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## Interview with Russ McGibney

Rachel Keller

Russ McGibney

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**Accession Number:** PS-MS-TR-KELLER-112911

**Interviewer:** Rachel Keller

**Interviewee:** Russ McGibney

**Place:** Sips Coffee House & Deli

101 S. Main Street

Mount Vernon, Ohio

**Duration:** 2.2.58—two hours, 2 minutes, 58 seconds

**Co-workers present:** none

**RK:** Rachel Keller

**RM:** Russ McGibney, owner of Sips Coffee House & Deli

**RK:** First, just orient the interview, this is Rachel Keller interviewing Russ McGibney, the owner of Sips Café downtown Mount Vernon. It is Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

**RK:** So how long have you lived in Mount Vernon?

**RM:** Oh my family, uh, I've lived here all my life. I did spend a few years in Columbus. Three I think. But have always basically you know had my feet here in Knox County. My family's been here since 1814 so uh we've got a long lineage here so I can say I speak from experience, so to speak.

**RK:** That's wonderful. Does the majority of your family still live here?

**RM:** Well, actually, I'm the last McGibney so you know, well I have two sisters and they have children and everything. But as far as the McGibneys that started here in 1814, this will be the last one so um. I'm not married and probably don't intend on getting it so uh you know I guess this is it.

**RK:** Is there a history of family trade?

**RM:** Well they've been...the first McGibney was James McGibney and if you look up things in Norton's history of Knox County he was, um, let's see, justice of the peace, post master and corner so he had... back then if you were ambitious and wanted to do things, you could wear many hats. So he did quite a bit and then, for the most part the family was involved in farming up until my great grandfather, he had a diary here, pretty successful one too, and closed it during the war in 1943 when he retired and all. My dad, he timbered for a while, but just uh that kind of got a little light and he had to take care of the family so he got a factory job and opened his own business in 66 I believe and quit the factory and just had his business until he passed away in 95. And I've had my own business since 82. Um I started a sporting goods store up in Fredericktown and then just transitioned into Sips in 98.

**RK:** OK. What was your father's business?

**RM:** It was McGibney's horse supply, in his earlier days he went around to different fairs. Back in the 60s 4H was really big so he used to sell all the riding paraphernalia. 4H was big in equestrian so not only did he have some horse supplies, he had a lot of the helmets and pants and the shirts and all the things kids would need. And then you know, as we see how things do, they shifted and not a lot of, toward 1970 not a lot of kids were so much into 4H and were doing other things. So he just transitioned into what his passion used to be. Uh he used to be in harness racing so he just went all into standard bred harness uh horse equipment and things so if we ever you know got a bruise or fever or got anything anything, it was always taken care of with horse supply. We were guineas pigs in a lot of ways so, but it was fun.

**RK:** How do you know so much about your family history?

**RM:** Well, I mean, experiencing it. Uh having family members who just remember--you know they're like elephants. They're just. Gosh. I've got a cousin, she's my cousin but she's actually my great grandfather's niece so my great grandfather and her father her brothers so she's like 85 and my cousin. But you know. Second or third cousin I suppose. But she's great and she just knows everything. History can be kind of uh askew with all sorts of good and bad and and and uh quirky and one of the things, its unrelated but interesting, my first relative who came here in 1814 I think was probably the only sober of the family. Maybe his direct kids were OK but everything that Betty, my cousin would always say, would be everybody was drunkard. Talks about they had to come and get. She had to come and get her dad one time because his car had stopped on the viaduct bridge and he was passed out behind the wheel. Those kind of things, that was a lot of typical stuff. Her dad's dad would go to town with the wagon with a load of corn in the back and the horse would know the way home and the money he went and sold the corn for is no longer there because he stopped by the bar and bought everybody drinks on the way home.

*McGibney is interrupted by a waiter who has a question about someone who wants to hold an event at the restaurant. McGibney explains that he is in the middle of an interview but to make sure he gets "the pertinent information and definitely a phone number."*

So my great grandfather, out on the front of our house...I live basically on the corner of Siker and McGibney road. My great-grandfather was a township trustee so Siker Road parallels Wooster Road, well his brother lived at the top of the hill and so since he was a township trustee, he put a road between his house and his brother's house and Wooster Road. On Siker Road there used to be a trolley that would go out to where now is the fairgrounds but it was Hiawatha Park, so he would get liquored up and grandma, great grandma, would say you're not coming home until you're sober so he would ride the trolley until its end and was sobered up enough to come home but you know, grandma could sit up there on the front porch and just watch him drive by, back and forth. (both laugh). So you know, family history is very unique and has a lot of those fun stories. But I said, he was the one who had the dairy and was the entrepreneur and definitely had a good clientele, and people in the community knew and respected him.

*McGibney is interrupted again by a different waiter who has a question about how to cut meat.*

So that's I guess probably as much of my family history that you want to hear.

