrew Huse, and on behalf of the USF Tampa Library Oral History Program, I want to thank you guys, June and Barbra Bartke, for sitting down with me today. We've been pouring over the scrapbooks of their parents and of their restaurant, Bartke's, that was—well, there were many different iterations, but one of the most prominent was in Tampa International Airport, and its elegance and leisurely dining is what it was known for; the steaks, especially.

So, first, I just wanted to ask, where were you born? When is up to you, if you want to divulge that. Let's start with you, June.

June Bartke: Okay, I'm the oldest. I was born in 1935 in Albany, New York.

AH: Okay.

Barbra Bartke: This is Barbara, who was born in 1936 in Albany, New York.

AH: Okay. And now, your mother wasn't married to Frank at the time, right?

JB: No

BB: No.

AH: And so, was your mother a restaurateur back then?

JB: No.

BB: No.

AB: So, what did your folks do back then?

JB: Well, and you correct me, Barbara—this is June speaking. When my mother and Frank first were married—and he's our stepfather, obviously—

AH: Yes—

JB: —he basically raised us. He had a tavern and my mother used to fix food at home and stuff. He had a restaurant and a tavern in Albany, New York, across from the capital, and so she would bake stuff there and fix stuff at home—literally, in the kitchen—and he would take it to the restaurant. She never really worked in that one. Then he got this restaurant that he started to—am I wrong?

BB: (inaudible)

JB: You want to add something?

BB: This is Barbara. Did you ask what did Mom do before she married Frank?

AH: Yeah.

JB: She was a housewife. Go ahead.

BB: She was married to my dad for a very short amount of time. When she and my dad got divorced, she moved to New York and she was a clerical person in the families' insurance-type business, and we lived in Brooklyn. And then she—my grandmother, my father's mother, introduced her to Frank and they started going out, and—

AH: So, how did she know Frank?

BB: I don't know. How did she know Frank?

JB: I don't remember. Well, it was—oh yeah, I do, Barbara. Remember? Because you were skipping one big part. My mother and father got a divorce and my mother, she took us down to the Catskill Mountains, to Leeds, New York. And Frank had a—and my grandmother was with us, and he had a, like, an old gin mill in those days. This is in the early forties [1940s], because I can remember World War II getting over and the fire engines, so that's when it was. So, my mother met someone else there that she started dating, but she had also met Frank.

BB: That's right.

JB: And Frank was very much smitten with my mother, but she ended up marrying someone else and he went off to war, World War II. He was a captain in the tank division and he was killed on my birthday in 1945. I think I was ten years old.

AH: Okay.

JB: So then, after that, we moved back to Albany with my grandmother, and then Frank started coming around. My grandmother was making sure that he did come, and then she ultimately married Frank.

AH: Okay, so your grandmother must have liked Frank, too?

JB: Oh, yeah. She was my dad's mother, but I mean, she was—my mother was like a daughter to her. And so, she married Frank and then—

AH: So, what year was that that they got married?

JB: Probably forty-six [1946]. When was Chris born?

BB: Kris was born in forty-six [1946], so they were married at the end of forty-five [1945].

JB: Think so? Because Brock was killed in June, and I don't think it was that quick, Barb. Well, at any rate, they got married.

BB: Around that time. (laughs)

JB: Somewhere around that time. And then, we have a half-sister, Kris. That's Frank and my mother's only child. And she was born, and she's eleven—I'm eleven years older than she is. So—

BB: This is Barbara. She [Kris] was born in November of 1946. Or forty-seven [1947].

JB: Forty-six [1946].

BB: Forty-six [1946]? Okay. At any rate, after that, my mother started doing the baking, and then he made this deal on this restaurant down on [Route] 9W in Albany, New York, and Ravena in New York. And then, ultimately, we all moved down there up over the restaurant, and my mother was—she did a lot of the cooking. His sister, Rose, and his brother, George, worked in the restaurant, and they kept adding to the restaurant and ended up with a 900-seat restaurant.

AH: Okay, and so it is a big restaurant?

BB: Yeah. Well, it was. It burned to the ground on Halloween.

AH: So—they're looking through the scrapbook here. What—all right, so she started to do some cooking for the tavern and the restaurant.

BB: Well, actually, what happened, she was seven or eight months pregnant with Kris, and Frank had booked a catering party—

JB: Oh, yeah, I remember that.

BB: —and everybody fell out, and my mother, seven or eight months pregnant, cooked everything in the kitchen where we lived.

AH: Okay.

BB: We lived in a flat.

AH: Now, when you say that the other people fell out, you mean the caterers?

BB: Well, the people that were going to help them do it, you know, whoever it was. And then, didn't she drop something, June? And one of the dogs got it? I don't know. But she was cooking for him before she had the baby.

AH: So, it's kind of funny, then, that the beginning of your parents' professional relationship began with that catering gig, right?

JB: Yes.

BB: Yeah, exactly.

AH: So then, after that, she gradually became more involved?

JB: Oh, yeah, she became totally involved.

AH: Yeah.

JB: And we went to a boarding school and then we started coming home on weekends, and you know, we were very active because we lived upstairs, and that was in Ravena in New York, which is on—it's not 9W anymore. I don't know what it is now, but it's below Albany. But we had people that would come from everywhere to eat in the restaurant.

AH: Yeah. And were steaks the specialty?

JB: Oh, yeah, absolutely. That was the whole deal. And he used to say stuff that you can use today, like, "If you have time, are you on my time or your time? If you are on my time, it's time to clean. If you got time to lean, you can clean. If you're on my time, find something to do." I can hear him saying that.

AH: And you guys became involved pretty early on, too?

JB: We were all.

AH: Now this [is] back in Ravena you became involved?

JB: Mm-hm.

AH: So, what kind of stuff were you doing? You started with the onion rings? Or were you cleaning? What were you—

BB: No, we just—we started with the onion rings in the basement, remember?

JB: Yeah, because we had a commissary down underneath the restaurant. We had a humong—it was just like a city down there. Everything was produced down there. He also—I'll tell you what else that he did that was really neat. He had—he aged his own meat with ultraviolet lights and a cooler, and then they would—a butcher would come in and he would butcher up the meat: he would cut all the hair away and the length of the hair would determined when Frank would tell the butcher to cut it and that, so it was aged, really, truly aged. That was a long time before cryovacking.

AH: So, what did the ultraviolet light do?

JB: It helped age it. We had mold on it, and they would cut it off. It looked like rotten beef, really, is what it looked like. That was the aging process.

AH: Sure.

JB: But, you know, we were just involved in everything. The kitchen—we had a huge kitchen bank, probably with maybe ten cooks behind there that cooked everything, and it just kept growing and growing. There was—

BB: (inaudible) his restaurant was basically out in the country near several towns. At that time, there wasn't a lot of people in the restaurant business: Howard Johnson's. You know, so this is a big deal. Everybody would make a big deal out of coming there for dinner, so he had a draw from at least four or five cities.

JB: Well, no. I mean, also, they would come drive up from New York.

BB: Yeah.

AH: Well, it's what they call today "destination restaurant." It's not right on the side of the road. People go there specifically to eat right there.

JB: He also had a nightclub when he was very young. That was his first thing, and that was in New York near the Columbia University. I can't think of the name. They had like Vaughn [Monroe], you know, the guy with the "Racing with the Moon"? That guy.

BB: Oh, Vaughn. Vaughn somebody.

JB: Yeah and he was a major singer, probably before your time.

AH: Yeah, I'm not that old.

JB: But he had a lot of big stars that weren't stars at the time that started to sing, and they—in later years, they would come back and always say he would give them their start. But that was in New York. Maybe I could find that one out and let you know later what that one was.

AH: Okay.

BB: Do you have the thing on, or were you—?

AH: Yeah.

BB: Oh.

AH: Yeah, it's recording. All right, so this restaurant was in its heyday in what, the late forties [1940s], early fifties [1950s]?

JB: It was the early fifties [1950s].

BB: Well, I was ten, eight, nine or ten, eleven. She was the same thing, so that was fifty, sixty years ago. So that's what? Forties [1940s]?

JB: No, Barbara, when the restaurant—he's talking about when the restaurant burned down.

AH: Oh, no. Well, that was my next question. When did it? When did the restaurant burn?

JB: I can remember that like it was yesterday. It was on Halloween, and I don't remember what year it was because my son—it was in the forties [1940s], the late forties.

BB: Well, Kris was born in forty-six [1946] and she was just a baby, so that's when the restaurant was going in Ravena.

JB: Yeah.

BB: And in the back, he had a bunch of animals with him. Remember? He had—didn't he have a bunch of animals that people could look at? It was like a hill, and he had all kinds of birds and monkeys and stuff.

JB: I don't remember that.

AH: Interesting. So, was the—

JB: The fire started—here's how the fire started. This is very interesting too. It was on a—it was 9W Highway, which at that time was the major highway between Albany and New York City. He [Frank] had been fighting this date in New York, maybe five or six, maybe longer years, to put a fire hydrant in down past the restaurant, because we had no anything there. And so they got—and he won the case against the State of New York for getting fire hydrants laid down there. So they came in, they dug the hole, they had the pipes lying along the side of the road, and they had not installed it yet: the only source of water was a pond, a huge pond maybe a mile down the road from the restaurant.

And then, what happened, on New Year's, at Christmas—no, Halloween—we were really busy at the restaurant. And they had—we had lemons on the table, and the only way they could attribute it was that a busboy dumped the ashtray into a linen and rolled it up and put it into the chute, and so that's where the fire started was in the laundry room. So, later on, that's what the fire department figured out where the fire started. And then, in that area, which was a commissary bottom, was where all the liquor room and everything was. So, once it hit the liquor room, it just blew up.

AH: Oh, yeah.

JB: The fire engines came, no water. So, all they could do was they laid their hose down to that pond. I mean, I was there. I can remember it when they lifted up the hose and, “Ah, we have water!” and everybody started cheering and a little trickle of water came out and that was it; there was no pressure. We just stood there and watched it burn. The heat was so intense. The patio area—there were glass tabletops, and it melted. The glass melted. It looked like—oh, and there was the safe. They got the safe out and they opened up the safe and the money that was in there was just crumbled. I mean, it was just ashes. It's (inaudible) safe. It was a very intense fire.

AH: Do you remember what year that was? Halloween of what year?

JB: Oh, it was probably in the late forties [1940s].

AH: Okay, so this was before they had the restaurants down here?

JB: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

BB: Well, no, no, no—

JB: Mom had the Plaid Bar.

BB: Mom had the Edward James Playing Room.

AH: So, let's go back and get her to Florida. Now, Barbara, you had just surgery for appendicitis, is that right?

BB: Yeah, and I was recuperating.

AH: Then she had backed into a knife in the kitchen?

BB: Yes, the knife was sticking up off a counter up against a breadbox and she backed up to let somebody go by and it stuck right in her back. So, she said to Frank, "I don't care, I'm going to Florida. I got to get out of here. Barbara has recuperated." So, I think I was ten, something like that. No, I must have been eleven, because Kris was a baby. We went to Sunset Beach and she just loved it. Loved it! I remember going back there and telling her, she told Frank, "I'm going to live there and live."

JB: Yeah, but before that happened, he would be driving the Jeep back and forth bringing stuff down to—

BB: No, no, this is when she first discovered that she wanted to move here.

JB: Yeah, but—

AH: There was no restaurant down here yet?

BB: No, there was no restaurant.

JB: Barbara wait, wait, you're getting ahead of yourself. What happened was she met the owners of the hotel on the beach, and then that was when they proposed. They owned a department store in Washington, D.C.

