

Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

Interviewee: Shemtov, Michael

Place of Interview: Butcher & Bee, 1085 Morrison Drive, Charleston, SC

Date of Interview: 2018-07-10

Interviewed by: Matthews, Tanya

Date of Transcription: 2018-12-22

Transcribed by: Gracey, Angus

Length of Interview: 37:39

Keywords and Subject Headings: Butcher & Bee, The Daily, Nashville, Charleston, development, hurricane, sustainability, restaurant, tourism, tourist

Biographical Note: Michael Shemtov was born in Israel, and emigrated with his family to the United States at age 10. After graduating from the College of Charleston in 2000, Shemtov remained in the Lowcountry and opened a number of restaurants in Charleston and Nashville, including Butcher & Bee and the Daily. In his interview with Tanya Matthews, he touches on his initial involvement in the restaurant industry, his experience managing and owning several establishments, and the future of Charleston's economic development and tourism industry. A veteran of the restaurant industry for nearly two decades, Shemtov prides himself on using fresh, locally sourced products.

Project Details:

In the summer of 2018, student researchers from the College of Charleston conducted oral histories for the research project, *Voices of Southern Hospitality*. The project documents diverse opinions and stories about southern hospitality in Charleston, South Carolina, but also offers a deeper and more intimate history of a changing community. Over the past thirty years (early-1990s to 2018), the Charleston peninsula and its surrounding islands have experienced rapid economic growth and rapid cultural and ecological changes. The *Voices of Southern Hospitality* project chronicles this profound transformation with the personal histories of Charleston residents. The project was launched in June 2018 with funding from The Committee for Innovative Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts and Sciences at the College

of Charleston. In addition to documenting important stories, the project was designed to train College of Charleston students in oral history research methods. Five student researchers and 42 interviewees participated in the first phase of this project (June and July, 2018).

Interviewer Initials: T.M.

Interviewee Initials: M.S.

TM: Hello this is Tanya Matthews sitting down with my Michael Shemtov, owner of Butcher & Bee, Charleston, South Carolina on the tenth of July, 2018. To start could you tell me a little bit about where you're from?

MS: Sure. Before that, to start I just wanna say I'm proud of you for how you've progressed, and for working on this project, and I wish you the best of luck with it. I am originally from Israel. I was born in this city called Rishon LeZiyyon, which is the fifth largest city in Israel, but nobody's ever heard of it, nor is there any reason why anybody should have heard of it. It's a rather unspectacular town, but that's where I was born.

TM: What brought you to the United States, and to Charleston?

MS: My mom's American, and wanted to get back closer to her family, so she, with her encouragement we moved from Israel to the States when I was about ten, and then I came to Charleston to go to CofC in 1996.

TM: So you graduated in 2000?

MS: Yeah, graduated in 2000.

TM: What did you study in school?

MS: I studied business administration. I was interested primarily in history, and in the history of science, and history of ideas and philosophy, but the business school had

the money to give, and they offered me a nice scholarship, so I balanced my interest in humanity's with enough business classes to graduate with a degree, and satisfy the requirements for my scholarship.

TM: Sure! And after school what did you go on to do?

MS: I graduated in May. By August I signed a lease for a restaurant on King Street, and by the following January we opened the doors. January, 2001 under Mellow Mushroom on King, very close to the CofC campus.

TM: Did you open any other ventures after that?

MS: Yes, but it took me about seven, well, it took me about ten years. I spent seven years running the restaurant day to day. I didn't think, I thought that after a couple of years, I'd go on and open more restaurants, or go to grad school or something. I was really humbled by how hard restaurant work was, and how unfulfilling financially it was. We really struggled for a long time there in that store. And after seven years I moved to Atlanta and took a job in the marketing department of Mellow Mushroom. And then pretty... within a few months, I got promoted to the marketing director for the company, and then did that for about two and a half years. And then I decided I wanted to start something new, and on my own. I was going to do it in Austin, Texas, cause I really liked Austin. But my partners at the Mellow Mushroom here found the space in Avondale, West Ashley, and we got it under lease, and we started building the Mellow Mushroom in Avondale, and I realized that I needed to come and spend time helping make that a reality. So I decided that... to open my restaurant here in Charleston, while also working with my partners on the Mellow Mushroom. And so we opened the Mellow Mushroom in March of 2011, and then I opened Butcher & Bee in October, 2011. So, about ten years passed in between the first restaurant to the second. But then we... I kept opening pretty close successions. So we opened the Bee in October, 2011; we opened a little bodega called The Daily in September, 2011. We opened Butcher Bee, Nashville in December, 2015. We opened Workshop in May of 2017. Between that we moved Butcher & Bee, Charleston to a bigger location in April of 2016. And then we opened The Gibbs, the Daily in the Gibbses, earlier this year. And then in between that we opened a Mellow Mushroom in

Summerville in 2013, and one in North Charleston 2015. That's a lot of different ventures.