**RK:** Well, it's great that the history is still so alive. Are you still living in the same house? Oh I live where I grew up. So and that's the place that my great grandfather built so I am very happy and pleased to have it. I've been told by my grandmother uh that at one point the family owned 1,000 acres. I'm not finding a whole lot of documentation on that but I know that there were some larger holdings earlier on. 'Corse I always say with the stories of everyone being alcoholics that they drank all the land away but uh uh, you know, it is still nice to be able to know that you know I have 21 acres left of family land and so I hope to. One of the goals I hope with 14 acres of it, well, I'm going to use some of the other land too. I want to build a, uh, basically a housing subdivision but it's all going to be based in, it's going to be the epitome of a neighborhood. You are going to know your neighbor. Every house is going to be old style farm homes, whether one-story like the prairie houses or two story you know farm-style house. You know, all of the houses will have front porches so you know, when you walk your dogs or your kids you'll be able to talk to people as they sit out on their front porch. you know people will utilize it. in doing something like this you will tend to um, people who have the same philosophies will gravitate there because that's the type of place they want. I want to have geothermal equipment there as much as possible for heating and cooling. Very super insulated homes, I'd like to see a 25\$ a month bill is all it'll take to heat or cool the places. A windmill to power the streetlights at night, a community center made like an old barn uh so you can have barn dances and gatherings of you know, if your place isn't large enough to have everybody over for family or things and an additional 7 acres, as long as possible, for everybody who has a home, they'll be able to have a garden plot so they can grow and just you know, have a good old fashioned type neighborhood community and I guess a bit of legacy for my family.

**RK:** That's a wonderful idea. Where did the inspiration for each of those parts come from?

**RM:** I don't claim to be a tree hugger, I'm not you know uh real liberal in thought but I just think what was good for my family and things I certainly don't have a problem with you know. I think everybody needs to know they neighbor. This stuff where you can still live in one of our historic neighborhoods around here and not know uh who lives next to you because either you just don't want to associate with other people, or you know they're strange, I don't want to talk with them, that kind of thing. Life is way too short. We came into this world all alike, naked and not knowing a thing and daggoneit why can't we share a little bit of ourselves with each other and do something right. Ah well, That's enough preaching for me.

**RK:** So it's important that they have front porches, I like that. And they'll have a barn just to use as a space. How many families do you envision living there?

**RM:** I think, uh, depending on size, cause what I want it to be too is, uh cause life, where things were so different back then, there wasn't that, you know in the 50s and 60s, nobody had the internet and 2 or 3 jobs, maybe dad had 2 or 3 jobs but mom stayed home with the kids. If you were lucky you had a TV um we weren't so just on the move, everything fast fast fast. And I understand, life is still fast but um there's aspects we need to make slow down. So that's why I want to put these aspects into a place, have front porches, every house can have Wi-Fi but you sit out on your front porch with your laptop or iPad and still be neighborly. You will own the home itself but not the ground that way it's like a condo association so to speak where you don't have time to do things, all the focus you have that you're able to do is to keep a garden going because

that's the mindset you have and we'll take care of everything else, you know snow removal and mowing, all that stuff. If you want to plant some flowers and things that make it unique to you, sure, you know, encourage that. But uh I want to make a place where everybody can really say 'this is home' and they feel that way but again, they don't have all the extra things they have to worry about, except for that garden, take care of that garden.

**RK:** So what, what are the things that you see that have created that change? Do you see what you're describing as lacking in Mount Vernon right now?

**RM:** Oh to do this? I think its lacking around the country. Here is where I tend to not be on the liberal end of things, you know I want to build a community for people who want to own for themselves, that they can take pride that this is my house, my garden, I'm living in a community where I know my neighbors, I'm energy efficient so I'm not taking a lot of natural resources, um you know, I'm taking pride in ownership of my life and my surroundings, unlike a lot of people, who are, now here I go, who are occupying Wall Street who are standing there saying 'you have too much, give me some'. You know, no. I want a community of people who you know have enough respect in themselves to say I will make it through this life, I will take care of my family and my children and my grandchild. You know, the pride that your parents and grandparents had you know, is just, if you take a handout from somebody, it's because you helped them with something, it's not considered you know a 'give-me', 'I deserve anything. You deserve what you go out and make in the world. Your reputation is probably one of the greatest things we possess and you know, to have it scared by you know, you know thinking, having someone else think that you're a leech on society so to speak, you know, I think we tarnish uh ourselves and our children when we you know give them enable them into that same kind of thought and process, that its right to think somebody else owes you for something, nobody owes you anything. Again, you came in with no knowledge and naked into the world, and everything that you get through until the day you dies is something you should learn and earn yourself. Uh, that's me.

**RK:** Do you see the sense of community as pretty important to that?

**RM:** Oh, you know, the Clintons did have one thing right. It does take a village. I really believe that. I think you know I mean, when I was a kid, my mom said 'you ever do anything that you know is wrong, I'll know it before you even think I know it' because then everybody looked out for one another and their family and things. So if you know I went and did something you know naughty at one of the neighbors. You know broke a window or something you know, there were a string of phone calls to my house saying 'do you know what your son just did?' That held you, because other people, so many people say look at the big picture. Well there's a lot of things that happen from one little thing. (*Two women greet one another in the background*). The kid that broke a window and ran away and nobody held him accountable for it, he's always going to think 'I can get away with something' whereas the kid who gets home and has had 3 phone calls and you get your butt tanned for it, you know they're all teaching things. It's going to teach you respect for that neighbor's property. Your mom will say do you know Mrs. Smith, her husband died and she has no way of getting that window fixed and dads going to have to go down there and get that window fixed, and dah da dah all the ramifications of the little actions we may see and be a part of, that if we don't care, if we don't act as a community and don't look out for one another, that takes somebody who has already had a burden or hardship and makes their life a

little harder. The kid that learns that lesson, the next time something breaks, he's going to go up to the door, knock and say, let me help, let me do. So you know, that is community, that is, I would think the utopia that everybody would wanna live in.

