

## Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

**Interviewee:** Glowacki, Casey

**Place of Interview:**

**Date of Interview:** 2018-07-24

**Interviewed by:** Robbins, Laura

**Date of Transcription:** 2019-05-31

**Transcribed by:** Davis, Alexis

**Date of Revision(s):**

**Length of Interview:** 00:49:59

**Keywords and Subject Headings:** Blossoms, Cannon Street, Charleston, College of Charleston, Coming Street, Five Loaves, Magnolias, NoMo, Sesame, TBonz, culinary, culture, flood, public transportation, rain, restaurants, southern hospitality, tourists

**Abstract:** In this interview, restaurateur Casey Glowacki discusses his journey from a busboy in Arizona to founder of Five Loaves Cafe in Charleston. He points out the changes that he has experienced in Charleston, including the increase in tourists and businesses and Charleston's shift to a cosmopolitan city. He reflects on the restaurant pioneers in the city as well as his own business and the direction that he hopes it will go in years down the road. Finally, he details what his vision of the future of Charleston is like and what he hopes to see improved in the coming years.

**Biographical Note:** Glowacki was born in a small mountain town in Colorado. He had attended high school in Arizona and came to Charleston in 1996 to be with his girlfriend and start a new life. While here, he began his culinary studies at Johnson and Wales but decided to pursue culinary school in Vermont instead. Upon returning, he worked as a corporate chef for a restaurant group until branching off to do his own restaurant endeavors. In 2002, he opened the first Five Loaves Cafe downtown and since then has opened several others in the Lowcountry as well as the brands Sesame and Ember.

### 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).

## **Interview Begin**

**[Interviewer Initials]: L.R.**

**Interviewee Initials]: C.G.**

**LR:** It's July 24th, 2018 and this is Laura Robbins sitting down with Casey Glowacki in Charleston, South Carolina. Casey, can you tell me how long you've lived in Charleston?

**CG:** I have lived in Charleston for just over 20 years now.

**LR:** And when did you, when did you first come here?

**CG:** So, it was 1997, '96. I had moved from Colorado, from a small mountain town that I was living in in Colorado, and I came to Charleston. I was dating a girl that was from here, and it seemed to be a city that we could get ahead in; you know, it was a medium-sized city on the East Coast that had a culinary school. So, I was looking to advance my experience in the culinary world, too.

**LR:** So, did you study here?

**CG:** So, I got here, signed the lease and then started diving into Johnson and Wales. I wasn't entirely impressed with the program at the Johnson and Wales University here in Charleston, and so I went up to Vermont and I went to culinary school in Vermont and I did an internship in Savannah and then I came back to Charleston, so technically this is my second time living in Charleston.

**LR:** Are you from Colorado originally?

**CG:** I am.

**LR:** Okay, so from the small mountain town?

**CG:** Yeah.

**LR:** And your whole family is from Colorado?

**CG:** Well, yeah. I mean originally, yeah, we all grew up in Colorado and now we've all scattered. And some of my family, my immediate family on my side--my siblings and my mom--and everybody lives in Arizona, and I went to high school in Arizona. And then like, you know, aunts and uncles living in Texas and stuff like that.

**LR:** Everywhere.

**CG:** Yeah.

**LR:** So, what made you want to start Five Loaves? Five Loaves was the first restaurant of your hospitality group, right?

**CG:** Mhm. Yeah.

**LR:** What made you want to start it?

**CG:** So, Five Loaves came about because I was a corporate chef for a restaurant group here in town, and I was running seven, eight, ultimately nine of his restaurants as a corporate chef. And I was like, you know, just really, really got burnt out and actually considered changing occupations. And so Five Loaves was the answer to my burnout, you know; I realized I was good at cooking, I had a talent for running kitchens, and I had a good palate. And so I, you know, I thought myself, well, I've always enjoyed making soups and you know, anytime that there was like a soup of the day at a restaurant or whatnot, that was like, that was what I always wanted to make. So, I thought of this restaurant that was focused around quality soups, so Five Loaves, you know, sort of was born out of that. You know, I looked at different occupations that I was going to explore and then I was like, you know, I'm good at this. You know, I was just kind of burnt out. So, I swore I would only have my little cafe, little 40-seat cafe on the corner of Canon and Coming, and I would never expand past that. And here I am with seven restaurants doing basically the same thing, only it's for myself now. You know, we have 330 employees last I counted, and it's nuts. It's going 100 miles an hour, but it feels much, much different than when I was working for somebody else.