TM: Did you find difficulty opening up Mellow Mushroom, cause it's more of like a chain? Did you find more difficulty opening up those, as opening up your own individual establishment?

MS: No not really. I mean the process is obviously different, but in some ways, like, opening up something that's already been done 100 times is easier because you have a sellers list, you know, equipment list, where, (yawns) sorry I drank a bunch of coffee this morning and I'm crashing. Whereas opening the Bee, you really have a clean slate, and it's one of those things with, for example when people say, 'What do you want to do with your life?', like I don't know; everything is open. It's really hard to figure out when there's no parameters. It's a lot easier. It's like, oh, my parents started a business and there's nobody to run it, and I don't want to see it sold, so I've got to go take over my family's business, you know? And I can either do sales, or I can do operations. I can pick between two things that's easier. So with the Bee there's like, what equipment do you get? Well, you need a menu, however it's going to change and we cook whatever we want. It's just probably harder to open the Bee than Mellow, but in some ways more rewarding too because you could make a lot of decisions the way that you want...

TM: Is there a specific reason why you chose Charleston? Or were there any changes that were going on in the community that you saw an opportunity to open these places?

MS: Well, we had one business here already, but I actually chose Austin because I like how they, the people in the city support sustainable agriculture, and I like how they sort of vote with their dollars towards the values that they have, but just the way that the timing worked, and I couldn't, I wasn't able to secure space in Austin soon enough, that sort of my hand got forced, and I wasn't patient enough to, like, open the Mellow Mushroom in Avondale here, and then go to somewhere else. So I just decided if I'm opening one restaurant in Charleston, might as well open two more. But at the time I thought I would open Butcher Bees, sort of get it running, and then move to Atlanta, or move somewhere else. I wasn't planning to stay in Charleston.

TM: You mentioned something in there about sustainable agriculture and development. Do you embody those goals in any way, in your establishments?

MS: I hope so. I mean, I know we do. I'm kind of a perfectionist so it's never quite enough; for my satisfaction there is always more work to do. But yeah, we buy well over 60, 70 percent of our dollars go directly to the person who raises the cows, the person who raises the pigs, the person who catches the fish. We buy, it's like one of the things that we do here is buy a lot directly from people, and buy... anybody that were buying from is practicing sustainability. And yeah, they might not be certified organic, but they're certainly using organic practices on their farms, if it's a farmer.

TM: I'm not sure if you're aware, but do you know if you were one of the first restaurants to bring that to Charleston, or was that happening around the same time?

MS: So it was happening. I mean the first person to do it, widely considered the first person to do it is Frank Lee, Slightly North of Broad. He was at it for well over a decade before we got started, but I do think that we were the first person that brought it to a price point where you could eat it every day, and you brought it to a more casual setting. So I think that those sort of ingredients and purchasing practices were generally reserved for fine dining, and sort of modern American farm-to-table restaurants, which is somewhat what we've grown into here. But when we started there was not a place that was counter service, that was, now around, right before we open, or around the same time, a place is no longer in existence open called To Boroughs Larder. And they had a similar philosophy and they were initially going to be a sandwich shop, but they very quickly turned into much more of a modern American restaurant. But they had a similar ethos and started around the same time, but I think before us there wasn't anybody, there wasn't anywhere that you could eat for ten to 15 bucks that was sourcing that way, sort of reserved for nicer deals.

TM: Could you explain a little bit about the menus that you feature?

MS: Yeah! It's definitely, this is we're sitting in Butcher & Bee 2.O. 1.O was a different location and different philosophy, which was much more fun and much more