**RK:** Have you shared your idea with others? Contractors or anyone?

**RM:** I have spoken to a couple people in the area but some people, you know if you're a contractor or someone willing to build something to the magnitude of this, all they are worried about is show me the green, you get a bank to back you up then come see me and we'll build it for you. I'd like to do a series of partnerships. Find a builder who has the same philosophies and wants to be a part of this. You know, maybe we can build a movement his way. That's another idea that could happen with this, if you take something and make a blue print of it and write down the things you do and the ways you do 'em and the ideas behind it, maybe somebody in Colorado hears about it, sees it on the internet and says 'wow, this is a really cool concept' so instead of having to re-invent the wheel. Here it is. You know, take it and build upon it. I don't want a thing for it. if my legacy is to say I have communities across the country of people trying to be as what I just described, I would be very proud, very proud.

**RK:** I'm sure there are people out there interested, I wonder if there are any larger groups that would be interested in helping.

**RM:** The one thing with me is, I'm a visionary in large and small. People come to me if they have a business idea, a problem in whatever—it may be, well, I just had a guy come to me. He has a little girls softball team and they're trying to do a fundraiser and so he's going around asking businesses to donate 50-100\$ but a lot of businesses for support of a little girls softball team, that's a lot of money to throw at something in this economy. So I said, how many girls you have. He said 11. I said perfect, I have 10 glass top tables here, we'll add one more, you get those girls to get 8 either family, friends, whoever, to come in and we'll have two seatings, 4 people each, we'll help them but they'll act like the waitress,. These are 11 year old girls, they'll take the orders and they'll get the tips. I said, well give a portion of every sale back to you guys and we'll go from 5:30-7:30 and give everyone roughly an hour to sit and do,

**RK:** I bet they loved that!

**RM:** Yeah, he went back and talked it over with some of the parents and call me up and said yeah, we're all in this. So I like to try and be somebody to make a solution rather than more of a problem. His idea of going door to door asking for money, I turned it into something, again that they can take pride and say 'I did this,' I raised this money, look at all the tips. So it's rewarding them for doing instead of saying 'oh look at what people gave us', that whole philosophy of do something for yourself and it will come to ya. Now to get back to your question if I showed this... (*sighs, long pause*). At the end of the day, when I finally get home sometime by 10 and 11 and I kick back, I DVR a lot of TV shows and that's my release for the day. I can sit and just watch the boob tube and let my mind go. So I haven't had a lot of time to, you know, it's a huge

project and it does mean a lot to me but I always have to keep this business going and that's my day to day. Do I still try to network and see if I can find those people? Yeah. Do I make it a high point? Mmm not really. A lot of times its conversations like this with somebody that you know gives a little coal to the fire to get me to try to do a little bit more.

**RK:** But like you were saying, because of the type of operation you're running, you're able to do very similar things through your job here. So it's not like its completely separate.

**RM:** Yeah, I still want to spread that philosophy. I want to help you in any way that I can but you know I want you to have some skin in the game yourself. Take and make this fundraiser or this whatever activity yours too. I suppose my whole shift in this, you know, owning my own business right from 21, you know, I've seen a lot in my time and it actually wasn't until I opened up a business in downtown that all of the aspects of community, I was able to talk with a lot of the older shop keepers before they retired and uh moved on, listen to the things that downtown was famous for, **Brudence** and **Ringwals** and you know we even had a situation where the 200 block, the sider where COTC is on, used to be bar row. I think there is a plaque down there that kind of signifies it. there were a number of merchants that uh as a building became available, they would buy it and get a business in there as opposed to a bar. There's a lot of those kinds of things that I look at and I think that that's exactly the philosophies that I want to try to keep going. '

**RK:** When did bar row, when did businesses kind of want the bars out?

**RM:** Probably, I would suppose the high point of that was 50s and 60s. And then by early 70s I think most everything was out of there and you know, mens clothing stores womens clothing stores was actually into dress shops and clothing stores and gifts shops and that kind of think.

**RK:** When the merchants that you talked with when you first moved here talked about downtown, what did they say it was like?

**RM:** Well, downtown Mount Vernon was, especially being the county seat, was the pulse and heartbeat of uh all retail sales in the area. You now, let's see, trying to think uh I'm thinking somewhere around 75 is when they built K-Mart, which for you people is where Shoe Sensation is now, uh near Dollartree.

**RK:** Ok, that strip mall near Kroger?

**RM:** You know where Saturday's hair place is? Uh what's on one side?

**RK:** Near the pet store?

**RM:** There used to be one. Right across the street from where Lowes is. That building used to be the original K-mart.

**RK:** So that was the first big store to come in.

**RM:** I'm thinking 75-ish. We did have two other department stores, where Lowes is located there was a store called Big N, then where Big Lots is, I always call it Odd Lots 'cause that's how they started, that was Buckeye lot. You know I have a bag from it because uh all the stores looked the same. They had these uh uh banners that just you know different heights and all the stores looked alike so when you saw it you saw, you know 'Buckeye Mart, Buckeye Mart'. So it wasn't that K-mart was the first, but it was the first national store.