**LR:** So, how did it begin? Was it just you or did you have other individuals starting the restaurant with you?

**CG:** So, I left that restaurant group that I was working with, and I had jumped through all the hurdles to get all the loans necessary to branch out. I went through the SBA, Small Business Association. I got them to back me on a loan, I went to wells Fargo and, you know, I jumped through all their hoops, and I was doing this all secretly while I was working these insane amounts of hours for this person. And then, so then once I came to him and essentially gave my notice and told him what my plans were, he offered to be an investor and then I would maintain a position of the corporate chef for his restaurant group and then we would incorporate this. I would still be able to get my salary, and I wouldn't have to take that loan from Wells Fargo. So, at the time, it seemed like a good idea. It was kind of one of those decisions that I had to make, you know, whether I really wanted to do this on my own or, you know, if I liked the security of still getting a paycheck and, you know, somebody with experience back of me. And then about six months into it, I started seeing the writing on the wall that it wasn't working out and he, you know, he wanted me to get back into his restaurants, and I was having so much fun running Five Loaves, you know, as much hard work as it was, it felt like my own and, well, it was my own. But he didn't collaborate, he didn't help. He didn't... you know. I got to do like, you know-

**LR:** It wasn't what you thought.

**CG:** Yeah, the partnership just wasn't what I thought it was going to be. And so I started researching ways to buy him out, and then I think about a year had gone by at this point, you know, and then I remembered a friend that I'd worked with in this restaurant group; he was general manager and he's like impeccable work ethic and honest as the day is long. And so I reached out to him, you know, on a Sunday afternoon and asked if he'd be willing to sort of take over this debt that I had incurred with the other partner and he could buy into the restaurant, and he accepted right away, you know.

**LR:** So, is he one of your partners-?

**CG** So, yeah. So, he's still my partner now. Yeah. So Joe Fischbein is my... we're equal partners and that's it. We've never taken any investors, any other partners, you know, in the group we have. We have two restaurants right now that have profit sharing in it; they're managing partners essentially, but they didn't put up any capital or anything like that. You know, they're just... they get all the rewards of the bottom line, you know, but they didn't have to put up the capital. So, you know, they're more or less doing like kind of a sweat equity type of situation. So, it's working out for both of us, you know, that I have two units that have highly-motivated individuals at them to make sure that everything is run perfectly and, you know, that they're hitting all their numbers and driving labor and food costs and so on and so forth. So, yeah it's awesome.

**LR:** So, what year did this all happen? What year did you first open Five Loaves?

**CG:** So, it was December of 2002. Yeah, it says 2003 on our sign, but it's technically 2002. And then I guess Joe might have come in around 2004 or something like that. I'm like super bad with dates.

**LR:** So, you obviously have a passion for the culinary world. Did someone influence you in that way? Like maybe in your family or from your past.

**CG:** I mean, my grandmother. I don't have that story that, you know, that stereotypical, "I grew up in the back of my great grandmother's Italian restaurant peeling potatoes for...", you know, it wasn't like that, you know. I mean, my grandmother is an old-world cook. She's from Czechoslovakia and she came over on a boat, you know, after the war, during the war with my dad, you know, from Germany and they went to, you know, escape all the troubles that Europe was having at that time and come to America for like, you know, a new beginning type thing. And so I could say she influenced me, but, you know, basically I just kind of like fell into, you know, the restaurant world because I needed a job. And so my first job was bussing tables and then, you know-

**LR:** Back in Colorado?

**CG:** This was in Arizona in high school. Yeah. My dad had died young when I was 13 and then my mom moved us all to Arizona. So, my first job was in a little Mexican restaurant, and I was bussing tables and washing dishes and just, you know, doing like, bottom-