focused, but not at all a profitable venture. And over the course of running that business, I became friends with some people around the country who have similar businesses, and I think almost every single one of them is now pivoted to doing something else in the restaurant business because you just, just can't sustain; it's really, really hard to sustain that kind of business that put Butcher & Bee 1.0 was. Especially in a city like Charleston, which is, doesn't have the density of population. Maybe if you add more density, would more density, sales would be higher, and with higher sales you can afford to have a smaller margin. But the first Butcher & Bee was basically, the idea was, we're gonna hire chefs that normally work, the kind of people that would normally work in fine dining. We're gonna sort of scatter the ingredients that aren't really reserved for fine dining, use the same kind of cooking techniques, but serve things between two slices of bread on a metal sheet pan. So we're gonna really have this, like, high/low dichotomy. This iteration of Butcher & Bee has much more than that because there's really a limit to what somebody wants to pay for a sandwich. And for us to source the way that we do way, we can actually get, like I could drive to Whole Foods and buy ground beef at the counter at Whole Foods for less than we paid for the ground beef that we buy here, or lamb. And the reason is Whole Foods is buying lamb from Colorado or Australia, where it's grown in very large quantities, even though it's better than commodity things, and they have their standards and they have, like, a five step, I don't know if you go to Whole Foods but right now they're like a five step wellness program, and they say this, 'This is like step three, this beef is step three' meaning, like, it's halfway to what they consider their ideal. But, you know, because of the way they buy, and because of the farms that they're sourcing from that are much larger, and the quantities that they're buying in, and they can get it to the consumer for much less than I can go and buy it from the producer who is raising it ten miles up the road, so...so yeah.

TM: Do you have anything to add?

MS: It's hard to make money selling sandwiches. I encourage anybody who's listening to this to not do it...

TM: (laughs)...In Charleston... You did mention something about density. Do you think that it would be more successful to have density for locals, or tourist density?

What do you mean?

MS: I think that one thing that I've noticed in Charleston in the past five/six years is that we started pulling in culinary tourists. Like we... I would talk to people who said that they're in Charleston to just eat for the weekend. Which is, that's a phenomenon that I hadn't seen before, where people were coming here just to eat. But all of a sudden, I've noticed people were coming to Charleston just to eat, so with the rise of that kind of tourism, I think that there's just not... it's just fundamentally a small town. You know, I just spent last week in Los Angeles, and I think if we picked up any of our businesses and moved them to California, I mean our costs would go up quite a bit, but our sales volume would probably double or triple, because there's that many more people, ya know? They're just not people everywhere in Charleston. I mean as much as people complain about Charleston and changing and growing in density, we still don't have that many buildings that have more than 100 apartments in them, for example, you know? It's still not really dense, so I think any sort of density will be, I think: one healthy for the city, for the downtown, for this important to the city, and two: great for businesses. I mean where we are now, we think that we're like early to this area, but there's not really many people they could walk here, you know? Versus like, we did an event in New York in a restaurant there, one of the customers that we met lives in an apartment building across the street, and she said three nights a week she eats dinner in this restaurant, you know? It's just convenient, she takes the elevator down, she walks across the street. There's a few hundred condos that are getting built across the street from us now, and down two blocks, but like this will be the first people who live walking distance from us, you know? I imagine that the brewery down the street will do better. I imagine that Lewis Barbecue will do a little bit better. I imagine that Home Team will do a little bit better. And we'll do a little better because we'll just be a convenient option for these people.

TM: Sure. This is a little bit of a different question now, but how do you personally define hospitality?

MS: Well, I mean, I think the sort of classic definition is like doing something for somebody, instead of to somebody. So like, you provide a service to people but, you know, you provide hospitality for people. But for me, like, what I think about it, is caring about people outside of just the four walls of the restaurants, and not, to me

hospitality is not transactional. So what I mean by that is like a lot of times you get good service and you get people who were friendly at the restaurant, but they're doing that to get a better tip, and if you are going to see them, like if you went out for a drink, and you saw them come into the same bar, they wouldn't look at you, smile, say hello or anything. So to me, you know, hospitality is really caring about people, not just as a potential tipper, but if somebody's a guest, or human being, I always say that we are going to feed people. We're gonna feed 200 people lunch, but every one of those people was only gonna have lunch once today, you know? So for us they're just another turn at table 32. For them this is a special occasion, they get to eat lunch out at a restaurant. So we just have to remember that, and I mean, I think, you know, a lot of hospitality is just thinking about them, and thinking about this experience being special for them; like, they don't look at themselves as one of four tables in your section.

TM: Do you think that Southern hospitality is different from that definition you just gave?

MS: I mean, Southern hospitality, I think, probably, connotes something to people outside the South. I think that the thing about the South that really makes us different is that we have more space. It's not the same level of density, as L.A., or other places that are larger cities. And so we're not so fed up with each other as people. I think that when you get into the dense pockets of the Northeast, or in L.A., you're just always surrounded by people. You could never just get away, or have any space. I think that makes it difficult for people to really be calm and friendly in those sort of places, because they're just tired of humanity always being around them. So I think that, you know, Southern hospitality is probably giving people a bit of a slower experience. Not, you know, rushing them through their meals. If you eat dinner out in New York, you know, three times somebody will come by and ask if they can clear your plate before you're finished. You know, it just feels a lot more... a lot faster. It's the pace of life seems slower, slower here.