**RK:** What was the public's response?

**RM:** Well see, this is part and parcel to some of the stuff I was going to speak on too. A lot larger. This is where a lot of people don't factor all the stuff in. You have the public who likes and enjoys new, so whenever there is something new built, they gravitate toward it. So you'll see in most every community you have your downtown, which was your staple of commerce because that's where all the city buildings are, what you needed to get done was always in the downtown. Well, another thing was that made things easy in the 70s and so forth for strip centers is the fact that, early on families had one car, maybe maybe two but usually one car so that made you know, the tightness of a downtown much easier to um navigate so to speak. You didn't have to , uh you know one car could take a family of four or five. You know you come in for Friday, for Wednesday night, you could fill a downtown with 100 cars which potentially had 400 people. Now, everybody in the house hold has 1 car so you might have three-four cars taking that many people to their destination so the importance of big large parking lots and things like that made strip centers the necessity. Because, 'oh, there's just no place to park downtown,' we get that downtown. I was president of the Heritage Association. I think I started in 99, I took over from Tom Metcalf. There were three people who were meeting at the upstairs of what was at the time Uncle Dan's tavern, which is down where Weinstine is now if you're familiar with..oh um are you 21?

**RK:** Yes.

**RM:** It's a need little place where the conference center is and the Comfort Inn hotel, it's kind of behind, worse place to have something but uh they should have built that uh out front so you know uh get easier access too. But you know, it's really cool. You can get microbrews and wine and they have neat little appetizers. Good place to go see. That's where they met, the three of them, and it uh always seemed like you know like when I got there when I became part of things, all the decisions had been made. These are people, now I know I'm being recorded so I wanna make sure everybody understands that uh you know I respect uh all the gentlemen who were associated with it at the time, but there was not a whole lot of input at the time. The Heritage Center Association was the former Merchants Association. Well you know they changed ahd wanted to do a little bit more. Merchants Association are usually all about what sales we can have, how things transition, retail change.



**RK:** How interesting that things would transition that way.

**RM:** At that time uh they identified that there was need in a lot more to occur uh beyond the scope of um these sales. Well, going back into things, I wanted everybody to have a voice. Um there were people who swore they would never be a part of Heritage because of the way they did things, the elbow rubbing that was uh of the time, who you knew, so you know, again, I wanted to make a community, I want everybody to be a part. I made it my goal to bring back as many people uh I said there was one woman, she was adamant. One of her uh--she was not exactly next door but was very close to this store, who said she would never have a part. I actually got both of them to join and I had one of them become secretary of the organization so you know everybody, get on board 'cause this train's going. We want you as a part of it. So uh after getting a good bard of people, you know, we have people from First Knox, and uh from First Merit, and other people with some influence downtown. The next key thing I was able to bring to Heritage is the National Main Street Program. Its uh that's something that--another aspect of life and change that you could look at as far as what it did to Mount Vernon and what may do to other communities. The organization in federal government said you know small towns are dying so we need to do soemthihng to help revitalize them, you know give them still a place of honor in our communities and so forth so they came up with the National Main Street Program and the um, it's a four-point program. You have your organization and membership, design, economic restructuring and promotions. It's perfect; it really is the perfect model because it takes all the things, all the fundamentals that you need to keep a downtown or every business should operate like this. It breaks them down into committees so your organization and membership is in charge of building a package so if you're going to join this organization, why would you want to become a member, well because this, this and this, as membership you gain these things. Besides promoting the wellbeing of downtown. You know, design enlisted the experience of architects and just us people who had artistic and restoration experience and we could help a tenant or a land lord with their building if they uh we had several take off old facades that were from the 60s and 70s. Phil Holding did it to his building. the building on the corner where paragraphs is now, down the street that had an icky old metal façade and when they took that down, beautiful building under that brick and everything it was gorgeous. A lot of times what they did in the 50s and 60s they you know covered up what they thought was old and not modern and and uh tried to make it modern for the day. (*Bells chime briefly in the background*). You'll see that with Sips here, the whole front has been re-done. It's much more easy to notice on the side, you can't see it from where we're sitting, on the side over here there was nice steel columns that was well—our storefront looked like the storefront of the next two businesses so with the steel columns out there with the windows the way they were but they wanted to make it more modern so they pushed it out flat, didn't make as deep a breeze way, uh covered over the metal pillars and put uh it's a it looks like glass, almost marble, but it's a type of tile. But it was modern for the times. Um you know but uh anyhow the design would help a business or a landlord you know try to get their building looking you know attractive for the community and for the business. It just helped improve.

**RK:** Did that prompt you to make the changes here?

**RM:** Well we were kind of um stuck with the amount of change we could do here based on what the Woodward Development Corporation was um looking to do at the time when 'cuase--this space and the Old Paragraphs space next door were the two most renovated spaces in the building. We're the only two spaces to have sprinkler systems, um they, there's nothing anywhere else yet. They had to get a special variance from the state and the state fire marshal to be able to only go this far. They didn't have the money to do more than two spaces and that was it. Then with Heritage and the Main Street you have economic restructuring and what that uh encompasses is your committee, and again, all this is committees, you're all focused on one thing. It's better than a few people having to wear a lot of hats themselves. Economic restructuring would take and do uh the um the um things, they would be business recruitment-- one of the things I got going early this year with the SIFE Group out at MVNU was to, and this is part and parcel for economic restructuring as well, you want to make the business that you already have stronger so they are able to survive the lean times. so you know I got with SIFE is you know, the Students Interested in Free Enterprise. They were able to bring people with different skills together; they had students interested in bookkeeping and that kind of thing you know, graphic design uh and other aspects of business. And you know what I started mentoring them with was to be able to come into the downtown, work with the Heritage Center Association and uh be able to go into the business and help the business owner out because, again, there's a lot of people who think 'I want to own my own business' and if they don't have much experience, they don't last very long. And you know, the 13 years that I have been downtown, I've seen 90 plus percent of the business come and go and many of them multiple times, in locations.