AH: The owners of the hotel?

JB: Yeah, they were two couples. They had a big department store chain.

AH: Do you remember what that was?

JB and BB: No. (laughs)

JB: I'll probably remember it. But at any rate, they offered my mother to lease the restaurant and bar. That's when she moved back and told Frank, "I don't want to live in the cold anymore. We'll have two restaurants, one in Florida." I remember that.

BB: I think you're right.

JB: Yeah, that's what happened, and then it started there. That's how it started.

BB: And it was a turnkey operation. They furnished everything; she just walked in.

JB: They did everything.

AB: So, it was built-out, it was just ready to go?

JB: Right.

AH: So, it was just between management?

BB: They leased it.

JB: No, no, they just opened it.

BB: They just opened it.

AH: Oh! Oh, so it was brand-new?

JB and BB: Yeah.

AH: Beautiful, okay.

JB: So then, they did the same thing, the same there, and the same everything as they had in Ravena. Ravena was still going, and then when the restaurant burned down, that's when we all moved to Florida and he bought a house.

AH: Yes, okay. Now, I thought he rebuilt the—did he not rebuild the restaurant?

JB: He rebuilt it, but he sold the name, and it's still there today. Well, no, it's not; it's a school now, because I went to look at it. But it was operated for many years as Barkley's afterwards, but it never—it wasn't us. He sold the name.

AH: So, after he rebuilt it, he sold the name and then just dedicated just to Florida.

JB: Right, and then we all moved down. We were all here. In fact, that's when he bought the house on Sunset Beach. Remember the house on the corner? He bought that house.

AH: So then, it was the Edward James Hotel?

JB: Right. And the Plaid Room, they called it.

AH: It was the Plaid Room?

JB: That's what they called the restaurant in the bar. The Plaid Room.

BB: I thought it was the Plaid Bar?

JB: Maybe you're right.

AH: Plaid Dining Room and Bar, something like that?

BB: I think it was Bartke's Dining and the Plaid Bar. I think she's right.

AH: So, then, that's the first anchor that kind of gets you guys down here. So, they became involved in the Republican Party early on then, right?

JB and BB: Yes.

AH: Because that's kind of—did that help lead to the Tampa thing then?

JB: Yeah. Well, yeah, because—but I can't remember all the people. I can't remember. All the people that—they would come to the beach to get away and discuss what the plans for the airport were. I can't remember their names now, but I remember them coming in.

AH: So, these are people from the Aviation Authority or whatever from Hillsborough County?

JB: Yeah, that's what it was. They would come to the beach for the weekend, and they would eat in the restaurant and they really liked the restaurant, so that's when they talked to my stepfather about opening up and bidding on the contract. If I remember right, Mom was not really happy about it.

BB: No, she didn't want to do it.

AH: She didn't want to do the airport thing?

JB: No, because it just meant the same thing all over again, and you know, it was. She was fun to where she was then. It was easy and fun, but because we all remember what the 900-seat restaurant did to us and the family. It's tough.

AH: Sure.

JB: So then, he bid on that, and in the meantime, the people that owned the Plaid Bar—actually, the two couples, they kind of got to where the tail was wagging the dog, and they tried to break the lease. Remember that? We went to court.

AH: Now, they wanted to break your lease?

JB: Yes, they wanted to—

BB: Mom's lease.

AH: They wanted you guys out?

JB: Yeah, and they wanted—

BB: Because they wanted to take it over, because Mom was doing so good.

AH: Yes, she was making a killing.

JB and BB: Right.

AH: And probably doing better than they thought that it was going to do.

JB and BB: Right.

BB: So, they tried to stab her in the back.

JB: Yeah.

AH: So, what happened there?

BB: Mom went next door to the Tropic Terrace—

JB: Well, wait, Barbara, you're getting ahead of yourself. We had to go to court and testify, remember? Frank had us all dressed up like we just got off the boat?

BB: I don't remember that.

JB: Oh, yeah, it took—

AH: Like you just got off the boat? What do you mean?

BB: Naïve.

JB: You know, he told us that we can't go in there into the court and talk the judge. My mother couldn't wear any jewelry or any makeup. Very, very plainly dressed.

AH: Yes.

JB: Yeah, everything. And they came in like Astor's pet horse all dressed up with the jewelry and the diamonds and the whole—

AH: No kidding?

JB: We—they didn't get us to testify, but my mother and stepfather had to testify and explain what happened, how they were trying to put us out because they wanted to run it themselves. And anyway, the judge sided in our favor.

So, in the meantime, the restaurant—there was a beauty shop next door at the Tropic Terrace, which was right next door, and they closed down and Frank and my mom went

over there and made a deal with them. You know, for a long, long, lease and everything. Went in and renovated it and then just gave them back their place, and they never ever did anything after that and there was no business. They always just came to us—

AH: Okay, so this is pretty sharp on your parents' part. They knew that they wanted—

JB: They didn't want to deal with them.

AH: They wanted you out, yeah.

JB: We were always going to have trouble.

AH: And they were through with it, so they decided to go next door to the Tropic Terrace. Of course, I read a lot about it in the scrapbook here.

JB: That was the late forties [1940s].

AH: Okay. And then—so, the people at the hotel, did they try to make it in their restaurant and they just didn't?

JB: Oh, yeah.

AH: It just didn't fly, though?

JB: It didn't fly.

BB: No, they ended up losing the hotel, too, didn't they?

JB: Yeah, I think so.

AH: Wow, okay.

JB: Tit-for-tat.

AH: Yeah. Well, I'll say. What becomes clear at this point is although your mother was relatively new to the restaurant business, she had great instinct and, like you said, she was kind of the pioneer, and your dad would kind of take, or your stepfather—

JB: He was a pioneer, too.

BB: In his own way, as far as the—

AH: She was kind of front of the house and he was more back, huh?

JB: Oh, yeah, he did. He took care of all the cooking and major stuff and buying the beef and everything. But we—when he was doing all this, we were all together and we learned

all this stuff, too. It was a trickle-down effect. And then, after they were divorced, my mom still just kept right on going.

BB: Everybody stayed friends. There was no angst or anything.

AH: Yes, all right. So, I just want to get from your point of view, at your age and everything at the time: what was it like to move to Florida at that time?

BB: Well, when Mom—

JB: Barbara's speaking.

BB: Barbara speaking. When the decision was made and okayed to move to Florida, we drove down here. Kris was about a year-and-a-half old and we had a black nanny with us, (inaudible) and my thinking of it at the time was, "What do you mean colored fountains and white fountains?"

JB: No, that was while we were on the plane, Barbara, when we flew down for the first vacation.

BB: Yeah, but this was even worse when we drove down, when he saw through all Georgia and everybody, and I was horrified, just horrified. When we came down and drove—I'll never forget this. (laughs) [We] drove over Gandy Bridge. I was scared to death. I thought, "This is never going to end! Where the hell are we going?" It went on—I mean, because we never saw anything like that up in New York. We went on and on and on. I don't know if they had bought the house then or not. I don't think so. I think we stayed in this apartment for maybe four or five months before Frank bought the house and I became a total beach baby. That was my impression. What was yours?

JB: My impression—

BB: June speaking.

JB: June speaking. My impression was, since I'm the older one, I remember the first vacation that we came down. That was our first plane ride, and Kris was a baby, and we flew down on a DC-3, I think? A prop thing, you know? We were like—you don't remember that?

BB: Oh, yeah, I remember that.

JB: I was aghast. We were all scared to death, and the plane was—

AH: What, of flying?

JB: Yeah, because we never had flown before. We did not even know what a plane looked like. And the plane, it was late; it did not arrive on time, and it stopped. I think it was in

Charlotte, North Carolina we had a stop. And I remember that was my very first encounter with segregation. I can remember going to the bathroom and the colored and the white and the—and I can remember how we were, we really were, because in New York, they didn't have that. And then when we got off the plane, it was so hot. It was hot. And the palm trees, that's really what I remember. Because that first trip—

BB: I think everybody acclimated beautifully. And it was freedom.

AH: Now, what about the nanny?

BB: The nanny stayed. What was her name? I can see her right in front of me.

JB: I can't remember.

BB: The nanny stayed not very long, because there was a stink about her staying in the apartment with us.

AH: Oh.

BB: Yeah so—LaVina. LaVina.

AH: LaVina.

BB: So, Mom arranged to send her back up there. And then later on, when Kris was maybe six or seven years old, we bought a house in St. Pete Beach, and we had a colored maid—an African American maid, housekeeper. And Mom had to go to the city officials and make application to have her spend the night. She had to; otherwise, she [the maid] had to be off the beach by six o'clock.

AH: Wow.

BB: And she couldn't come on the beach before 6:00 AM.

AH: Okay

BB: So she got special dispensation to build her room in the garage so she could move in.

AH: Okay.

BB: And that was not—it was the fifties [1950s].

JB: Yeah, but you're jumping ahead of it. I remember too. Webb's City? Yeah. Old man [James Earl] Webb.

AH: Yes.

JB: He used to eat with us all the time. He was a trip.

AH: Okay.

JB: He ate—and you'd never know he had a dime to his name. He was the nicest man. We had no clue. He had—he built Drug City, which was—

AH: Yes, it was huge.

JB: (inaudible) in those days. I'm looking at this one about Eleanor Roosevelt

AH: All right. So then, you spent most of your time here at Pinellas County until—I assume—until the restaurant over there. Now, I find it interesting—yeah, your mother didn't want to go through the whole thing again of having a big restaurant. But, obviously, your stepfather did.

BB: Yes, so he operated the one over there and she operated the one over here. But she was very involved in the setting up of that restaurant and the rules—

JB: Well, she worked there for quite a while.

BB: Yeah, she worked there, but I mean she kept this one going over here.

JB: And then Frank bought here a big old Spanish house in Tampa. Can't think of the name, if it was near the airport. What's that fancy—I don't know, can't remember. Anyway, then I transferred—remember the (inaudible)—

AH: What? You're asking what the neighborhood—what, Palma Ceia? Or—?

JB: No, no, it was more west. It was more towards Gandy [Boulevard].

BB: Park. Something Park.

AH: Okay.

JB: Beach Park?

BB: Beach Park.

AH: Okay.

BB: Yeah, and it was three stories. Spanish place. And I went to school at [Academy of] Holy Names my sophomore year, or junior year or whatever. But Mom would come and stay a couple [days] at a time, or whatever Frank needed her for at his restaurant, and she'd go back and she had an apartment on the beach. And we were kind of back and forth all the time.

AH: I see.

JB: Here's that guy's name I was looking for before, Barbara.

BB: I can't see. Who's it?

JB: Eric Shremmer.

AH: All right. So, what did you guys think of the restaurant in Tampa? I mean, once—was it still being built the first time you saw it, or was it open?

BB and JB: No.

JB: We would go over, but you know, it wasn't—

BB: We were teenagers (inaudible).

JB: We had already been through the 900-seat restaurant. So, really, it wasn't any big deal to us.

AH: Okay, wasn't a lot different than the other restaurants. And the menu, and the specialty, the steaks and everything, was the same. Now, when did this—I'm interested in this Gretchen Broil-O-Matic contraption.

BB: She knows more than I do.

AH: When did that first come about? Was that before—

JB: He went to a restaurant show in New York and he saw it. Or Chicago? One or the other. We used to go to all restaurant shows, the one in New York and the one in Chicago. And I don't remember exactly which one he saw it at first, but he saw it there and he bought it.