**LR:** Grunge work.

**CG:** Yeah, yeah. And then, you know, sort of a funny story, you know. I was washing dishes at this Mexican restaurant and every day the kitchen manager, you know, if I got done all the dishes and all the pots, he would allow me to do a recipe. And so I started learning the recipes. So, I learned how to make like Borracho beans, refried beans, pico de gallo salsa, marinating fajita meat, red rice, you know, stuff like that. And I had carved through every single recipe; I'd made every recipe in the place. And then on a Friday night, he fell and broke his leg. And they needed somebody to kind of run the show. And since I had been sort of mentoring underneath him and learned the recipes and had been, you know, vicariously kind of shadowing him. And, you know, not really formally trained or anything like that, but the managers were kind of all scratching their heads, like, "What are we going to do? It's Friday night." And Patrick had fallen and broken his leg, and he was like off to the hospital and so I kind of rose my hand up and I was like, "I can do it," you know, "I can get us through. I can sail the ship through this Friday night." And I did it and I absolutely loved it. It's like, I can honestly say that was kind of the moment when the light went on.

**LR:** That's really interesting. That's a good story to have.

**CG:** I was 16. And then I left there; there was a lot of troubles in that restaurant, and it kind of went downhill. There was some drugs and things like that and kind of shady stuff going on. And so I went to a nicer restaurant down the street that was like super fine dining. Like I wore a tuxedo as a bus boy, and I decided I wanted to, you know, learn the finer dining aspect, and I really, really enjoyed the aspect of just really taking care of the guest, of learning that sort of over-the-top kind of like, you know... The best analogy that I can give to you would be like a Halls, you know. It was like Halls. There wasn't a steakhouse; it was contemporary cuisine. And then after several months, maybe a year of that, I had totally bought in to restaurants. I loved... I got excited. I was a 17-year-old kid, and I would prefer to work on a Friday night than hang out with, you know, what other 17-year-olds were doing, you know, going to the movies or partying or whatever, you know. And I just, you know, I was loving every minute of it. And then I had asked the chef if I could get in the kitchen, you know, I started really taking interest in what they were doing in the kitchen. So, you know, I went from making \$80 to \$100 a night bussing tables to 6.50 bucks an hour working the pantry and tossing salads and whatnot. I didn't really care, you know, 'cause I was just 17; I didn't need the money. But so I started learning all the aspects of dining, you know.

**LR:** So, you're in an interesting spot. The original Five Loaves is on the corner Coming and Cannon Street. So, I'm sure you've seen a lot of change over the last 15 years-

**CG:** Coming up on 16 years.

**LR:** Can you think of any deep impressions that you had? Like something that really stuck out to you and maybe a certain year or a certain range of years where you saw just immense change in that area? Or just in Charleston in general.

**CG:** I think it was like, you know, once like Lana came in, you know, where Goulette is right now, that was sort of the window where I was like, okay, you know, this neighborhood's starting to turn

because back in the day, it was just me and Hominy Grill, you know. And Robert and I were on this sort of island. Robert, he had opened Hominy Grill, I don't know, like four or five years before me. So that was like unheard of that he was like-, you know, I'm sure he's celebrating his 20th anniversary or soon if he hasn't already. But then you sort of had the Warehouse come in and Two Boroughs. Two Boroughs isn't around anymore, but you had these really eclectic restaurants starting to open and we started seeing, you know, all the college kids coming in. And it was like... I remember I went to a sandwich place in Tucson, Arizona by the University of Arizona and it was a really good comp to Five Loaves. And I wanted to try this sandwich place because I wanted to, I always try to eat in like-minded restaurants when I go to other cities to see if I can get some ideas and so on and so forth, do some R&D. And I was so jealous because this restaurant was packed at 3:00 in the afternoon. And that was sort of the missing piece for me. I was really busy for lunch, sort of busy at dinner, okay. But after lunch it was like I wouldn't have... you could basically like... There was no customers in at 3:00 in the afternoon. And so I remember feeling really jealous that how does this restaurant continue to, like, pack it? But once I sort of tapped into that College of Charleston crowd, you know, college kids are very unorthodox in their patterns. You know, they go to class and then they party. And so sometimes breakfast is at 11:00 and lunch is at 3:00 and dinner is at 10:00 at night or, you know, they snack, or they come in for a sandwich and they don't really like adhere to-