**RK:** What's your secret?

**RM:** *Sighs.* Dumb luck.

**RK:** Let's talk about Sips. This is the first place you opened?

**RM:** Actually, no. We started over at 124 South Main, across the street next to Dumbaugh Insurance. There's an investment company out there, over there right now um but that's where we started--how long have we been going? Have I been talking for too long?

**RK:** No, no. I was just making sure it was still running! (*Referring to the recorder, which I had checked*). I have a fear that this is so good and then it's like, ahh I wasn't recording it. Sorry about that, please continue.

**RM:** We started off, at the time um, myself and my business partner, we were operating. We had done retail. I ran uh my sporting goods stores for eight years. Um well, I'd also worked at Wordcraft, a printing manufacturer, I worked from midnight to eight there, got about an hour and a half sleep and opened up shop. Did that for eight years. Um so after that, I met up with my

current business partner and we started to do temporary business stores for Christmas. We called it uh the Night Before Christmas and uh this was when I lived in Columbus. New Market Mall is at Sawmill and 270, its almost basically not there anymore, they've torn so much of it down. It started off as a discount mall. Well, it was in Dublin basically and Dublin people weren't really interested in discount. Um, so it um some of the businesses transitioned in there. We would go in uh to a vacant space. We started out with a 1,250 sq. foot room, which is about the size of this room here (main front room in Sips). We went to a 7,200 sq. space and did everything from October to January, just went in, hit it hard with all sorts of stuff. I'd go into the trade shows and specialty coffee was becoming you know, pretty big, mostly in the bigger cities. So I purchased a few just coffee brewers and things and did a little small coffee cart inside the store and it went over pretty well. And never up to that time never really liked coffee at all but started to enjoy coffee and so when that was, when we finalized doing those types of stores, the family place where I live now, I, well where the dairy was, they call it the milk house and I re-did that building for a retail space and called it McGibney Farms. Gifts and home accessories and furniture and all. So, wanted to expand wanted to do downtown

*(A customer walks by and says "It was good." McGibney waves and replies, "Good, good. Thank you.")*

And didn't have funds to do a coffee shop and this, I already had the inventory and equipment and everything to do the store, retail, so my cousin, he lived where did he live at the time, Kentucky somewhere he said he had always, because he lived in Lexington, KY at the time, where coffee was bigger, said he'd throw down for a coffee place. He was making very good money at the time, still is. So uh I went down, found a coffee shop that was closing up in Zanesville and went and purchased almost everything that they had. Counters, the only thing I didn't buy was the espresso machine which was pretty well worn and since that's going to be your key thing in a coffee shop, I wanted to make sure I had a new one. So I did buy a new espresso machine. But counters, and everything I bought from there and moved up into this space. We operated for two years with McGibney Farms being in front and the coffee shop being in the back. He decided to move on to other endeavors and we bought it from him. At that time we went and got a full food license and were able to do sandwiches and baked goods from that point, that was in 2000. We operated there until 2004 when we moved over into the location here at 101 South Main, so been here since.

**RK:** Will you describe your choice of how you did the layout? Why you did it the way it is?  
*(gestures around the room, towards the walls)*

**RM:** We were given a historic space to work with, the Woodward Development decided they wanted lighting that would match the period of the building. So you see back in that portion of the building (points to back room where coffee is made and orders taken), those lights are different then in this portion of the building. Those are more Victorian.

**RK:** Really, those seem brighter to me.

**RM:** Well the bulbs are different. In that room, we had such a situation with heat, because of heat and refrigeration system. So we tried to eliminate as much heat as possible. These are incandescent lights up here, those are the florescent bulbs back there. So we went to florescent because a lot less heat is put off by them. But if you look at the fixtures, see how the little thing down at the bottom, (*ceiling light, metal base looks like a chandelier*) it's much more dainty, those are the Victorian and these up here is more 1850s and 1860s (*metal base looks boxy*). They wanted to have things look as period as possible.

**RK:** And the 'they' is the Woodward Company?

**RM:** It's the Woodward Development Corporation. It's a nonprofit organization that owns the Woodward property and is in charge of you know the restoration.

**RK:** Are you in agreement with, you know, the mood they want to set?

**RM:** Um...yeah. It would not behoove us to come in at the foot of a historic project and try to do a bohemian look or ultra-modern with steel and everything in it so yeah, we kind of took our cue from uh what you know was basically for us to inherit, so to speak.

**RK:** The pictures come with it then?

**RM:** Oh no, gosh, I've had different people throughout the years, artists selling photography and artwork or something. The pictures of the barns up there. I'm vice president of the Knox County Renaissance Foundation and you know we're all about historic preservation. One of the projects we did was a Knox County barn tour. Those were barns that were on our last tour and we had different photographers you know take their unique view of those barns and those are the ones they had come up with. A lot of these pictures here are from when we were over across the street uh we had one big wall just full of old pictures of Mount Vernon. You know again, I'm very history minded and uh want people now to see what things were like and they are very reminiscent for people you know who did live back then, its nostalgic for them to think 'oh gosh, I forgot'. It is pretty cool to see someone's eyes light up. There's a picture of East School in there and somebody says 'I know her, she was my teacher.' It's pretty cool to get peoples responses that way.