AH: Okay

JB: And that was the beginning of all of this. He didn't really have to have a cook after that in the kitchen, as far as somebody cooking the steaks, because they had—it was pie shaped. The pans were pie shaped, because they would go in and you could put them, you know, on around and around on that. You could load—

AH: Oh, I see, so they were like wedges.

JB: Yeah, yeah, like pie wedges. And you just, you know, and we had our own seasoning. We had that, and there's a lot of different restaurants using that right now today, as we speak, that had that recipe for this seasoning, which we gave them to use. But you just

put—you know, you wanted it rare, you'd open up the slot, slide it in, that was rare. This was medium, that—

AH: And it rotated, right?

JB: It went around. It just went around, and you'd come around to the other side and it would come down like a runway and it would, plop! There it was. And you knew it was rare, because it came out of the rare hole. So, that was the whole deal with that.

AH: Okay.

JB: And it was a big thing. We had them in both restaurants.

BB: It was a big, big, deal here.

JB: Everybody would come to see it.

AH: Well, and there's a lot of articles here that are dedicated to—

BB: (inaudible) Louie Wall and Sons?

AH: Yes.

BB: Okay. They were suppliers of everything back then and he didn't want to (inaudible) the Navigator. And they were astonished at how Frank had reconvened, remade it to fit what he wanted.

AH: Okay. Yeah, so how did he—what did he change in the original design?

BB: I don't remember. I just know that he changed the whole thing around. He took the concept and put—he did it the way he wanted it to be done for the type of restaurant that we had. And the guy that had the patent on it, he had to confer with him, I remember that.

AH: Okay.

BB: But that wasn't any big deal, because he improved on it.

AH: Yes.

BB: So, I don't even know. I would not imagine that is still in existence today.

AH: Well, what's fascinating about that is on the other side of the continent, the McDonald's brothers were working on their own concept of kind of taking the skill or whatever out of it, making it as something that you could hire anyone to do. And the same process was taking place in the kitchen here, except for a much—like a fine dining concept, instead of a fast food type of thing.

JB: Yeah, he almost didn't need a chef. She's right.

BB: But the thing about it, too, was to this—the Bartkes came a long time before McDonald's.

AH: Yeah. McDonald's had just opened up, but it wasn't a fast food place per se yet.

BB: No, no, it wasn't.

AH: Go ahead, June; you wanted to talk about dredging.

JB: Yeah. Well, he, at the time—and I don't know what date this is; it doesn't tell you. But he was into dredging and developing besides the restaurant, and he owned both sites. He had a hundred year lease—I think it was a land lease—on both sites of Courtney Campbell Causeway. One had the Days Inn in it. That was the Causeway Inn, North and South. So anyway, he got dredging at that time, dredging. He had a partner who put all the money up because Frank could do it. And his name was—it's right here, Eric Shremmer. And let me—I don't think it tells you anything about him.

AH: Shremmer.

JB: But he made a humongous fortune and he designed and patented it, the—when you open a bottle of beer. (makes popping sound) Today, the same thing. That was his patent.

AH: You mean the tab that doesn't come off?

JB: Yes, that was his patent, and he and Frank were partners for many, many years on a lot of different ventures. But he came in, and he was the one. They did it together.

AH: So, they were dredging around the Causeway creating more land, and—

JB: They pumped too fast, and it closed the road off. The dredge was pumping so fast.

AH: Yeah, yeah. How did they close the road off?

JB: Because it pumped over: it was pumping so fast after it had filled up it ended up spilling over into the road, and they couldn't stop it and—

AH: So sand and stuff was coming out onto the road?

JB: Oh, yes, sand, sand. It was a big mess and he got fined by the state.

AH: Okay. (laughs)

JB: He dredged in—he also dredged in most of Boca Ciega Bay over on St. Pete Beach.

BB: Oh, but—yeah, right, that's when he had those—

JB: All those—yeah, all the homes that are in there? He dredged all that in there.

AH: And that is just—that's just huge money making opportunities there, right?

JB: But then they shut off the dredging, and you know, he made a lot of money at that. But he always was pouring it back into the restaurant.

AH: Yes.

JB: We had a commissary over there, too.

BB: Oh, yeah, I worked there.

JB: Yeah, she was in the commissary.

AH: Oh, so—all right. So, the commissary—and which restaurant was the commissary at, the one in Tampa?

JB: No, it was at Drew Field. It was a separate building.

BB: It was at Drew Field, and it supplied the airport and the beach.

JB: Airport and the restaurant. Everything was made there. All the seasoning, all the deliveries and shipments, came to the commissary and then it was packaged out, you know, as to go into—and the meats were cut. Everything was done in the commissary.

BB: And then they would fill the order from the beach restaurant, deliver it, and then he'd fill the order from the airport. So, it was like a mini store, a warehouse. And also then—and then they got the first IBM machine, which was about the size of this room here. That, and doing inventory control. And it was like a—oh, it was wild, wasn't it? That one.

JB: Oh, I hated it, hated it.

BB: It made so much noise. (makes slapping noise) The IBM cards, you know, would shoot out.

AH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, those made a lot of noise.

BB: You had to keypunch everything, and you stay in front in from of a keypunch for four or five hours. Argh!

JB: See, our uncle was—our uncle was instrumental in getting that. He was with Martian and Glenn Insurance Company in New York and they had contracted with IBM to begin with, and that's how that all came about. He got that down.

BB: Well, Frank was one of the first ones to do that here. I mean, we did payroll and everything on it. It was very unusual for that time.

AH: Oh, that's once again pioneer. Big time.

JB: Terrible job, but it did the job.

AH: (laughs) Yes. All right, so then the airport deal came about because they met the aviation authority at the restaurant. Now, I guess for most people today, they cannot really imagine how much of a novelty eating at an airport was. I mean, today, nobody really wants to eat at the airport. Everyone wants to get out. But back then, most people didn't fly. It was considered a real luxury and everything. Do you have any comments about that?

JB: The only thing I remember, I was in school then in Holy Names, and all the kids that were in my class, they were always chattering about, "Oh, Dad's taking us to the airport for dinner tonight." It was the place to go food-wise. And everything was perfect. They had valet parking, they had entertainment, they had the views of the planes coming in and out, and it was just at the right moment to open that in the society we lived in at that time. They didn't have—the only really good restaurants they had in Tampa at the time were the Columbia, that type. So, this is a real—something new for the—and the elite came there all the time. I mean, it was—they really made it, because when it opened, they showed up to tour and everything and were impressed it. And then they kept—they came back. So, that's how that worked. But I didn't see anything odd about it at the time, because as a teenager I thought, "Well, jeez, everyone at Frank's restaurant does good!"

AH: Yeah.

BB: But also, they could sit and have dinner and look out at the planes coming and going and landing.

JB: And they loved that.

BB: Eastern Airlines was big at that time.

AH: Well, this was before the huge glut of steakhouses, too.

BB: Oh, yeah. We were it. That was it.

AH: Yeah. I mean there were—Bern's wasn't even around yet, and it started with a jukebox and a bar and steak sandwiches. It wasn't even a fancy place.

JB: But, Bern himself was really—I don't know if you have ever done any studies on him, but he was a very, very interesting man.

AH: Yes.

JB: We used to go eat there. And Frank and Bern's—Bernie, I think, was his name—they had a good rapport, because they were both doing the same thing at different—Bernie used to do all of his own cooking, and he would be in shorts and a t-shirt.

AH: (laughs) Yes.

JB: I can remember. I can remember that when would go over there.

BB: Didn't he end up eventually having his own farm?

JB: Yeah, he did everything.

BB: You know, all the good vegetables that were healthy for you. But he wasn't there then. So, that restaurant at the time was the perfect time for all of that.

AH: Well, he may have been inspired by your dad.

BB: I don't know, but—

AH: To some extent.

BB: The people in Tampa at that time were probably bored with a lot of the places they had to go.

AH: Sure.

BB: You know, everybody flocked to a new place anyway, and fortunately, they did it right and they came back.

JB: Plus, we didn't serve any Spanish food, so the only one that really—we were just "regular." I want to see that about Jack Stern.

AH: All right, so—

JB: Yeah, it's just another question.

AH: Well, one of the things I noticed in the scrapbook is they used a lot of advertising and a lot of—like you said, all the papers were doing it. They had an advertise section for the restaurants rather than have a real restaurant section, you know, like today where you have all these different writers and such. Do you care to comment on that, or do you have any insight on—

JB: I wasn't listening to what your question was. I was reading.

AH: It was all about using advertising and promotions and things like you talked before. The Albany restaurant had a customer list, right, with birthdays?

JB: But they still continued that down here. They did the same thing here.

BB: But as far as advertising goes, there wasn't a food critic at the time, and everybody did it. It was that—at the time what you did. That's what that was all about.

JB: Well, plus, they knew the value of advertising. And it wasn't, obviously, as costly as it is now, but they knew that they had to get the word out and promote the name. And if you looked—and I may look, find, look for these and give you these if I can find them, the albums on my mother's advertising at the Careless Navigator. I mean, she spent a fortune on advertising, and she always did, right up until the end. Advertising.

BB: And she always had a good rapport with the people at the paper, and that was nice because they'd go out of their way to do something for her at the last minute, that kind of stuff. She was very good with people.

AH: One of the things I wanted to get to back to—I just alluded to it a little bit earlier, but it's the political involvement, too, which certainly helps when you have influential friends and such. What can you tell me about that? There was—your parents had a relationship with Cramer?

BB: Bill Cramer [Congressman William C. Cramer]. Actually, what started was I think somebody invited Mom to start a Republican club. And that's how she got into it. That's how she met Cramer. That's how she got into all that kind of stuff.

JB: And they did—they would provide all the food for the Republican Party in Pinellas County, and they were on the original development of the first Republican Party in Pinellas County. They did—they just donated to everything. Frank always believed in that. He felt that was the right way to go, to be politically active in everything that you could be. Also, he was on all the boards of all these organizations.

BB: Well, he knew it was good for business.

AH: Exactly.

JB: They worked hard to get Bill Cramer elected in the beginning, so that was a long time ago.

AH: Well, and he was, if not the first, one of the very first in Florida.

JB: And today, Bill Young is still—we can call Bill Young up, and they always return our calls. They helped when my mother was sick.

BB: Well, they helped get her a card—

JB: A military card.

BB: A military card to—that she was entitled to from her second husband.

AH: Oh, I see.

BB: And they—I had a terrible time trying to get it for her. I just called up and, zip, city.

JB: And (inaudible) took care of it for us.

BB: And this—we're talking about many, many, many, many years ago that he and Mom were close. But he—you had to say that about him; he takes care of you.

JB: Yeah, but he's dead now.

BB: Ah, well. Bill Young—

JB: Bill Young, yeah, we could always call. And my son, my middle son, is in the military, or he was in the military, and he wanted to take his son to the last inaug—when [President George W.] Bush was—second term?

AH: Yeah.

JB: And called up Bill Cramer's office and—Bill Young's office, rather—and he got tickets to take his younger son to—

AH: To the inauguration?

JB: Yeah. But he lives in Virginia, so—

BB: And he works a lot in Washington, so—

JB: It just—they were very good to all of us. But on the other hand, they—my parents really helped get them started in Pinellas County.

AH: Now, I have another question about the grand opening ceremony for the International Airport. So, on August 17—you saw the picture earlier. That was in fifty-two [1952]. Do you have any memories of that day?

BB and JB: No.