**LR:** They don't have a set schedule.

**CG:** Yeah. So, it was good for me to be open all day long. College kids start figuring that out, that, you know, they could come in and have lunch at 3:30 in the afternoon. And before I knew it, I'm like Friday afternoons I'm on a wait at 3:00 in the afternoon. You know, it just, it really worked out. And then my dinner started taking off because all the kids, you know, the college students started moving down to that direction, and it became this affordable, cool place to take a date. And you know, we did half-priced wine nights and so the students would come in and get a bottle of wine and take a date out. And you know, I would look at the dining room and it was either friends, girlfriends having dinner together or-

**LR:** A date.

**CG:** Yeah. It was like 80% of the dining room was college kids, you know, but like they weren't like... It didn't feel like a college bar per se. It wasn't like people were getting drunk or anything. It was neat to see them enjoying a meal and then getting the check and being able to afford it or put it on their champ card, you know.

**LR:** So, did you market Five Loaves to the College, or did it just come naturally because so many college students were starting to move out towards Cannon and Spring Streets?

**CG:** Yes, and yes. You know, I mean, it did come naturally, and we did reach out to... You know, we did percentage nights, a ton of percentage nights. We've given away so much money to, you know- basically sororities would have a cause that felt dear to them. And so they would often ask us if we can do a percentage night, so we took a Monday or Tuesday night or whatnot. And then

the person in charge of this sorority would suggest that the students go to Five Loaves on Monday night.

**LR:** It was like a win-win for both parties.

**CG:** Yeah the suggestion was meant to be like, "You're going. I don't care what you have on your schedule, you're going to Five Loaves", you know, so it was one of those like suggestions, strong suggestions. So then it was like, it'd be packed, you know. So yeah, it's always been... Five Loaves has always been more of a female-dominated concept, I think. You know, we don't have TVs, we're not heavy on draft beer, and it's a healthier cuisine, you know? So, that's just kind of the way it's always- you know, it wasn't intentional. I wasn't thinking it. It's just... Five Loaves is the way I eat, you know?

**LR:** So, for you it's been generally positive changes?

**CG:** Yeah, it's been great. I mean, every time a restaurant opened, you know, we were scared that that was going to take away business and it would have like this two or three week, you know, everybody goes and checks it out. And then our business would ramp up, you know, but there's clearly enough business-

**LR:** Customers to go around for everyone.

**CG:** Yeah, for sure.

**LR:** So, you haven't seen any negative changes at all? Like I mean... It's fine if you haven't.

**CG:** No. I mean, I think rent's really high. You know, I think that that's a negative for the students and the people that are wanting to live down here, you know, it's harder and harder.

**LR:** You own the building though, right?

**CG:** I don't.

**LR:** You don't own it. So, you rent it?

**CG:** Yeah.

**LR:** So, has that been difficult on you or do you have a fixed-?

**CG:** I have options, you know, so I'm coming to an end of all my options, so I don't know what they're going to do to my rent. I mean, I believe I have to start over, you know, have to re-look at it, but you know, another couple of years I believe, I'm going to have to re-look at it. Then there's just a real lack of people that want to work in the restaurants, particularly in the back of the house, in the kitchen. And so, you know, probably 80% of my kitchen staff is traveling from North Charleston or Hanahan or...

**LR:** Other areas outside of downtown.

**CG:** Yeah, Summerville. A lot of people come in from Summerville and more affordable places to live, but it's like I can only pay them so much and they got to travel and then the parking and stuff like that. So, there's minor things, you know, of course parking. Parking, you know, that seems kind of redundant. It's like, "Duh!" if you mention parking, so I'm trying to think of like what are the challenges other than the obvious, but you know... The two lanes, switching the lane, I thought that was going to help my business, but it didn't; it didn't negative or positively impact me.