**RK:** How would you characterize the customers?

**RB:** Oh, such a mixed bag. Um, you know we get Saturday mornings we have a group of women that come in and bible study. Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons we have women come in and play Mahjong.

**RK:** What's that?

**RM:** It's kind of like Chinese...

**RK:** Checkers?

**RM:** Checkers. It's the little white dice and they have different symbols and things on them that mean different things but I don't understand any of it. So uh they keep trying to get me to come and join so they have an extra person but I never have time.

**RK:** How old are these women?

*Recording for 1.01.02*

**RM:** Well see that's uh, the church uh bible study those range from late 20s to mid-50s most of them are younger. The Mahjong girls, I would say they're about 65 plus. Um you know we have college students, don't get a ton of high school students they're more the 'coffee isn't their scene yet,' but you know the college students from MVNU or some COTC not too many yet because it's still in Fredericktown but some of them still come up here. And you know a day like today, Saturday, is a little bit of everything. I had a group of gals they did a multilevel marketing um session here. And actually I will attribute to myself for remembering so many things today. The stuff that they gave me, some tree from the Philippines that the people there have been using for centuries well probably thousands years that they would grind up and eat and they said that this is one of the only things known that has every aspect of what your body needs. If you consume this every day, you wouldn't need to eat anything else. It has all the vitamins and I guess proteins, I didn't ask. They said this is all you need in a daily life. She actually gave me one of the ones that was with energy and she said which one do you want and I had been running a little uh, my days in the past four have been uh 16,18 hour days so with maybe uh maybe about 3 ½ - 4 hours of sleep at night.

**RK:** Why is that?

**RM:** Caterings, uh you know, we've had Dane up in Fredericktown. They've been doing inventory so they wanted to treat their employees for something while they were doing inventory and they got there around 5 in the morning. I got something to them at 7 but still had to get up early to prepare everything.

**RK:** Are you the main chef?

**RM:** Well, I do as much as extra is needed. I do have a uh manager here in the mornings that uh you know she does for the most part everything, but this was for, uh the first two days was 70 people the last day was 55 uh so I brewed a lot of coffee and made a lot of doughnuts.

**RK:** Do you make the doughnuts?

**RM:** Mhhmm.

**RK:** You have a fryer back there?

**RM:** No actually, we uh do like Timmy Horton's does and we just uh we have the doughnuts and we do a finish bake and ice em or whatever or glaze them with whatever needs to be done so our thing of baking every day, we certainly do. We bake our cinnamon rolls and uh croissants and you know scones and uh strudels. We do quite a bit of baking here.

**RK:** Are there any other groups that come here regularly? You mentioned the two female groups, are there any others?

**RM:** Oh there's just uh-- it really does make for a nice meeting place for people. I see a lot of people in business who you know somebody will come in and they may look like they are little lost and I'll say you know 'can I help you with something' and 'oh no, I'm meeting someone' and I see someone I know who is in business around here and they are meeting for a client meeting. So it's nice to know that you know they recommend us as a place to come and eat. And we do have Wi-Fi here so if they need to do anything on the Internet, they're able to uh access that and uh you know, um like I say, just so many different people of all levels. Whether its business client meeting, friends that we have uh-- a few different groups of people now I couldn't tell you just how many but this is the center um for they live in different areas and they meet here. It's just kind of centrally located. You know about once a month or once every other month. Got a group of gals from Newark that come up here and there's one or two who live here and two or three who live down there and they'll meet up here and they just love coming in here because I always rib with them and they rib back and you know we just have a good time--So yeah it's a big crossroads of different, different, different people.

**RK:** Would you say it's about equal, the amount of regulars who come and new customers?

**RM:** Well, and see regulars can be once-a-weekers too but they're regulars. You know like the person that went by—

**RK:** Yeah, tell me about him because I know you asked me to remind you about him.

**RM:** You know his name is Bill Mustane, he and his wife moved up here from Columbus. I think they were both school teachers down there for you know decades and uh um they moved out on Newark Road and Bill'll come in and his nickname is Chili Bill because he'd always come in and get a cup of chili and a cup of coffee and so he just became a good costumer and we'd talk. I'd hear about, uh, you know he used to be an usher at OSU in the 70s and 80s and he'd tell me stories about the things that he say and people he saw doing ushering down at OSU games and it just game to a time there, he and his wife would come in when we would have music and all, I've got an email entertainment group of about 500 and I send notices out when we've got a band or anything.

**RK:** Do you bring in the bands?

**RM:** Yeah, I uh you know that's the thing that unfortunately I wish I had uh a big pot of money to throw at entertainment to come in, but unlike a bar, where during the 3 hours span of music going on, a bar could make \$2,500 by all the uh you know beer and everything that they sell and I might do about \$250 in the same amount of time. You know they might just get a cup of coffee and already ate at home and just want to come in and sit down, you know a couple of bucks for a drink to hear music is all it takes. I've had some very good—Jim has well, he's done several jazz bands

**RK:** What is his last name?

**RM:** Gravy. We've had I think 9 across the front with drums and just you know, really, really cool um

**RK:** When did you start bringing music and why do you think entertainment is important?

**RM:** Well and see it's free too. We don't charge for anyone to come in and do this, I'd said a bar would charge an admission fee and they'll make money so they can afford to pay a band three or four hundred dollars. But our people work for tips uh you know again, as everything I've said up to now is all about community. I want people to have a night out and you know not cost an arm and a leg. A husband and wife could come down here and if they want, you know we don't have a liquor license, so they can bring a bottle of wine or something with them, buy dinner and dine with everything and be under uh you know 20 bucks and have a great evening of entertainment and fun and you know still have enough money, you know 3, 4 or 5 bucks to throw into the tip bucket for the musicians. So you know.