AH: No, not really? Okay. So I had read that the air conditioning had broke in the restaurant. And they had a banquet and there's a—I actually saw a picture, and there's a gentleman actually wiping his brow during—we had talked briefly talked about the menu where everything was flown in from all over the world, courtesy of these different airlines and such. One of the themes that I tapped into with this is this self-consciously ultra-modern style they took on. You know the significance of that image? Yeah, baseball. All the baseball greats.

JB: All the baseball greats. They all ate with us every year.

BB: Mickey Mantle.

JB: Yeah, Mickey Mantle. I was—he asked me out, and my dad had an absolute fit.

AH: (laughs) Is that right?

JB: Yeah, because that was at the Tropic Terrace and we had little tables with—because you couldn't have the barstools at that time. You couldn't—you had to take the barstools out away from the bar, like on Sundays and Saturday night at a certain time, the barstools had to be removed. So, we always had a little duce right by the door when they came in, and it was an emergency table. And these two young guys came in, and we sat them right there in the front, and it was Billy Martin and Mickey Mantle. And somebody said, "Oh my God! Do you know who you just sat there?" And they were just coming up, and he asked me if I would go and have a drink with him. Well, I wasn't even eighteen at the time.

AH: (laughs)

JB: I remember Frank having a fit about that. But we had Eddie Stanky and—

BB: And who was Marilyn Monroe's husband?

JB: Joe DiMaggio.

AH: He came? Okay.

JB: Yeah.

AH: Now, is [this] in Pinellas then?

JB: Yeah, this is at that restaurant. We had Doc Webb. He ate with us all the time, "Doc" Webb. And like I said, you would never know he had a—

BB: He had—they had a lot of the corporate people from the ballgames, too.

JB: He had Din DiVine—

AH: Management and owners and stuff.

JB: Rich LaMasey. Yeah, all of them. They all ate with us.

BB: Auggie Busch, when the [St. Louis] Cardinals were here training. He had a place on Pass-A-Grille [Beach]. Great big compound out there.

JB: Big, big, big compound. House and a compound.

BB: And they would be there every night eating.

JB: And yeah, we did all their catering. We did all the Busch people's catering.

BB: He was a tough man, wasn't he? Auggie Busch.

JB: Yeah, he was. Well, when he would come into the restaurant, we would always knew when he was coming in town because the dealers, the distributors would be running around checking the beer bottles, the date on the beer bottles, because—I mean that if you—if he got an out-of-date bottle of beer, that was it. You were done. And they used to come in and he would order every kind of a beer that we had. Budweiser product. And you could see him sit and look, checking the date. He always did that.

AH: Everyone then, okay.

JB: Yeah. And then, oh, in the fifties [1950s]—no, when was it? I'm trying to think. It was in the late fifties [1950s], the late fifties [1950s], early sixties [1960s]. I was married at that time, and they used to eat and I had the restaurant down in St. Pete Beach and they used to eat back and forth between the restaurants. And we got invited to go out deep-sea fishing on tarpon. My husband and I, tarpon fishing on Busch's boat the *Miss Budweiser*, and to make a long story short, we ended up catching two huge tarpons. And I got—in my divorce from my husband, I got the one tarpon and he got the other tarpon. And Auggie Busch used to come in, and when we knew he was coming in, we would run home and make sure that the tarpon was hanging right where it was last time the last time. He'd always look for the tarpon.

BB: Are you talking about the Brass Lamp restaurant?

JB: No, I'm talking about—yeah, that's when they—

BB: Okay, so you opened that a couple years after your Mom opened the Navigator?

JB: Yeah, so that had to be in—when did Mom open the Navigator?

BB: Sixty-two [1962].

JB: Okay so it was in the early sixties [1960s].

BB: The early sixties [1960s].

JB: Yeah, and so we got invited down, and I mean, they did everything. I mean, unbelievable. And then they had both fish stuffed and everything, and so we had it hanging in my mother's restaurant for many, many years just in anticipation. But they always ate with us all the time. And like I said, we did all their catering. That was—we had them all. I'm trying to think. The Mets, Casey Stengel would used to come in all the time.

AH: Well, you also mentioned Bob Hope coming in town.

JB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, he went to the Airport.

JB: To the Airport.

AH: The Airport, okay.

BB: Anyway, he came into Tampa for some benefit or something, and he requested to eat there. He heard somebody say something about dropping: "Oh, my God, you gotta try this restaurant in little quirky Tampa town area."

AH: Yes.

BB: And he was there, and he was really great, wasn't he?

JB: Mm-hm.

AH: Oh, what, did he give a performance?

BB: No, he was just funny and accessible with people and—

AH: Yeah, what you would kind of expect.

JB: So was Casey Stengel. Casey Stengel was very—he used to eat in the restaurant all the time. We had a lot—we had a lot of (inaudible).

AH: He was a ball player, too, right?

JB: No, he was the manager of the—you don't know who Casey Stengel is?

AH: Sorry, no.

JB: Oh, my gosh!

AH: If he managed a baseball team, there's no way I would know who he is, even if he would speak now. I don't follow baseball.

JB: Oh, he's dead now. He's one of the great all-timers.

BB: For the Mets, was it?

JB: No, he was with Yankees for many years and then the Mets.

AH: Gotcha.

JB: But at any—

BB: Oh, and Yogi Berry [Yogi Berra] used to eat with Mom, too.

JB: Yeah, Yogi, all of them. All the big-time—all the big-wiggies. No matter what they were in.

AH: Okay. Now one of the things I read about in here was that they had the Luau Night. You remember anything about that? It was a triple buffet?

BB: Where?

JB: In Tampa.

AH: This was in Tampa.

JB: I remember that.

AH: Yeah, and there was one table that was just your cold appetizers and the relishes.

JB: Yeah, they did all that.

AH: Yeah, the hot one, and your dessert. You guys prepared desserts for a while after you did the salads and the onions rings, right?

JB: Oh, yeah, we—yeah.

AH: What were some of the desserts that were really big at the time, there?

BB: The parfait. That was the big deal.

AH: Parfait.

JB: That was the big deal, yeah and what—

BB: It was in a big, tall beer glass.

JB: It was a pilsner's beer glass.

AH: Okay.

JB: And we—that was our main dessert was that, and there—and I can still see me making those things. And you'd take the—and you would—we'd have chocolate, and you'd have to tilt the glass. There's a special way we had to do it. (AH laughs) Tilt the glass and swirl the chocolate, and then you would put a scoop of vanilla ice cream and a little bit of chocolate on it. You kept pressing down, and with whip cream and a cherry on top. And it was—oh, it made a big presentation.

BB: And then they had different flavors.

JB: Strawberry, yeah; they had a strawberry parfait.

AH: Did it have fruit in it, too? Or no, it was just the ice cream inside?

JB: Ice cream.

AH: Okay, and the whip cream.

BB: And or strawberries.

AH: Okay, strawberries.

BB: We had crème de menthe.

JB: Yeah that's right, crème de menthe. We had crème de menthe de parfait, strawberry, and chocolate.

AH: So, what? That was with the ice cream, but you what? You'd sprinkle a little crème de menthe in it?

JB: Yeah, yeah. We had the green—

BB: Instead of chocolate or strawberry (inaudible), we'd use crème de menthe.

AH: Oh, I see, yes. As the, like, syrup.

BB: Right.

JB: Yeah, forgot about that. Any of the other desserts we had were no big deal. That was—we were—

BB: Nobody was doing it then.

AH: Yeah. Well, it was a great presentation, too, with all the layers, right? Now, the other thing that was kind of ultra-modern, you mention Louis Wohl and Sons and this kind of gleaming stainless steel kitchen and everything.

BB: They always did all our designs.

AH: I guess they used to offer a lot of tours of the kitchen? At least the one in Tampa was—you know, they wanted to show how clean it was and everything, and how great it worked. Now the other thing: when you think of ultra-modern, at least at the time was the organ, the Hammond organs.

JB: Yeah, Danny Daniels, yeah. He did a radio show, too, from there.

AH: Okay, from the Airport restaurant.

JB: Yeah, once a week he did a—or was it every night? I can't remember.

BB: I can't either.

JB: But he did a restaurant—he did a show.

AH: Okay. And there were several performers, though, over the years, right?

JB: Mm-hm.

AH: Okay.

BB: He was the main one, though. Danny Daniels.

AH: Yes. All right. So, let's see—all right, how old were when you came down with the polio?

BB: Seventeen. I had just graduated from high school.

AH: Okay, and tell me a little about that. And then, I also want to hear about the community's reaction with the restaurant. You had alluded to that earlier.

BB: What do you like me to tell you about it? What do you—ask me something.

AH: Okay. Well, when did you first notice symptoms? How—

JB: Pretty quick.

BB: Frank had got me a car for graduation, and I was a big shot. I was the only one who had a car, and I was going all around with my friends. Something was wrong with the car, and they had a car dealership on Treasure Island at the time, Ford. So, when I—on the way home, I stopped there and the guy—well, whatever was wrong with it, I had to walk home. Well, I had to walk home from 104th [Avenue] to where we were living at the time, which was maybe twenty blocks. And I'm walking and I'm walking and I thought, "Jeez, I don't feel good. Eh, what the hell, you know, I just had a good time. I'll go home." By the time I got home and got in bed, I couldn't walk. And then by the time Mom got the doctor there, I couldn't—so, Dr. Cage took a nickel and clicked it in front of my eyes and he said, "What is that?" and I said, "That's a fifty cent piece." So he said to Mom, "I gotta get her down to Bayfront [Medical Center]"—at the time it was called something else, I don't know. He said, "I'm not—we're not waiting—"

JB: Mound Park [Hospital].

BB: Mound Park. "We're not waiting for an ambulance. Come put her in the car." So he drove me down, with Mom in the back seat, and every time we went over a bump, something else died, but I got more paralyzed as we went. Then we got there and he—they got me in there and they did that thing in the back. What are they called?

JB: Ooh?

BB: Where they drained the fluid out to see?

AH: What, a spinal tap?

BB: Yeah, spinal tap. And then, by the time they got me in my room, I couldn't move.

JB: She was totally paralyzed.

BB: I was totally paralyzed.

AH: Wow.

BB: Yeah. I mean, phew!

AH: So fast.

BB: Yeah, and then—

AH: And you had never noticed anything before that?

BB: No.

AH: Okay.

BB: But I had a very active summer. I worked over [in] the commissary in Tampa, then when I'd come home, and then all the kids where I went to high school with were having beach parties. I'd go to a beach party all night, go home for two hours, get up, take a shower, and go to work. So, I was really worn out. You know, as far—I didn't take care of myself.

JB: And then, when the word got out, and she was diagnosed as polio, and she was totally paralyzed—I mean, totally paralyzed. I'm the one that had to tell her what was going on.

BB: They had me in bed and because they didn't want me—I was lying on my side all the time, and they didn't me to do that because that would make those muscles even more harder to come back. So, I had to lay on my back in the brown and white shoes you pointed out: they put those on me, and they had a box on the end of the bed.

JB: Oh, I remember that.

BB: And they tied my feet in there so I wouldn't turn.

AH: Okay.

BB: And then I had hot packs two or three times a day. Do you know what that is?

AH: No.

BB: Well, (laughs) I feel like such an old fart. (laughs) They would put these blanket-type things in a washing machine and get it steaming hot, and then that's the only treatment they had for polio then. They put then on your back, your legs, your stomach, your arms.

AH: Sort of like the hot springs.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

JB: And then the only thing out at the time was gamma golbine, glamite, gamma—

BB: [Gamma] globulin shots.