**LR:** So, do you encounter a lot of tourists or more tourists in recent years than locals?

**CG:** Yeah, yeah, we've gotten a lot more tourists. I think that's due to TripAdvisor, Yelp, Urbanspoon, and then also Airbnb. And then, you know, all those hotels that are going around, they're like... you can spot a tourist from a mile away. Like they might as well have a sign on their back that says, "I'm a tourist", but you know, when they're walking up to the front door using their Waze app, that pretty much gives it away. Or they have a map of Charleston or they're riding a Holy Spokes bike, you know. So yeah, I would say, I don't know, I'd say like six years ago, five years ago, it was like 90% local, 10%. This is just like totally taking a guess. And now I would say it's like 60%, 40%.

**LR:** Wow. Okay.

**CG:** Yeah. It's like huge. The tourists- like I used to pride myself, like I know the Market and you know, the restaurants on the East Bay, like totally thrive on... And I, and I would kind of, not really, but you know, brag that we were just a locals restaurant, and I can't say that anymore.

**LR:** So, do you think that your interactions are different with tourists than with locals when they come in? Or generally the same?

**CG:** Yeah. Tourists are all, you know... Tourists are great, you know, because they're not in a rush, they usually have a beer or two at lunch, they're there to enjoy themselves, and typically people come to Charleston to eat. So, you know, I've always enjoyed it when they come in and dine and then get the bill and are so happy, and they have this comment like "How did we buy this food when we just spent \$200 at a bunch of restaurants I'm not going to mention?" It's pretty much par for the course on any of those restaurants on King Street. You know you're going to spend at least 75 bucks a person. So, it's never been my cup of tea. I don't go crazy on my buildouts, I keep my expenses low, and I try to run a restaurant where we make a little bit off of each person that comes in, you know, and my deal is to... I want to pack the restaurant every day.

**LR:** So, has your menu remained relatively consistent over the years, like price wise and what you're putting on your menu?

**CG:** I'd say it's gone up, you know, sort of staying just under inflation. We've always paid close attention to what other people are charging and then our goal is to stay as below them as we possibly can. So, you know, with Five Loaves, it's a heavy prep to menu. You know, it takes, requires... I got people coming in at 7:00 in the morning to get set up. So my payroll is starting to ring early and then the products that we're buying are, you know, we're outsourcing the best



vegetables we can find, antibiotic-free chicken, hormone-free beef, free range this, organic that and then the juice bar, you know, all the products in the juice bar like cacao and the hemp and the spirulina and all that stuff is like incredibly expensive. So, in reality I should be charging more. Any other restaurateur that looked at my cost of goods compared to what we're charging would recommend me raising my prices. So, we just actually did a menu increase like three weeks ago. So, you know, it's going to cost you, I don't know, probably 55 cents more for your lunch than it would have a few weeks ago, but that 55 cents isn't really felt too much by each individual customer, but yeah, it's making a difference on our bottom line. And then my managers are all on incentive programs, so I'm paying them out bonuses as well.

**LR:** So, have you noticed that people's attitudes have changed in Charleston over time, maybe?

**CG:** It's just become more of like a bustling city, you know, to me. When I first opened up, it felt kind of like I knew everybody. And you know, I knew Robert at Hominy and I knew [inaudible] at Magnolias and Frank Lee at Slightly North of Broad. Robert Carter at Peninsula Grill, and just kind of the list goes on of, you know, these pioneers that maybe had paved the way five or six, seven, eight years prior to me. And then, you know, Mark and Jerry at TBonz, and these are guys that are all like 10 years older than me and had really, you know, started. And now we laugh about it now, that, you know, I was kind of that second generation, you know. So, Hugo hit in '88 and from what I understand, I wasn't living here, but you know, pretty much wiped out the city. And then Magnolias' Tom Parsell was like the first person on the scene to open up Magnolias downtown and then Blossoms and Slightly North of Broad. And sort of that whole explosion happened on King Street and then TBonz on the market. And it was like all the action was down there. And then, there was nothing, you know, on King Street there was... What's the bar? The all-night bar right across the street from Basil? You probably played pool in there a hundred times.