TM: Are there any behaviors or phrases that you would identify with Southern hospitality?

MS: Y'all, hi. No, not really. I mean, I think hospitality is hospitality. It's just whether you care about making somebody happy, or not, you know? And it's not always, we tend to think about hospitality as, like, putting out the placemat and bringing somebody desert, making them feel comfortable. But hospitality is also like somebody being upset, and they've waited so long for their food, and saying that they just wanna cancel their order, and go someplace else and not telling them, 'Fine, we'll cancel your order'. I mean, hospitality is also saying, 'You know what, it's not about whether you pay for it, it's not about anything else, I just, you came here to eat, and I don't want you to leave without eating, so I promise you, I know it's been longer than you should have waited, but it's gonna be much faster than getting up, getting in a car, driving somewhere else, parking, going in, ordering and getting your food there. So please, just, you know, let me feed you. Don't worry about the bill, that's a separate issue. I just want you to eat'.

TM: Do you think that Southern hospitality plays into the appeal of Charleston, as a tourist destination?

MS: Oh yeah.

TM: In what ways?

MS: Well, I think that people notice that the general population here is nicer than the general population in other cities. And that the people today they interact with seemed genuinely friendly, and I think that helps boost Charleston's appeal. And I think that Charleston is also very low on negatives. So, when people come here, it's not just like the hospitality but it's the lack of inhospitable people. So it's not necessarily just everybody's friendly, but it's also that nobody cusses you out on the street. Or, like incessantly honks at you in traffic, or other things that would so frustrate you...

TM: In terms of the environment, how do you personally interact? Or how does it make you feel when you're out and about in Charleston?

MS: It's a small town, especially when you've lived here for 20 years, like I have. You

live here for 20 years, and you're a business owner, you know, let alone the owner of multiple businesses. I mean there's probably 3/4,000 people that have worked for me in the last... since 2001, when we opened the restaurant. So I mean, I see a lot of people just out that have had some sort of relationship with our restaurant. And then, just, you know, knowing a lot of people, from the people that pick up the garbage, to the people in the city's planning departments, to customers, you know? There's customers [who] followed me from Mellow to the Bee to Workshop., so.

TM: What, in your opinion, is the most attractive appeal of Charleston?

MS: Just the quality of life, and that you don't have to fight for things here, that you have to fight for elsewhere. Like, for example, going to the DMV here is a fairly quick and easy experience, like Paris for shopping is easy. Doing laundry is something that happens in your house, which we all take for granted living in Charleston. But if we lived in New York, all of this would be hauling our laundry down multiple flights of stairs to some facility where we'd wash and dry our clothes, to fold them and haul them back up a certain number of flights of stairs to get back to our house. So I think to me, like the appeal in Charleston is just that you don't have to.. you don't have to fight like that, like where you're going there will be parking. You know, people like to complain about a lack of parking, but it's like you're gonna park a block off, or you're gonna circle the parking lot once, you know,? It's not gonna cost you 30 dollars to park for two hours, you know? Things are just easier. It's easier to navigate life here.

TM: Is there any specific moment in your memory where things changed drastically, like there was an increase of population... or things started to develop a lot more than they were before?

MS: I mean, to me, the big turning point was when Husk was voted the number one restaurant, new restaurant in the country by Bon App, which was the Fall of 2011, I think. Maybe it was 2012. But yeah, they were on the cover of Bon App, and it was, you know, like I said, hey all this is the best new restaurant in the country. And that really changed a lot, I think, really, like, put Charleston on the map as a culinary destination.

TM: Have you noticed changes in the community as a result of that?

MS: Not really. I mean, they probably have continued to... you know... they set the standard for what sourcing locally means, and so they have a nice drag along effect. It may be a raised cost of entry, that anybody who wants to be in the same league as them has to source locally. They just put more of an emphasis on that, so they led the way there. People often ask me why we're Nashville, and why there's so many Charleston restaurants in Nashville, cause Husk, Butcher & Bee, Caviar and Bananas went there, I actually just read they closed their location in Nashville. But I don't think there's any others, but those three, you know, to say like if Sean, Sean Brock is a trailblazer, you know? People watch what he does, so if he's in Charleston and opens a restaurant, naturally people are gonna ask, 'Hm, you know, I wonder why he went to Nashville?' Maybe we should, too.