JB: Yeah, it did, and that was it. They didn't have anything else out. And we had—Mom had a black lady that was the housekeeper and the maid and—but it was a real go-around getting her that shot, and I can remember that. And I remember Frank being absolutely furious with that.

BB: Well, everybody—

AH: Well, because they didn't want to give her the shot because she was black?

BB: No.

JB: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

AH: They wanted to give it to whites first?

JB: Right.

BB: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

JB: But, so we got—everybody got the shot in the family, and then—but—and people would—I mean, we—our business—

BB: It was an epidemic, that's what was going on.

AH: Oh, yeah.

JB: And we went from big business to nothing.

AH: Yeah.

JB: You know, until they kind of got calmed down about it. She was in a hospital, but—so, we suffered financially, emotionally, and everything with—

AH: Yeah. So, the public stopped coming because they were afraid that somehow they could contract polio.

JB: Well, yeah, but the epidemic was really strong in the summer, so—

AH: Yeah.

JB: And basically, she—

BB: Then I was in a park for maybe three or four months. Then I went over to the—

AH: And what park is this again?

BB: It's Bayfront. It used to be Mound Park Hospital.

AH: What is it called, Mou-what?

BB and JB: Mound.

AH: Mound Park. Okay.

BB: Before it became Bayfront.

AH: Okay.

JB: That's long before your time.

AH: Yes.

BB: Then we went over to the (JB laughs) crippled children's place to get to rehab, and I had an absolute wonderful therapist.

AH: Yes.

BB: And a wonderful doctor.

AH: This is the guy that saved you from the iron lung, right?

BB: Yeah. Well, that was in Mound Park.

AH: Okay.

BB: But then I went to—God, I can't think of his name; it's right in front of me. Anyway, it was an orthopedic guy that specialized in—

JB: Dr. Wallace.

BB: Doc—the other one. Dr. Wallace was his partner. God, he was so wonderful to me. But they, he and his partners specialized. They were orthopedic surgeons and they specialized in polio rehabilitation. They went to Warm Springs once a year to donate their time. I mean, they were really good. And he was just absolutely to me.

JB: And you had—she had, like, a therapist, and my mother had, like, a live-in because—to help. And that was Potsie. Yeah.

BB: Yeah, Potsie. I can see—

JB: Because—

AH: Was this the black lady you mentioned earlier?

BB and JB: No.

AH: Oh, no, this is someone else.

BB: When I came home from the rehabilitation thing. I mean, I still was a mess.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And Mom couldn't handle me by herself, so we got this live-in nurse who was really, really funny.

JB: She was wonderful. Yeah, she was wonderful.

BB: Yeah, she was really great. We had a lot of laughs with her.

AH: Okay. Well, that's probably just what you needed, right?

BB: Oh, yeah. Then she took me back and forth to therapy every single day. I think it was at least two years. But a lot of funny things happened. Like, I'd go to the doctors and we had dogs in the back seat, and Mom—we were all dog people, and there was what they call “sliding” where I couldn't get in or out of the car. What they would do they'd put the board underneath me in the car, and the board in the wheelchair, and I'd slide. And then she'd throw it in the backseat and we'd go and see the—Dr. Farrington, that's who it was. We'd see Dr. Farrin and we'd come back out. Well, we came one day and the dogs had pooped all over the sliding board.

AH: Okay. (laughs)

BB: And another time Frank had a standing board made for me because you—when flat on your back so long, you stand up and the blood just rushes to your feet. It's very painful.

AH: Okay.

BB: So, they—it was like a see-saw. One part, you know, and then they would put you on it and they gradually stand you up. Slowly, and slowly, and slowly, and slowly until you were able to tolerate it. Well, Potsie was doing that for me in the house and it collapsed. (laughs).

AH: Okay.

BB: I went all over the place, she went all over the place, she was—but eventually, I got to the point where I could manage.

AH: Okay. And then is when you kind of became—you helped out with charity events and stuff, right? I mean, did you hold the title like the Gulf Beaches Polio Queen?

BB: Well, I don't know how that happened, except they were trying to raise money for the polio victims because there was an epidemic here.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And my mother volunteered me, I think.

AH: Oh?

BB: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

BB: That's how that happened.

JB: They were always—they were really active in a lot of charities and stuff.

BB: Between Mom and Frank and every—they raised a lot of money for the polio fund.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

AH: Okay.

JB: Another thing before we—we don't get this in. When he died, which was—

AH: Who? Frank?

JB: Yeah, when he died, he was supporting us. So many people that we knew nothing about, like my younger sister, she would—up until even a few years ago, she would be getting calls about this house. It was in his name and—or he had—he was paying for the mortgage payments and everything. Different people that had worked for him over the years, and he had two or three people in nursing homes that we'd never even knew anything about that. That one was Ella, remember her?

BB: Mm-hm.

JB: She was, like, the housekeeper for a good many years, and she got sick and he put her in a nursing home. We never even knew that he was paying everything. He did a lot of that.

BB: And then he donated the land to the Shriners.

JB: Yeah, over in Tampa?

BB: Yeah, over in Tampa.

AH: Oh, where the Shriners—

BB and JB: Where they are now.

AH: Okay.

BB and JB: He donated all that land.

AH: Oh, you mean over by the Causeway?

BB and JB: Yeah.

AH: Yeah, okay.

JB: He donated every stick of land—

AH: Wow!

JB: —to the Shriners. Because—you know why he did that? Because of the work that he knew that they did for kids.

AH: Yeah.

JB: And that always stuck with him, you know, that they were such a wonderful organization. He gave them all that land.

AH: Yeah. Wow, that was—

JB: Which was a lot of land.

AH: Well, and it's also prime, prime location. I mean, any decade. And then the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

JB: That was Kris.

BB: That was our younger sister.

AH: And she's the one that cut the ribbon or whatever?

BB: Yeah, she's like seven—six or seven.

JB: Yeah, when she cut that ribbon. I can—I remember that.

BB: Yeah, I do, too.

AH: Mm-hm.

BB: And the mayor and, you know, big deal—

JB: The governor, the governor—

BB: The governor.

JB: Can't remember who the governor was.

BB: I can't either.

AH: Well, and it was—it's kind of one of those times in Florida where it's just like this boundless optimism. There's so much development going on. Tourism is [at] the beginning of this upward curve that—we just now, in the last couple of years, have seen that it doesn't go on forever. But if anything—I don't know if you can really even call it—it's totally a bubble, but that's where was first becoming this huge—

BB: Well, you used to have to take a ferry to go to get to Sarasota, Bradenton-Sarasota. So that was really—

AH: Or travel all the way around.

BB: Right. There was a huge deal there with everybody in St. Pete when that bridge was built.

AH: Mm-hm. Well, Sarasota, too, I'm sure they were just connected.

JB: And he had a dinner theater down on Rocky Point [Drive] to where the Steinbrenner building is now. That used to be—there was a restaurant and he—when they had that hundred-year lease on that, he was partners with Julian Lovesee, was one of the drugstore in—now, I thought it was Walgreens, but my sis—we're not really sure. I don't remember.

AH: Okay.

JB: But his name was Julian Lovesee and he owned one side of the road on Rocky Point and Frank owned this side (demonstrates) and they did a lot of developing down there. But there was an old, old restaurant down on the end, and he made it into a dinner theater. It was called Bartke's Dinner Theater.

AH: Yes.

JB: And that was down there for a good many years. And then—

AH: Now, is he still married to your mother?

JB: At that time, I don't think so.

BB: No.

AH: I don't think so, either.

JB: No, I don't think so, because I worked in the dinner theater. I mean, I—

AH: Okay.

JB: Yeah, I—and it was one of those stages that a stage came down from the ceiling and it entered in the center.

AH: Oh, wow.

JB: It was really—it was—

AH: It's pretty elaborate then.

JB: Yeah, it came—

JB: It was Barn Dinner Theater; people came in and did that. They contracted it with them.

AH: It's just kind of funny, because—I mean, you think about dinner theater today, and you think, "Eh," you know?

JB: But at that time, it was a big—

BB: At that time, it was a novelty—

AH: At that time, it was, yeah.

JB: It was a big thing.

BB: Big deal.

AH: It was new and fresh.

JB: I used to have to go out every night and give the opening speech and everything. I used to run and hide in the bathroom and he would come in and get me. (BB and AH laugh). I hated it! Oh, my God!

AH: What did you have to do? What? For the play, you mean?

JB: Yeah, for the play, and the—to give everybody an introduction and talk to everybody and the first time I ever did it I—it was like a Proscenium type thing and I can remember looking around and I just froze. All I saw were green eyes.

AH: Yeah.

JB: You know, the little ol' eye?

AH: Yes.

JB: And we had all these Finelli lights. It was maybe a couple hundred lights. And I was like “Oh, my God!” And I stood there and I was going from one side—(to JB) I don’t know if ever told you this. And I went, “You know what? I forgot everything I was going to tell you. It’s a great play and the food’s wonderful, and just have a good time.” And I walked out. I thought I was going to get killed.

(JB and AH laugh)

AH: Well, was that one of the first times you did it or something?

JB: Yeah, oh, yeah. I totally went—I froze. I went blank.

AH: Yeah, okay.

JB: And then every night, I had to do it every night. And I used to run and want to hide, because—you know, I could talk naturally, but to say a canned speech every night was really hard.

AH: Well, and this takes me back to something you guys mentioned earlier, that your dad would make you go around tables at the restaurant and ask people what their experience was. Tell us a little about that.

JB: Well when we were kids—this was in the upstate New York restaurant—

AH: And you were young? This was when you were pretty young still?

JB: Yeah, yeah. And I was still in my early teens, and I really was—I was not a school person. And I wanted to end, which eventually I did. I quit school and he let me work in the restaurant. But before that, he would work in the dining room and he had an organist, and when it got busy, he used to go up and tell her, “Donkey Serenade,” because it was (hums) and everybody would move faster when that song came on, you know? They also remembered that he wanted that play because we were busy and we needed everybody to move quicker.

AH: Okay.

JB: But when you're talking about a 900-seat restaurant, that's a big restaurant. It was all on one level. So he would say, "Okay, you have to go over and you go talk—find out how the food is at all the tables where there's food in there." And I used to have to go, and I can still do this today. He wanted us to have peripheral vision. That's what he called it, peripheral vision. And you had to go around the table and then come back and tell him what every person was eating. And we really—he was very, very adamant on that.

And another thing he did, we lived upstairs—I don't know if you remember this, Barbara. He would send us downstairs, and he'd say, "I want you to tell me what the bartender's doing, exactly what the bartender's doing." Remember when we would used to go down and he's have us play the jukebox and no one would pay attention to us? And he would be wanting to know what the bartender was doing, because—

BB: We were spying on them. (laughs)

AH: Yes. (BB laughs)

JB: Yeah, and we would—

BB: And who would suspect two kids?

JB: Well, would he be—

JB: Trying to steal or give people drinks and have the tips.

BB: For years, in the old time world of restaurants, bartenders were notorious for stealing, or giving away drinks, or all that kind of stuff.

JB: For tips.

AH: Yes.

BB: We learned a lot of that stuff at an early age.

AH: Well, and then, didn't he ask people—he put plants in to complain?

JB: Yeah, you'd just say, "The meal was terrible," and see how we would handle it.

AH: Okay, so did you learn how to handle that pretty quickly?

JB: Well, yeah, a couple times I was dumbstruck in the beginning, but then after that, you knew, you'd say, "Well, just let me take care of that for you," pick up the plate and take it back. He always used to have this saying, and my mother, too: "If one person goes out the door unhappy and you don't rectify it, you got—you've lost twenty customers."