**RK:** Who do you see interacting at the events?

**RM:** Meaning?

**RK:** Meaning do you see a lot of people meeting new people or do people seem to come with their group and stay with their group?

**RM:** Uhh I, you know when we have some of the bigger groups, I think there's a lot of people come down, meet friends. May meet new friends. I think with the focus being on the music you don't have a whole of time to socialize but people will talk and you know and get to know one another and all and I very much encourage that. You know the thing that brings people together, they have similar interests in. So you know if you strike up a conversation with someone, in some on the nights its really standing room only some of the times and we only have tables for four and you may have to sit down with a person you don't really know and by the end of the night, either you're friends or you never want to see them again. So uh you know its uh but again, that's what I like to see. I like to see people and uh you know I usually always make my appearance. I have baskets back over there that I don't put out when they start, I usually don't unless it's something that is needed, I let them introduce themselves and after they've played

three, four, five songs, I'll you know they take a break in between songs, I'll say 'hold on, hold on we've got to just do my little dog and pony show, saying you know if I have a, if there is a group of you know kids, I'll say they perform like seasoned veterans, they're a group called Morning Star, uh you actually should try, uh at sometime when they're back, well they have played at the Village Inn, to get them more out at Kenyon. They play Celtic music and oh my gosh, are they absolutely wonderful and none of them are older than 18. I think they're all 18. The two girls just graduated um high school and are now in college, the brother, so they're all siblings, the brother is I think is 16 . But uh oh boy, they are something else. So I'll come up and I'll say 'OK now these kids performed all this great music and all I ask is throw a little something , they live clear down there so let's help them get home, you know with gas prices these days.' I try to say, come on guys, pony up a little bit and take care of these guys. There's no free lunch so to speak. If you enjoyed what they did, you know just encourage them to buy a CD and support them, if you like the music, keep it going.

**RK:** When did the new Sips store open?

**RM:** 2004.

**RK:** And is it still operating?

**RM:** I didn't know whether you meant here or on Coshocton. That was in 2009. It is, we had a lighting strike out there the middle of September it took out our oven, one of our prep tables, the espresso machine. We limped along, my business partner already had some surgery planned and were' trying to get everything in place so we could keep going while he was off but all these things just compounded it and well, the biggest thing was I couldn't get repairmen up. People are repairing their equipment today instead of going out and buying new. So these guys are just full of work and it's been very difficult to try to get them. Matter of fact, the over guy was supposed to come up yesterday but his girlfriend had to have an MRI yesterday morning and uh he was supposed to call me if everything was fine for him to come up but he never called or anything and I had Dana for morning and lunch and I did a um catering out to Kenyon at 3:30 for the Physics Department and then we had our Halloween party thing in here last night for a group so uh, not everybody is a--that wants to come and perform is a uh full-fledged group. Uh Sometimes you know I get people who are just individuals and they have friends and family and they want a place where everyone can come and have a good time and uh a gentleman from Fredericktown approached me and said that he uh had played and sang you know years ago and he was invited down to Columbus and played some down there and he says 'oh, it was so much fun I had a great time, and just wondered if I could do it at your place.' I said 'sure' uh you know again, I like to give just anybody the chance to uh be the star and uh uh so you know he set for the to you know invite friends and family and they turned into uh beyond just playing music and they did a Halloween theme so he did all the stuff up there (*looks towards the front of the store where there are Halloween lights and cardboard gravestones in the window*)



**RK:** Yeah, I love the decorations.

**RM:** And uh and so he invited a lot of friends and he was from Galon so a lot of them traveled from Galon down here just to see him play and so forth but it wasn't anything big or fantastic and we had uh a few of our regulars that I email come and a lot of them you know this is a busy weekend. You guys have a lot of Halloween parties tonight. So you better take a nap before you go uh..ha ha

**RK:** How many years was the other Sips open?

**RM:** The other store? Out there? That was, like I say, we opened in 2009.

**RK:** OK, and when was the lightening?

**RM:** The lightening happened I think I think September 14<sup>th</sup>.

**RK:** Oh, this year?

**RM:** Yeah, yeah yeah just recently.

**RK:** Do you see a big difference in the customers that came?

**RM:** That store..uh..

**RK:** Because they are in completely different locations, so I wonder if--

**RM:** Yeah, it well it's a big difference out there because one, we get people Apple Valley people that we may not get down here (*says 'see you girls' to women leaving, they answer 'bye'*) Um you know, they're typically, they like going out there but you know not open right now so they come here. You know a lot of hospital people and you know that kind of thing and what that gives us over here we have a drive-thru and a patio so I think it's the greatest patio on Coshocton Road because we're right there, I call it the Mount Vernon drag way um you uh sit there and you can look out over Coshocton Road and its where it turns if you're heading east, it turns into a four lane and if you're heading west it turns into a two-lane uh so you gong east you see all the people who are trying of sitting behind grandma and floor it you know 'I'm going to Wal-Mart get out of my way' you know kind of thing and then going the other way you see, I have seen semis and little old ladies who can't hardly see over the steering wheel just cram it trying to get ahead of the cars to get ahead of them to go into the two-lane. That's why I call it the drag strip its sometimes scary. I see cars that just race to get ahead of the car next to them so uh but it's a really nice patio the sad part of the place is that it only seats 14 inside and that can be a little tight. I wish I had more space in there but I just don't know how to you know maybe if I brought an engineer to look things over. Maybe I'll ask Jim, Jim's an engineer. See if uh uh, look and see if there's any configuration of seating so we can get more people in.