TM: Do you notice any trends month to month, or in a year, in the amount of tourists that come to your business, or just out and around?

MS: Well we've always been in both locations. We've been on the edge of where tourists go. So this sort of visitor, I like calling them visitors, also, instead of tourist stories, cause I feel like tourist has a negative connotation, and I just.. I feel like they're keeping our economy afloat down here, and are great for businesses. But they don't affect us as much, obviously we're busier on weeks where there is a lot of tourism. No, I mean, I'm just, you know, the main difference that I've noticed is just a number of restaurants that have opened, and what that has done to put pressure on the labor market, and to raise costs for restaurants, like raise operating costs for restaurants. So like, front house management has gotten much more expensive in the past few years. Line cook's pay is probably gone up an average of two dollars an hour in the last few years. So it's just that has put... I've just noticed you know... I don't know that... I will say this... we have too many restaurants, or that we've reached some critical mass, or that there needs to be some shake out, or something. But it's just... it's increasingly hard to staff. It is more competitive than ever. And those things at some point will start to affect people, you know?

TM: Do you consider these changes positive or negative?

MS: I consider them positive. Yeah, I don't think Charleston needs to be like a small, sleepy town. Like I'm happy for the tourism. And I'm happy for more restaurants, and for more diversification.

TM: Do you think that the city is holding a nice balance for locals and visitors?

MS: I mean, I live my life on the upper peninsula, like I, generally, am not South of the Daily on King Street more than once a week, twice a week, to just go to the Gibs or do some baking. So for me, I don't feel it. But I wouldn't buy a house off of Broad right now, even if I could afford it, because I just, the amount of carriages, cars, tourists, just traffic down there. So it doesn't affect me, but I could see where it would affect other people.

TM: Do you have any favorite places in Charleston that you like to go to?

MS: My life has changed dramatically; I have two young kids now. So you know, like, playgrounds are my favorite places these days. So, I mean, I like going anywhere where there's an owner present who's working their business, and supporting them. And I do, like, the neighborhood dining restaurants, like, especially Manero. But yeah, I like going places where I know the owner and I know that the owner's there. And I know that the owner appreciates having our dollars in their cash register. And places that are kind, where the staff is kind, and not, you know, stuck up, and having an attitude about what they're doing and how great they are.

TM: This is a bit of a different question now, more related to environment, but have you ever experienced a hurricane or any tropical storms during your time here?

MS: Yeah a few minor ones, but I mean the threat of a hurricane is as bad as a hurricane... In 2017, we had a storm that was supposed to hit, but didn't hit us at all. But they evacuated Charleston for four days, and the two weeks around that were terrible, in terms of sales. One day, first of all, because of the mandatory evacuation, like, most of our customers and most of our staff left, and we weren't able to open this restaurant, for example. For four days, we were able to open the Daily because we

can operate it on a much smaller staff. But, but the interesting thing was on day five when everybody was back, there was no storm, there was no damage, there was no power outage. We could operate as normal. We had by far our worst day of sales, and the following day was slow, and the weekend was slow, and the following week was slow because everybody had to leave town for four days. This is my thesis; restaurant owners love coming up with ideas for why things are busy or slow. My thesis is that everybody left town, they weren't planning to take those four days off, they have to spend money on hotels, on gas, on meals out, on boarding up their house, maybe. And they were feeling the pinch when they came back, and we're not going out to eat. I mean, it basically tanked our Fall. Like we had a really, really challenging Fall because of that, and the actual damage sustained was non-existent.

TM: So the physical damage was non-existent, but the financial one, that was something difficult to come out of?

MS: Yeah.

TM: It was like an economic bust.

MS: Exactly.

TM: Do you worry that that might happen again?

MS: Oh, it's gonna happen again. I mean, we are completely destroying our planet. It's gonna happen. To me, like I own a piece of property on King Street that the Mellow Mushroom is in, with two other people. I personally want to sell it, because I think that the peninsula's gonna have, you know, 30, 50, 80 days a year of flooding, where no one can get down there.

TM: Does that make you feel any sort of way, or... ?

MS: It makes me sad. I mean, it's...it's we're unquestionably destroying the livability of our coastal area, and not really facing up to it as a nation. And most of our political leaders lack the courage and the will to stand up in front of us and say what we're

doing is destructive and counterproductive. You know, they want to talk about tax cuts, and kick the problem down the road. Their... their not going to be in office, and let somebody else deal with it. But you can't, we're not gonna be able to reverse what we're doing.