AH: Yeah.

JB: Today, it's a lot more than that.

AH: Oh, yeah. Did you have something to add, Barbara? Looks like—

BB: No, that's about—no, she's got it right.

AH: Yes.

JB: Mom—my mother used to be, “If you didn't enjoy your meal, you didn't pay for it.” That's just the way it was.

AH: Yeah.

JB: Because we were noted for that.

BB: And a lot of times, she would send them a letter: “Two dinners free.”

AH: Okay.

JB: It was very, very, customer-orientated. Which today, it's not.

BB: And my mother was very kid-oriented. She used to have a—

JB: Treasure chest.

BB: Treasure chest and—

AH: Oh, what? They had toys and stuff?

JB: Pirate's hat, candy, and a—

BB: Mainly candy.

AH: Okay.

BB: But she figured, “Get the mother and father, or get the kids in there, all right, and the mother and father will keep coming back.”

AH: Yes.

BB: And it worked.

AH: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Because not a lot of—

BB: Like I said, she was a terrific PR person.

AH: Mm-hm. Yeah, very much ahead of her time.

BB: Yeah.

AH: For a really fine dining experience like that, and cater to children.

BB: And then another thing about (inaudible) that happened to her was when she opened the Plaid Bar and the restaurant in the Edward James Hotel, she got tremendous flak from the male restaurant owners. You remember? I mean it was a very sexist area then.

AH: Yes.

BB: And she just charmed them all. But they were out for blood. “You’re not gonna make it. You’re just a woman. What are you gonna do?”

AH: Yeah.

BB: She was very aware of that, and she just was charming to everybody.

AH: But even though she was married to the owner, co-owner, whatever you want to call it, they were still—had that attitude towards her.

JB: Yeah, because she ran it for a long time before the restaurant up north burned down and Frank came down.

AH: Oh, okay. Yeah, she was out on her own. Yeah, okay.

JB: And my mother was very adamant about the way things had to be done.

AH: Mm-hm.

JB: She was very pleasant and charming to all the customers, but the—and she was to the help too, but because many of the help had worked for years and years and years—but they knew they had to do it the way that we wanted it done.

AH: She was demanding, yeah.

JB: Yeah, I mean demanding that it had to be done this way for a reason.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And as late as sixty-two [1962], when she opened the Navigator, remember all the flak from Gene, those lobster people or whatever?

JB: Oh yeah.

BB: “Oh, she can’t make it, she’s just a woman. She doesn’t know what she’s doing.”

AH: Mm-hm.

BB: So that went on, and you know, that was an extra burden that a woman had to carry in that time.

AH: Absolutely

BB: That doesn’t happen now.

AH: Mm-hm.

BB: They’d be horrified if that happened now.

AH: Well, it’s a pretty remarkable story of someone who got into it in her middle of her life.

JB: Right, basically. Yeah.

AH: And not only did she kind of learn the ropes, but she did a great job at it.

JB: Wait, if Frank did it—I mean, in all respect, he had the basic idea of the customer always came first. And then my mother took that and ran with it.

AH: Yeah.

JB: But they always remained good friends up until the end, really.

AH: Okay.

BB: My mother used to go home and make him dinner in her apartment, remember?

JB: Yeah, he came and stayed with me when he was really sick.

BB: When he was married to somebody else. But everybody was friendly. There was no backbiting, animosity, nothing.

AH: Yeah.

JB: And he was sick in the hospital. He had congestive heart failure and he had fluid around the heart and we insisted that he come over to the—because he was—everybody was always after him.

AH: Yeah.

JB: “Frank, take care of this.” Even at that—because they had the two hotels.

BB: Well, he and his wife lived in a houseboat, which wasn’t too good for him: the dampness and everything. And remember, we went to the hospital and took him out. Remember?

JB: Yeah, we brought him over to—I had a condo on the beach, and he came and stayed. Actually, that’s where he died from. He went over to Tampa in the daytime and he had a massive heart attack when he was over at the—

BB: Causeway Inn.

JB: At the Causeway Inn. He went over for lunch. But, he just—he was a good man. He really was. He was very good to my sister and I.

BB: Yeah, he was.

JB: Yeah, he was a good man.

BB: He treated us like his own.

JB: Yeah, he did, and my younger sister, who, as I said, is their only child. I’ll have to get her phone number and stuff for you.

AH: Okay.

JB: So, you can talk to her, because she’ll have a different vein on—she knows all the things he did more so than we do, as far as the people he took care of and everything. Because she was constantly getting all this, “Who’s that?” “What house?” “What are we going to do with that?” That type of stuff.

AH: So, do you know or do you care to comment on why they got divorced?

BB: Probably the restaurant business did it.

JB: Well, you know, in the restaurant business, even as we speak today, there’s a lot of flirtin’ going on.

AH: Mm-hm.

JB: So—

BB: (gasps) Well, they all did it.

JB: But, Barbara, that wasn't the rea—they never spent any—

BB: No, that wasn't the reason, no.

JB: They didn't—they never spent any time together.

BB: No.

AH: Mm-hm.

BB: And he was up there and she was down here, then he came down and he got involved with the restaurant in Tampa. And they just grew apart.

AH: Yeah.

JB: But they always remained good friends.

AH: Yeah.

JB: And my younger sister was young. Kris was young when they got divorced.

BB: I think she was ten or eleven when they got a divorce?

JB: Yeah, something like that.

AH: Okay.

JB: And then—

BB: Maybe even younger.

JB: I don't think so. I don't think so. Kris was—

AH: So they were married for just over ten years then, huh?

JB: About that. Ten or twelve years. Yeah, they were married.

AH: Yeah.

JB: But like you said, they always remained good friends.

AH: Yeah. Well, and the restaurant business—I've done a lot of interviews with people involved in the restaurant business. It's totally true.

JB: You know it's—

BB: It's a very demanding job for anybody, but it's even more demanding when it's a husband and wife.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Because you just—there's just no time.

JB: Well, I had several restaurants in the area, too, so it was. It's tough.

AH: Well, yeah, I want to get to that. There's just, there's a couple of things I wanted to—

JB: Okay, go ahead.

AH: Well, there's a Davis Island hotel and bar; were they connected with that?

JB: Yeah, they were, but for a very brief time. They were trying to help out the—I can't re—I just remember that, but I can't remember any of the particulars.

BB: It was very short-lived.

JB: Yeah, it was very short-lived.

AH: Now, and then Rocky Point—you mentioned he had all the properties there and stuff; you remember anything called The China Clipper? I think this may have been before your dad took over the property.

JB: That might have been the name of that, because there was an old—it was a restaurant on the Point.

BB: She knows more than I do about that.

AH: Because The China Clipper became Bartke's on Rocky Point.

JB: Well, that's it. That's the restaurant I just told you about. There was an old restaurant down there. That's it.

AH: Yes, okay. It was The China Clipper. Okay.

JB: It was old!

AH: Yes. All right, and we talked about dredging—

Mp3 file 1 ends; mp3 file 2 begins.

AH: Some people in Tampa complain that there wasn't a beach, like a public beach, and Rocky Point eventually kind of filled that need, and I'd read that Frank was a backer to

bring in a white sand beach and a big pool. It says twelve hundred by six hundred foot pool.

JB: That never happened.

AH: Okay, that didn't happen.

BB: He did bring in the beach, because I worked in the snack shop over there.

AH: Okay.

BB: Yeah, they had a lot of people, and we had a regular snack shop with hot dogs and hamburgers and—

AH: For people that were on the beach?

BB: Yeah.

JB: But he also—that's where the Budweiser hydroplane races were.

BB: Yeah.

AH: Mm.

JB: And that's a big hotel now. That's a very big, exclusive hotel there right when you go down the road.

AH: Okay, but that's—they happened when your dad was still in business there?

JB: Mm-hm.

AH: Okay, interesting.

JB: Not the hotel, the hydroplane races and the—

BB: The beach and snack shop.

JB: Yeah, the beach and snack shop.

AH: Okay. So, once again, there's that Busch connection.

BB: Yeah.

AH: And your dad. Neat. Okay, so—yeah, and I see there's a radio show. Now, I don't know if you heard anything about—they were, your folks were consultants during construction of the Skytel? It's a hotel for people who are traveling by air?

BB and JB: (murmurs of disagreement)

AH: Okay. All right, and then there was a service station?

BB and JB: Yeah.

AH: Now, tell me just a little bit about that.

BB: She knows more than I do.

JB: Well, it just was right near the airport, and you—to get gas and everything and then they had the—I think they had the car rentals and—

BB: And that's when they were going back and forth to the beach from the commissary, too.

AH: Okay.

JB: Yeah and he—Frank—he had a brother, George, and he was always trying to keep him busy and he built that. He had that built and it had an airplane stuff on it. I can remember that. It had a different design to it. But George ran the gas station, his brother George.

AH: Okay. And then I see there was an apartment building on Dale Mabry [Highway], is that right?

JB: I don't remember that.

AH: Okay.

JB: He had a lot of real estate. He dabbled a lot in real estate.

AH: Okay. All right, so let me see what we got. We got some organ stuff here.

JB: Some what stuff?

AH: Oh, organ. Some stuff on the organ.

JB: Oh, yeah.

AH: We already talked about that. Well, and this won't be news to you, but this is just a little section from the chapter that I have written. It says, "Because all of the novelty surrounding, Bartke's Restaurant became a novelty, an absolute favorite of groups, clubs, and organizations. Banquets, receptions, conferences, and presentations filled the

Bartke's schedule. Disabled American veterans welcomed a freed POW from Korea one night."

JB: Oh, yeah. We did that.

BB: Mm-hm.

JB: I remember that.

AH: You remember that? Okay

JB: We did the—we also did the Vietnam veterans coming back.

AH: Okay. And you'd have a banquet there?

JB: Yeah. Oh, and we gave them all—

AH: In their honor?

JB: We gave them—and that was at my mother's restaurant. We had free meals, (inaudible) put them up. And it—there was very, very anonymous when they came in. Nobody bothered them, nobody did anything.

AH: Okay.

JB: They just donated everything to the—any of the—the plane that [Senator John] McCain came back on, as a matter of fact.

AH: Okay. Wow.

JB: Everybody involved in that. Yeah.

AH: Wow. Well and that's—I can see how that discretion would be appreciated—

BB and JB: Yeah.

AH: —from someone who has already shown something.

JB: Well, we used to have—Henry Fonda used to eat at my mother's restaurant, and that was—you know, nobody, we would not let anybody bother them when any of the movie stars came in. It was very—

AH: Yes.

JB: Everybody had to stay away.

BB: Everybody was very discreet.

JB: Yeah.

BB: You wouldn't come and gush or anything.

AH: Yes. Well, I also liked one thing that I found, that I thought was pretty interesting, was that the cattle consigners from the Florida State Fair dined at the Airport restaurant, which is a great sign for a steakhouse if they're coming to your place to eat.

JB: Yeah, right.

AH: Now, let's talk about, is it Kathe? How do you say her name?

JB: Oh, *Tante*.

AH: *Tante*. Yeah, well—

JB: That's German in—for Aunt.

BB: *Tante* means Aunt.

AH: Yes. Okay and then I just saw that her first name was like *Kante*?

JB: Yeah, *Tante* with a "k" "t" bit. *Tante*.

AH: Oh, okay. Yes. All right, so this is—tell me a little about this. She was in Austria when it was occupied by the Russians.