**LR:** AC's?

**CG:** AC's. AC's has been around since before I moved to Charleston. And it's like you had, where Basic Kitchen is now, you had Andolini's there and we could go and get a pitcher of beer and a pie. And there was only like five or six places that you went downtown. So anytime you went to one of those five or six places, you saw the same people, you know, and now there's like five or six hundred places, and I walk up and down King Street and I'm like, I don't even know where I'm at, and I'm like, I'm trying not to sound egotistical, but like I've been in this city, I've seen all these changes and it's just insane. And then when I walked, when I see people, you know, just the way people are dressed, it just... Charleston was kind of like, I don't know, it seemed like a way more relaxed city back in the day, you know? And now it's like uber-cosmopolitan and every girl that walks down the street has got like these \$200 pair of shoes on and these floral dresses and every guy is like, you know, looks like something out of GQ magazine and I'm just like, where am I? You know?

**LR:** It's gone from a quaint town to a real city now, I guess, is what you're saying.

**CG:** Yeah. And you know, I'm not affected by it as much as maybe somebody like Tom Parsell, that owned Cypress and Magnolias and Blossoms. I'm maybe not as affected or aware of the

massive changes in Charleston because I'm spread out, I'm everywhere. I have restaurants in Summerville, West Ashley, downtown, three in Mount Pleasant, and so I'm like constantly in my car driving around. So, I'm kind of aware of the growth out in West Ashley. I'm kind of aware of the growth up in Summerville, I'm aware of the growth downtown, and I'm paying attention to everything. But at the same time, I'm not married to any particular growth because I'm just focused on the full Charleston metropolitan area, you know, and how it's growing. And I'm looking at where the new growth is going to go, like Nexton or the NoMo area, you know.

**LR:** Does this make you...? Like the changes that you're seeing, they're really alarming. Are you concerned for the future: future of Charleston or personally for your business?

**CG:** Not so much my business 'cause I'm trying to grow my business and trying to get out of the city. I want to be a Charleston-based restaurant group that went national, you know, so I want to see how far I can take Five Loaves. I want to see how far I can take Sesame, possibly Ember, we'll see. But, you know, I would like nothing more than to have restaurants in California, Colorado, Arizona, you know, all over the southeastern region and have Five Loaves be a brand that people recognize as quality, as a place that when they go to a city, you know, it's familiar, but it's not watered down. It's not, you know, a Panera or a TGI Fridays or something like that. So, I want to continue to, you know, if I have to keep it-

**LR:** To maintain the authenticity of it.

**CG:** Yeah. You know, I don't know how many units you can grow it and still keep that authenticity, you know, if it's 60 units, 70 units. I mean there's, you know, several restaurant groups out there that I follow, and I pay really close attention to how they're growing and what they're doing so that I can, you know, mimic, imitate what they're doing because, you know, I think that that's the new wave of restaurants is like really chef-driven, smaller menus, eclectic, know your roots, know your swim lane, stay in your swim lane and just kind of own that swim lane. And then to always be like, we're a Charleston-based restaurant. I'm proud of the city. You think of like Darius Rucker, you know, like he's a household name all over the United States and he's like, "I'm from Charleston."

**LR:** And he always makes it known.

**CG:** Yeah. I think that's cool.

**LR:** So, can you tell me what is your definition of southern hospitality? Or do you have certain practices that you always adhere to, to maintain southern hospitality?

**CG:** I mean, I think southern hospitality is, you know, me being from the West, it's a respect for your elders, for people that have gone before you. You know, the "Yes sir", "Yes ma'am". I'm not used to that. I didn't grow up like that. I'm raising my kids to have respect for people like that, to encourage serving ladies first when they come in the restaurant. It's part of our culture at the restaurant, just trying to really go above and beyond and give people an extra level of service. Plus, you know, I would say it's casual, it's not so stuffy. You know, I go to New York, my wife's

from New York, and the waiter comes by, he's like, "You guys have time to look at the menu? All right, good." And he's very prompt and you know-

**LR:** To the point.

**CG:** Yeah. It's not like they're rude in any way, but they're not trying to be your friend or anything like that, you know? And so you've got to find that balance. You know, you don't want to be best friends with your server when you're dining out, but for that server, ideally, to feel the vibe of the table, you know. If you do want to engage with the server, we encourage our chefs to bring the food out. If there's food sitting in the window and there's no server that's available to run the food, then grab the food. I don't care. My mentality is that the person dining in my restaurant ordered their food and they want it, and they don't care who delivers it. So just somebody get the food to the table. I don't care. There's no, "It's not your job." There's no like, "Oh, that's not my section. I'm not going to. I don't need to run that food" or something. Yeah.