TM: And in your opinion, the development that's currently happening on the peninsula, do you think that's... it is a sustainable route, or is it kinda going in...?

MS: I mean I don't know if the development itself is sustainable or not, but, I don't see the development as the issue. I mean, if anything, I think more density will reduce our use of cars. It'll sort of get more people walking and biking, but I do think that Charleston is woefully unprepared for a rise of sea level. I mean, Joe Riley said they're modeling a one inch rise over the next 30 years. Which is not a conservative estimate, it's an unrealistically low estimate. So, I mean, you look at what Miami's... I don't know if you've looked at that at all... but like, Miami has been impacted by sea level rise, and by flooding, dramatically, and they're working very aggressively on plans to mitigate that. And here, I don't see any of that happening.

TM: So these are some last thoughts... but do you have a future vision for Charleston and how does tourism kind of play a role in that?

MS: I mean, that's not something I think about, so, I mean, tourism is a big part of Charleston. I mean just today, we've got an email saying we're voted number one city in the U.S. for the sixth year in a row by *Travel and Leisure*. So, it's not going anywhere. I mean I think, it's you know, let's embrace it. Try to position the city in a way where we're attracting the right people, and not the wrong people to come down here, and you know I think that it's a fallacy to think of like tourism as bad, and tourists take away from our quality of life. I mean, they enable Charleston to have a thriving restaurant scene, which we wouldn't have if we didn't have the amount of tourism here.

TM: I think you just mentioned something about... there's something that you just mentioned, I don't know, okay I'll move on...

MS: *Travel and Leisure* award?

TM: Right, why do you think that we repeatedly get this award?

MS: Oh, I don't, it's not what I think, it's what I heard, the person who puts the survey together came down here to speak, and she said something that I mentioned earlier, which is the reason, big reason why Charleston won it, and continues to win it, is because our positives are good, but our negatives, our lack in negatives is excellent. So people love Paris, for example, but then they get stuck in a traffic jam for two hours, and they miss a show that they spent 300 dollars buying tickets for, and now they hate Paris, or they hate some aspect of Paris, which could easily happen. I mean you could be out on a highway in Paris, take your exit, and it could take you an hour to go a quarter of a mile from the highway, to where you could turn left or right at the exit ramp. And Charleston just doesn't have the negatives. So it does well because of the lack of negatives.

TM: And if you could change anything in regards to the community's development in terms of tourism, would you change anything?

MS: I don't know enough about what's going to be able to answer that question intelligently.

TM: Sure, okay.

MS: I'm happy with what's happening from what I can see.

TM: Do the hotels that are popping up, do you have any opinions on those?

MS: Yeah, I mean again, it's like when you go and sit in on these presentations... what the people who are charge of promoting Charleston to the world, Charleston convention visitors bureau, you know what they say is that they can't get conventions to come to Charleston without more hotel rooms. There's not enough conference space, and there's not enough large hotels for them to be able to attract the top conventions. So they essentially worked to get more hotels built, so they could go out

and pitch to people who were playing conferences to hold their conference in Charleston.

TM: Okay, so that's kind of why... they have three popping up... to fuel this more business oriented world, or... ?

MS: Yeah, I mean it's probably a lot more than three hotels in the planning stages here. But, yeah, that was a big push to that Convention Visitors Bureau had, was more large hotels so they can attract more conferences.

TM: Interesting.

MS: Yeah. And just so you know, that helps round out the Monday through Thursday business, because we're doing fine on the weekends, and people driving in from Charlotte, Atlanta, flying from Boston or New York to come visit. But during the week, you need that conference convention business, to keep the hotel rooms full and keep restaurants full.

TM: Very interesting, okay. The final question that I have for you, since this is an oral history project, and were developing the archives, and I'm wondering if you have any hopes for the project itself, and your involvement in it?

MS: You know, I think that Charleston has played a central role in the development of Southern food, as we've known it over the past 20 years, also historically played a major role, so it's nice to see this project worked on, and I hope it's a resource for people who're studying the food history of the South, in later and later decades and years. That the work you and others are doing is a resource to them, and helping understand how things developed here.

TM: Well, thank you so much for sitting down with me today.

MS: Yeah, of course.

TM: It's been a pleasure speaking with you.

MS: You too, we miss having you here at the restaurant.

TM: I miss it as well, sometimes. Alrighty...