BB: The Germans.

AH: The Germans. Yes. And she has aided some soldiers, apparently.

JB: She rescued—I don't remember the number.

BB: Pilots that crash-landed.

JB: Pilots that crashed, and then the underground would rescue them and would stash them at different safe places until—

BB: They could get them out.

JB: They could get them out.

AH: Okay.

JB: So, she would have them in her house and in her—like, the cellar under the house—and would feed them, bathe them, administer to their wounds.

AH: Okay.

JB: And I don't know—I can't—I don't remember how many she rescued.

AH: Now ethnically, she was German?

JB: No. Well, yeah—yeah, she was German?

BB: Well, she was Austrian.

JB: Austrian.

AH: She was Austrian.

BB: Which is not the same as German.

AH: No, no. It's not the same as German.

BB: No. But they speak German, but they're not Germans.

AH: Of course.

BB: Half German.

AH: Yes.

JB: But Germany occupied Austria during the war.

AH: Yes. I mean, Hitler was born in Austria.

BB: Mm-hm.

AH: So, I mean, she was very much going against the grain, and this is what helped get her—

JB: Into the country.

AH: Into the country.

JB: Because the immigration had stopped, there was no—they stopped the immigration.

AH: Mm-hm.

JB: And so, all the people—the men she had rescued during World War II signed a special bill was passed in Congress to give her and her husband citizenship. And Bill Cramer helped organize that. But then, ultimately it was everybody that she rescued that signed it.

AH: Yes.

JB: And she became—they became US citizens.

AH: Okay. Yeah, and one of the gentlemen is mentioned by name, Joseph Suss.

BB: No, I don't know of him.

AH: And he actually testified, and I have some of his testimony here.

JB: Oh really?

AH: So the communists, it says, took over Austria in forty eight [1948], and Tante was put on the blacklist.

JB: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

BB: I just knew that.

AH: Yeah, and it says that she briefly visited the US in 1949, but then she went back home in 1950. The political situation got worse, and this may have been when she found out she was blacklisted.

BB: And that's when she tried to get out.

AH: Yes, exactly, and it said that the US denied this in—when she got here in 1950, the US denied all extensions of her visa and she was ordered to be deported in 1951, and that's when the appeal—and it said one of the—Bill Cramer, I'm sure, was instrumental, but also mentions [Florida Senator] George Smathers.

BB and JB: Yeah.

AH: Who was very much the anti-communist.

BB: Mm-hm.

AH: So, and that's when Joseph Suss came to her defense and actually testified in front of Congress and that a bill was passed. So, she became a resident alien. What can you tell me about any memories about that, about her?

JB: Well, she was an interesting lady. She was always there.

BB: And I was always around her more than you, because she lived at the house in Tampa when I was there.

JB: Yeah, but I mean, I was around or she was just was—she was a good lady.

BB: She worked in the commissary.

AH: Okay. Oh, she worked there?

JB: Oh, yeah, she—they all worked there.

BB: She was—

JB: Everybody in the family worked.

AH: Yes.

BB: She was a big, fat German that was very hugging and, you know, outward, outgoing.

JB: Yeah, she was a good lady.

AH: Yeah, okay.

BB: That's about all I remember about her.

JB: Yeah, me, too. I don't remember what year she died in.

AH: Okay.

JB: Frank had a sister, Rose, that we were all very close to Rose. She was Auntie Rose.

AH: Okay.

JB: And she was always in the restaurant.

AH: Now, before we close the chapter on your parents—and I do want to talk about your mother's restaurants and yours as well. I had heard that when they built the new—they were going to build the new airport terminal—that Frank found out late that he had been cut out of that business plan. Do you remember anything about this, because they—I guess they gave the contract to Marriot [Hotels and Resorts], who oversaw everything in the new Tampa International Airport. You don't remember anything about that?

BB and JB: Mm-mm [no].

AH: Okay. I just heard from the same source that Mr. Krowder—that Frank was bitterly disappointed, that—

JB: Well, he prob—yeah, he probably was, but—

AH: Yeah, they probably went to the—

JB: But he was probably older then.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And then—and you and I were older and everybody was kind of living their own life, so we didn't talk too much about stuff.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Right?

JB: Yeah, but he was also involved in the Courtney Causeway, North and South, and down around Rock Point. I don't remember that at all.

BB: No, I don't either.

AH: Okay. And then, you may not remember anything about this but, I guess, Bartke's had replaced a restaurant in the old Drew Field [Tampa] called Leo's.

BB: Bartke's was never in Drew Field.

AH: No, no. I know, but when the new terminal went in, I think Leo's thought they were going to get the contract and I guess—

BB: I don't know anything about that.

AH: —Frank bid on it and got it instead. Okay.

BB: I don't remember that at all.

AH: Just checking. Okay, so let's talk about your mother's restaurant for a minute, the Careless Navigator.

JB: That was a very big restaurant in its day.

AH: Yeah, where was that?

JB: Treasure Island.

AH: Treasure Island, okay.

BB: Extremely successful.

AH: Yeah.

BB: On holidays, like Mother's Day and Easter and everything.

JB: Christmas.

BB: We used to hire off-duty cops. They'd stay in the middle of Gulf Boulevard to direct —

AH: Direct traffic.

BB: In and out and everything. I mean, it was very—

JB: It was nothing to serve two thousand, twenty five hundred people on a holiday.

AH: So how many seats about were in that restaurant?

JB: Six hundred.

AH: Six hundred. So, it was a pretty big restaurant.

BB: No, no. Was it six hundred?

JB: Yes. Remember, she kept adding dining rooms on?

BB: Well, okay, she started out with two [hundred]. All right, started. Yeah, okay.

AH: So she started with two, and then worked her way up to six hundred.

BB: And then she added, and added, and added.

AH: Gotcha. Okay.

JB: And also, she had a really, you know, very—she had major awards from National Restaurant Association.

AH: Mm-hm.

JB: And she had a reservation system that worked.

BB: She invented.

AH: Okay.

JB: And they would die for it today to have a re—but you can get in there and it—we were right on time.

AH: Okay.

JB: Always on time.

BB: And she was very lucky, she—the maître d', they had cook in the kitchen, and a head bartender were there the whole time she was there at the restaurant.

AH: Okay.

BB: It was a steady—

JB: Yeah, she studied—

BB: —command post of people that she could count on.

AH: So, obviously, she had a good rapport with her employees.

BB and JB: Oh yeah.

AH: You talked about that before; she was demanding, but she was—

JB: Yeah, but they all knew that this was the only way we could go.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And at Christmas, instead of—I used to wrap up two, three hundred presents for everybody, and then they got to the point where Mom decided that she would pay the cost of having dinner in the whole restaurant for people from nursing homes that couldn't get out and all that kind of stuff. Then they would hire a double-decker bus and bring them in. That was a real big deal.

AH: Okay.

BB: And then all the waiters and waitresses would donate their time to serve everybody.

AH: Wow. And that was around Christmas, you said?

BB: Yeah. Every Christmas.

JB: Yeah. Every year.

AH: Now, how did the Careless Navigator differ from the restaurant your parents had together or your mother had with Frank?

BB: Well, it was more up-to-date, obviously, because it was a newer restaurant—

AH: Yeah.

BB: —and everything, but I don't think changed much. Do you?

AH: Was there more seafood or—

JB: Well no, it was—actually the truth of the matter was you didn't have to be a “chef” chef to work in any of our restaurants, because we always kept it simple. You had to have really good coordination. If you had good coordination, you could—we could teach you to cook.

BB: And she did have a butcher come in once a week.

AH: Okay.

JB: Yeah, she had a butcher.

BB: She did keep that up.

JB: Yeah, she did that, and we had a soup pot, a soup maker that she got at the Chicago restaurant show that was huge.

BB: We always used to say that the savages would put somebody in there to cook them.

AH: (laughs) Yes. Because [it was] how big?

JB: Because it was it huge, and because we had—with every dinner, the table came with soup tureen, with soup. That was part of everybody's meal.

AH: Did she have a signature kind of soup?

JB: No, they were all good.

BB: She had one guy that made the soup that was fantastic.

JB: Yeah, made the—yeah.

AH: Okay.

BB: Elmo.

JB: Elmo. He made it for years and years.

BB: Oh, wonderful soup.

AH: But it was just—it just varies. Different kinds.

BB: Well, it was a different soup every night, and it was just what he made.

AH: Yeah. Okay.

BB: And she had the relish tray, and she had—what was it? The relish tray and soup tureen?

JB: Yeah, we had—

BB: And then the entrée and the—

JB: We started the early birds in the area. We were the first ones to do early birds.

AH: Okay. Well, and of course, that became synonymous with St. Pete.

BB: (laughs)

AH: Along with the green benches, right?

BB: Yeah, right.

JB: Yeah, but we did our early bird dinners; but then of course then it went nationwide, early bird dinners.

AH: So, when would you say she opened up?

JB: The Navigator was opened in—

BB: Sixty-two [1962].

JB: Sixty-two [1962]. Yeah.

AH: And then how long of a run was that?

JB: Oh, about twenty-five years.

AH: Really? That long? Wow, okay.

BB: And the only reason she got out of it was she got sick.

AH: Yeah.

BB: And then June took it over.

AH: Okay.

JB: And then we sold it, we sold it to—actually he bought, he bought—I had the Red Cavalier up on Redington [Beach] and he bought my restaurant. And then he ended up buying the Careless Navigator and he ran those with our name on it, and then he went (makes whooshing sound) belly-up. And then the restaurant, the Navigator—I ended up taking the Red Cavalier back, and then the Navigator had a bunch of different owners over the years with different names that never really did anything. Just in the last couple years, they tore it down and they put condos in.

BB: They put condos there.

AH: Oh, yeah.

JB: But, I mean, it was a big, big restaurant.

BB: And she had—in the Careless Navigator, when you walked into the lobby, she had, like, a drunken sailor with a yellow thing on. She played that up.

AH: Yes.

BB: And the menu and my cousin—as a matter of fact, there's a menu somewhere, drew out the original Careless Navigator figure for the menu. Michael.

AH: Yeah.

JB: And then she had this famous guy—I can't think of his name—downtown, that did all the statues.

BB: All the carvings.

JB: All the carvings.

BB: Used to be a restaurant down there called Aunt Somebody's. What was it?

JB: Aunt Hattie's.

BB: Aunt Hattie's. He did a lot of stuff there. Oh, Frank, Frank somebody. He's still around in the antique business.

AH: Okay.

JB: And he did all the woodcarving.

AH: Mm-hm.

JB: And it was beautiful. I mean, it was very, very, expensive and very, very, beautiful. We never knew what happened to all that stuff.

AH: Okay. So, tell me about the Red Cavalier, then. This was—all right, this was your own venture?

JB: Yes, it was my own venture.

AH: And, obviously, you had been working in the restaurant business for a long time.

JB: All my life.

AH: Learned from the best.

JB: Yep.

AH: So, tell me about that.

JB: Well, it—I'm trying to remember. I think it was 1970—

AH: Okay.

JB: —that I opened that, and then, in the early eighties [1980s], I sold it to Vince Felipaso and he ran it but, he didn't do that well in it. He ran—he didn't have the same—

BB: He was from Las Vegas and thought he knew everything the restaurant business.

JB: He was so—

AH: Sure, sure. Huh.

JB: And then I took it back. And when I took it back, it was so far down I couldn't bring it back up and I just closed it.

AH: Okay. When you sold it to him, was it still on the up and up?