**LR:** Do you feel like you had to learn southern hospitality when you came here from Colorado?

**CG:** Yeah, I did. One instance, I was in Savannah and I was at a Blockbuster Video. Do you remember Blockbuster Videos? So, I'm like shopping for the movie that I'm going to pick out on this particular evening. And I was by myself and I walked in front of a southern lady and she was like born and raised, you could tell. And I walked in front of her when she was viewing the wall of movies, and I didn't say anything. And she was an African American woman and she thought I was being racist because I walked in front of her and I didn't say, "Excuse me." And I realized that was like a cultural thing that like if you walk in front of somebody, you know, you just, "Pardon me, excuse me." You know, and it wasn't anything I did intentionally; it was completely innocent. But she yelled at me in front of the Blockbuster. She overreacted completely and called me some names I don't want to record, and I'm not excusing her, she was ridiculous. The whole thing was ridiculous. But the point is, I got it. And honestly, just the whole like culture down here, you know, I had to learn southern culture, just everything. I learned how to cook southern food. I'd never had sweet tea before. I'd never had grits. I'd never had collard greens. I didn't know what proper fried chicken should taste like. It was neat. I remember going to Jestine's and eating grilled meat loaf and just thinking it was like the best thing I'd ever put in my mouth. I love southern food and butter beans, corn, you know. Magnolias, I learned how to make shrimp and grits, and Donald Barickman taught me all about southern food. That's why I went to work at Magnolias because I wanted to learn southern food. I went to go learn southern food, but I didn't realize I was getting a lesson in southern culture, too. And Magnolias is like the place to learn southern culture. Mint juleps, you know, all this stuff, and it was like a whole other world. It was kind of like I went to another world. I had been promoted to management and you know, primarily the African American staff, the staff in the kitchen, I had the hardest time relating to because I didn't understand them culturally. I went to a mostly white high school, and I mean we had 2,500 students and there was like four African American people. So, I just hadn't really been exposed to it. I was in very suburban white area where I went to high school in Arizona. And so I came here, and I loved their culture. Like I wanted to be around, you know, this community, but I didn't really know how to fit in and so that was, that was a learning curve. And, you know, now I embrace it.

**LR:** So, is your business partner from the South?

**CG:** Yeah. He's born and raised in Charleston.

**LR:** So, were you able to learn a bit from him?

**CG:** No, he's... I wouldn't say... He wasn't like... He's nothing of what I just mentioned. You know, it's not that he's like anti-that. He's Jewish, and so he grew up in a very orthodox Jewish household. It was kosher; the house was kosher. I had been raised, you know, with some of my closest friends were Jewish. And so, I kind of knew that culture, but you know, that community embraced us. Once he became partners, then it was like we got the whole JCC community started coming in like regularly. And they're great people. You know, they spend money, they're complimentary, they're very supportive of other Jewish businesses, run businesses and whatnot. So, you know, the irony behind it is it's a biblically based name. You know, Five Loaves comes from the Bible. So, you know, they used to tease my partner. What are you doing with a name from the First Testament?

**LR:** Do you have a favorite place in Charleston that has remained relatively the same over time through all these changes that you're talking about?