JB: Oh, yeah, yeah. And I sold it to him on a—he bugged me about buying it. He came in and then he wanted to buy it, to buy the restaurant, and I was like, "Yeah, okay. Well, if I ever change my mind, I'll call you." And that was the end of it. And I had had a rough time. My kids were teenagers and I was like, "It's hard." I was divorced, and one day I just said, "I've had enough." And I called him, and he was in Miami and he chartered a plane and flew up for fear I was going to change my mind. And I actually did it on a cocktail napkin with him, so—

AH: Okay.

JB: So, I did it on a cocktail napkin. But he ran it into the ground. They really did, with the family and everything.

BB: And he ran the Navigator into the ground.

JB: Yeah, he ran the Navigator into the ground.

BB: And it's very easy to do, you know? You can be on top one day and then the bottom the next day if you don't do it right.

AH: Oh, sure. Well, then, it's really hard to bring it back, like when you moved back in, you said it was too far gone, right?

JB: It was too—yeah, I had to do all the remodeling and then it became Shells.

AH: Okay.

JB: And Shells just went under not very long ago.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Now that's closed.

AH: Yeah.

JB: Yeah. They still had the paintings and stuff that we put in there.

AH: Okay.

JB: Yeah. So, we've had a long history in the restaurant business, and once it's in your blood, it's always there.

AB: What is it about it? Tell me.

JB: It's just—

BB: It's like a party, only every night, if you have the right attitude.

JB: It's adrenaline. It's getting it to where everybody is coordinated and they know what they gotta do and they hold their end up and they do it. And it's a satisfaction of people going—

BB: I think when you are in a position like her and Mom was, as far as running everything, you get a tremendous sense of satisfaction, “Oh, my God! Everything went all right tonight!” Right?

AH: (laughs) Yes, there’s so many different variables of what can go wrong.

BB: Yes, yes.

BB: You know, when I opened the Red Cavalier, it was at the same time that the Wine Cellar opened up here on Redington Shores and Redington Beach, and also Spoto’s Restaurant opened here. And we all went through all this together. And, like, I had the Red Cavalier from 1970, sold it in the eighties [1980s], in the early eighties [1980s], then got it back. But for maybe twenty-five years I knew them, and Spoto’s just gone back in. He’s (inaudible) a few years older than me. He just opened another restaurant. We can’t believe it. And we just had dinner last night at the Wine Cellar, and Ted, the other two partners, have since retired. Well, he’s retired, too, but we saw him last night. We go back a long, long, long—

BB: (inaudible)

AH: Now, what’s the first name of this Spoto gentleman?

JB: Bob Spoto.

AH: Bob. Okay.

JB: Yeah. He just opened up a new restaurant.

AH: Yeah, there’s lot of Spotos in the area so I was just curious.

JB: Yeah, but they all come from him.

AH: Okay.

JB: You know, in the restaurant businesses. He was the original Bob Spoto’s Restaurants. Spoto’s.

BB: If Mom ran into anything, well, she just called up local restaurants and they switched food back and forth.

JB: Yeah, we used to help each other out.

BB: Or, if I ran out of money for the cashier, I’d go somewhere and buy change.

AH: Okay.

JB: Everybody helped everybody.

BB: Yeah. There was no nastiness anywhere.

JB: No.

AH: How did the concept of the Red Cavalier? Was that any different than, say, the Careless Navigator?

JB: Oh, yeah. It was an entire—yeah. Well, no. No, it was the same type of food, because that's all I knew how to do.

AH: But you had those ribs before anybody else did.

JB: Yeah, we had ribs but—

AH: Yeah, what kind of ribs?

JB: They were spare ribs. And one of my customers—it was one of his recipes, and he was a doctor and he really and truly enjoyed having his ribs on our menu. Oh, jeez, that's a long—I forgot about that.

BB: But you had the same attitude Mom did: you took care of the customer.

JB: Yeah. It was “the customer is always right,” no matter what happened.

AH: Yeah.

JB: That was it. That's how we were raised. That was it, so. And the young man that owns—oh, gosh, Frank's restaurant up here, what's the name of that?

BB: Spoto's?

JB: No, Barb.

BB: Oh, Salt Rock Café.

JB: Yeah. He has about six or seven restaurants now. He told me how what a—

AH: Back up here for a second. What's the gentleman's name?

JB: Frank Chavez.

AH: Frank Chavez?

JB: Chavez.

AH: Chavez.

JB: Yes. He owns Salt Rock—

AH: And he worked for you originally?

JB: Yes. He was sixteen years old when I hired him.

AH: At the Red Cavalier?

JB: Yeah. And he was a bus boy at the Hungry Fisherman and Donald Cates who—we're again very close friends with Donald Cates and his family. He was a big restaurant person.

BB: And he owned John's Pass Fish Company.

JB: Yeah, he had John's Pass Seafood, and we were real kids when we first met him. But Frank worked for him as a busboy and I hired him away from him and taught him how to cook, and he ran my kitchen for about ten years.

AH: Okay.

JB: And then when I sold the business, he was also back with Donald Cates in the seafood business, wholesale seafood business. He also used to deal with Gene Holloway all the time.

AH: Okay.

JB: And we actually went on some restaurant trips with Gene Holloway and Frank and all of us would go to the different restaurant shows. But he will tell you in an article, any of the articles you read, that he learned—his mentors were Donald Cates and me.

AH: Okay. That's great.

JB: Yeah, he was just a kid, but he was well coordinated.

AH: Yeah.

JB: He had a feel.

BB: Quick study.

JB: Yeah.

AH: Yes.

JB: He had a really good feel for the restaurant business. He's done very well.

AH: Okay.

JB: And he's very close with my sons and that, the whole family.

AH: Wow.

JB: So, yeah.

AH: Yeah, that's great. Well, I want to thank both of you for sitting down with me today, and—

BB: It's been interesting to me.

JB: Well, it had been for me, too.

AH: Very much for me as well.

JB: Never knew this existed.

AH: Yeah. Well, and it's kind of interesting because I just happened to find it, and when I first started working up there in Special Collections, I just—I think my professors thought I was a little nuts when they said—when I was graduating, what I wanted to do and [I said], “I want to write about restaurants.” I mean, to me, that's such a fascinating cultural barometer.

JB: Especially people who own restaurants, too. It's not a normal person.

AH: Yes. Yeah, it takes a certain kind right?

JB: You should really look into the Hungry Fisherman, too, because he brought a different concept to Pinellas County and the whole area down in (inaudible).

AH: Okay.

JB: Because he brought it where it was low priced, quality, fresh seafood.

AH: Seafood. Yeah.

JB: He was the first to do that.

AH: Long before Shells. Yeah right?

BB and JB: Oh, yeah.

JB: Shells? No, long, way long before Shells ever knew anything about it. But Shells's food was never as good as the Hungry Fisherman.

AH: Yes.

JB: Seriously speaking. I knew the original John Christian. He was the original owner of, or started up, the Shells. John Christian was. And then he had—

AH: So, is the Cate still around?

JB: No. He died a couple of years ago, but his wife is still.

AH: Okay.

BB: And then Frank Chives can tell you a lot about him.

JB: Oh, yeah. Frank worked with him all his life.

BB: And he was Frank's first partner in the restaurant business, Salt Rock Café.

AH: Gotcha.

JB: Was Donald. Donald was a very behind the scenes person but he knew seafood, and I mean, he was—John's Pass Seafood, from which Charlie Rice, who was the first one that brought in all the seafood. He owned all that area up there and Donald worked for him.

AH: Okay.

JB: When I was a kid, I used to go drive down to John's Pass Seafood to pick up the seafood for the restaurant. I would drive a Jeep and Donald Case would load the seafood in the Jeep; and that's how long ago? That was in the early fifties (1950s).

AH: Okay.

JB: That's so long ago it was.

AH: Wow.

JB: But he's a very—he developed that concept of the low priced, turn it over, cook to order seafood.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Well, you know, during that era though, when the Navigator was—when you were there, seafood was the cheapest thing you could buy. Wholesale.

AH: Yeah.

BB: Basically, you made your money in the seafood.

JB: Yeah.

BB: And now, it's the opposite: seafood is more expensive than the steaks.

AH: Yeah.

JB: Grouper, too, is the big—grouper and snapper were the big things.

BB: And you—

AH: Well, now you don't know what you get when you order grouper, right?

BB: You designed that double-decker seafood platter.

JB: Oh, yeah, we had a double-decker seafood that we had a patent on that.

AH: So, what was that?

BB: When she had the Cavalier.

JB: It was a—no, that was at the Brass Lamp, I think. We got a patent on it, designer patent on it, yeah. It was a wood seafood platter that was shaped like a fish and it had—it was in the first tier that was a little small fish on top.

AH: Okay.

JB: And then a big wooden fish on the bottom, and that was hot down on the bottom and cold on the top.

AH: Okay, so that typically went on the top then? What was cold?

JB: Oysters, shrimp, clam or something cold.

AH: Gotcha. Yes, okay.

BB: That was very popular, wasn't it?

JB: Mm-hm. Forgot about that.

AH: It's ingenious to put it on a totally different plate.

JB: Yeah, yeah, and we—

BB: It was wonderful presentation.

AH: Oh, I'm sure. Yeah.

JB: In fact, I gave one those to Frank couple of years ago. I said, "Hey, do something with it."

AH: Well, and now kind of vertical has come back; you see all kinds of tapas towers and things like that today. That was kind of the first.

JB: Some of the stuff that's out today is a little far-out for me.

AH: Uh-huh.

JB: Yeah, I don't get it.

BB: Well, we were—our restaurants were plain food cooked well, seasoned well. We had our seasons. In fact, Frank has got our seasoning. I gave him the restaurant years ago, the recipe for that, and he uses them in all his recipes.

AH: Okay.

JB: In all his restaurants, right?

BB: In an elegant surrounding. (laughs)

AH and JB: Yes.

BB: Not really, but comfortable. (laughs)

JB: But it was just easy cooking. It wasn't all these sauces and stuffings. Everything was cooked to order. Nothing was prepared ahead of time except the turkeys on the holidays.

AH: Of course.

JB: This was—we had the National Zoo—the zoos, the National Zoological convention at the Causeway Inn and it was a big, big convention. And William Holden was coming from Kenya to address everybody at the—and that was when he was the top of his game. You know, William Holden?

AH: Okay.

JB: So, everybody—there was a big group of people going to the Airport to meet him and bring him back. The mayor and everything and my father went. They all went as a

welcoming committee, and I was the only one left at the hotel. And this cab pulled up, and out gets William Holden. (laughs) They're all at the airport and it's me. I don't know, maybe I was eighteen or twenty. I don't know how old I was. But I was just in awe. I just thought he was absolutely incredible.

AH: Uh-huh.

JB: So I took him, and I took him to the room and asked if there was anything that we could get for him. He said, yes, he'd like a bottle of Scotch, and he needed to sleep. He didn't want anybody to bother him because he was on the jet lag. So we—when they all came back, “He wasn't on the plane. We missed him. Something happened.” And I got my father on the side and said, “He's up in the room, but he doesn't want anybody to bother him.” So then, they said, “Well, he's here, but we're not—we promised not to let him be bothered.” So the next day, they [the press] were doing interviews with him, and he wanted to thank me for all that. So I have a picture of myself taken with him.

AH: Oh, that's great.

JB: Yeah, and then the inscription on that, on the photo, but he was there for a couple days.

AH: Big, big convention. That's one of the many stars that we had there but one, I was privileged. Oh, my gosh!

End of interview