**CG:** I mean Magnolias comes to mind because we've talked about it, so. Hank's Seafood Restaurant still remains one of my favorite restaurants. My wife and I started going there before we had kids. We, you know, I remember one Christmas Eve, you know, what do you do when you're by yourself in the city with your fiancée and you have no kids and no family in town, you know, you go out for dinner. So, we sat at the bar at Hank's and had champagne and oysters and lobster and had a wonderful Christmas Eve at Hank's one year. And then it became sort of a tradition that we would go there for my birthday every year. And it was like, you know, the one time that I would make my kids get dressed up and you got to use your manners and, you know, no throwing food at each other. You know, we're going to a nice restaurant, and now they're 11 and 12 so they're a little more mature, but when they were four or five- but every year we went to- and I would get a lobster and let my kids get shrimp and mashed potatoes and stuff like that. So, Hank's, Magnolias, you know, Kudu Coffee is another great spot. Every time I go there I wonder, you know, I think the only thing that they've changed is they don't allow WiFi, you know, but now everybody's figured out they can just hotspot it. So yeah. AC's, if you want to play pool.

**LR:** So, do you have a vision for the future of Charleston or something that you're hoping to see in the coming years?

**CG:** I'd like to see some sort of public transportation, you know, some way to get around the city easier. I think the roads are just going to get more and more congested. I mean, one accident, one mistake, you know, one more 8-inch rainstorm, you know, completely locks up the city. And then I've got, you know, this last rain storm that we had two weeks ago, I had a restaurant that couldn't open on time because I couldn't get staff to the restaurant, not because of the rain, but I had one sous chef lose his car, it's totaled because it was water all the way up to the windows on it. And so, it's just like, you know, it's pretty disheartening. Something's got to be done with the drainage or whatnot.

**LR:** Do any of your locations typically flood or have they flooded in the past?

**CG:** The downtown will flood. If there's enough rain in the back, it will come through the back door. So, we, you know, we have sandbags ready and whatnot, so it's not as bad as the Market, but, yeah it's pretty bad. But I think that, you know, the city's going to just keep going, you know, up north, you know, I mentioned the NoMo area and so, yeah I think it's kind of keep going that direction. I've heard rumors of, you know, that huge area where the... like behind the skate park off 26, off to the left by the skate park out there. Like that whole huge field, that's going to get all developed and whatnot, you know, so it's prime real estate on the water. So, I mean that's just going to keep, continue to keep going.

**LR:** Are you thinking of expanding into North Charleston, putting a location there, one of your restaurants?

**CG:** I'm like hard at work right now. We're looking at a new location for Five Loaves and for a Sesame, for another one that you know... the next Five Loaves that you see or the Sesame that you see is going to resemble the Five Loaves that you know now, but it's going to sort of blow your mind. It's going to be really, you know, way better, way more, you know, easy for my staff to work at, much more conducive for the dining experience, you know, incorporate the juice bar, you know, the acai bowls and everything, sort of put them more forefront and you know. I'm working on the design right now, so you know, I'm calling it kind of a Five Loaves 2.0 so, you know, my hope is that people that have loved the brand and grown to love it and support it are just going to be thrilled with it and not, you know, go above and beyond their expectations, you know?

**LR:** And do you have a location in mind?

**CG:** I mean, I there's like four that we're kind of looking at. Yeah, I mean, you know, no secret, but the WestEdge is an area that we're taking a look at. The Meeting Street project right at the base of the bridge, 601 Meeting. There's another project we're looking at and then just some like existing places. So, I think I'll probably stay off of King Street and go up that way, you know. If I have to go, I really think my prediction is West Ashley. Mayor Tecklenburg is going to really put all of his focus on West Ashley. So, we're already starting to see that, hear whispers of, you know, the traffic circle that's going to be going on out by Bees Ferry and whatnot. So, I'll probably be more inclined to hit, you know, untapped rural areas as opposed to being right in the heart of the shopping scene and stuff like that.

**LR:** So, you're hoping to see some improvements in transportation and expand outward?

**CG:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, and Charlestonians are going to have to change their mentality. They're going to have to start Ubering more, riding their bikes more, committing to parking garages. You know, there are garages, I still am not convinced that the average Charlestonian is ready to just automatically go into a parking garage. You know, if they're anything like me, they'll do four or five laps before they finally concede to going into a parking garage. But I think

it's just kind of like, it's like New York City, you know, you're not going to try to park on the street. You're just going to find the nearest parking garage.

**LR:** Yeah. Well, it was interesting to hear your thoughts.

**CG:** That's it?

**LR:** Yep. Thank you so much for sitting down with me.

**CG:** That was painless.