**RK:** It's like a puzzle.

**RM:** Yeah. So, uh uh but I do like it and this goes back to ok the philosophies that I was building with the community aspect on, of the things that opened my eyes in all of this and becoming a community and Heritage and National Main Street and just seeing the evolution, my evolution into the ways that I think now um. I have been for a long long time before I became involved in the Knox County Renaissance, was a proponent of the brick streets so you know I started what I called SOBS, Save Our Brick Streets. Uh well, there's a, well you know there's a you know 'put back the brick,' 'protect property rights put the brick back in Mount Vernon' because one of the things I found frustrating dealing with City Council was you have the Convention Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce talking about the charm and all of Mount Vernon and driving down its historic you know tree-lined brick streets yet all the city was trying to do was rip them up and get rid of them: 'oh these are antiquated and in such bad shape' so I lobbied and lobbied and lobbied and was finally successful in getting the um city to preserve the last eight and a quarter miles of brick streets in Mount Vernon. Also, when they tore up this, golly how long ago was that, early 2000s, um when they tore up Coshocton Road, there was brick all underneath that, there used to be bricks all the way up to Coshocton. So I was lucky and talked the city into preserving a bunch of the bricks for us so I had them take them out to community pool and I got volunteers, lot of local volunteers I got the uh John Fair and his uh army reserve battalion to come up and we palletized 144,000 bricks from out on Coshocton Road to be reserved for future brick street repair in Mount Vernon.

**RK:** Wow. Congratulation. What a feat, that's great.

**RM:** Yeah I was really proud of the people of Mount Vernon to support us and that we accomplished that.

**RK:** Do you find that people really do come together for projects like that?

**RM:** Well, you know, a lot of people have passions. Um, you know there were enough people who live on brick streets and like the history of them and things say that they want to get involved so you know when you like brick streets, what can you do? Well we gave them a project and they uh you know came and attacked so um you know it was very nice accomplishment and we're really, really fortunate to be able to have you know volunteers and things that uh pulled that all together. Now I can't remember how many-- just bunches and bunches of pallets that we were able to put together for them.

**RK:** That's really great. So on that note, how do you characterize the Knox County community?

**RM:** Well, that transitions into one of the other aspects of what I was, uh started to say, with uh my transition into the way I think today. Uh there's I talked to a lot of people who came from other communities and decided to move to Mount Vernon or you know they just came and we'd just get to talking and they say 'this is such a great community, oh I love this, you have great homes, the people that we talk to.' Now on the line of where we are but very sidebar, Mount Vernon was um chosen in the 90s there gosh I think 95 or 96, it's a reprint from uh *Ohio*

*Magazine* where um Mount Vernon was chosen one of the best places to live in Ohio. And we were in the running with another community in Ohio and uh the reason that we got it is that there was a gentleman, the one who was writing the article, who was walking on the other side of the street here, there was a little old lady who was trying to park her big ol' Cadillac and she had the real end up on the sidewalk and everything and she was just having trouble. She gets out of her car and this guy is walking down the street and she says 'Sonny, I'm late for lunch with my friends and they are waiting inside for me at the Alcove and would you do me a favor and would you park my car?' and 'you just leave the keys in it and that's fine' so a perfect stranger—now you're not from the community but if you ever have the experience to have met Helen **Zelkowitz** uh she, and her husband started WMVO and they actually started the first cable company here in Mount Vernon, and uh uh she had a radio program called Coffee Cup and she was a unique character of herself and this act of you know complete innocence by this you know usually elderly are a little bit more hesitant on things and you know giving him her keys and you know asking him to you know park her car just said to him 'where in Ohio, or for that fact anywhere, would you have a perfect stranger give their keys to you' so he said 'you know this has to be the best place to live in Ohio.'

**RK:** Do you think the community is still like that? Is that representative?

**RM:** I think there is a great bit of that here.

**RK:** And what is that? Trusting?

**RM:** Yes, yes I think still small town. Sadly, over the last and I say that was in the 90s and over that last decade we've seen a lot of things move into Mount Vernon, you know a lot of drugs. There's drug problems here in the community that if you didn't have a sit-down with the police or sheriff's department, you'd never dream how bad it is.

**RK:** Do they give reasons for why it is so bad? Any ideas?

**RM:** well most drug dealers look for you know new—it's funny, if you look at the evolution of everything, even drug dealers have become savvy businessmen. So just like any corporation or large business that is trying to expand its uh products into new areas, they look for any place they can go and you know, rural places like this are an easy—you know the police aren't that aggressive uh because they don't know how to handle it and uh when it does reel its ugly head a lot of times the community and those in power like to keep that down and silent. So it bubbles underneath uh because there's not a light shone on the problem and the issue because (*whispers*) 'oh no, drugs, that's no problem here.' You know and that's sad because there's a lot of you know youth and adults who have lost their lives over drugs and things and it doesn't get reported as overdose or died of this or died of that, you know it's just 'passed away.' So the community is really in the dark about a lot of things of that nature.

**RK:** It probably wants to protect itself.

**RM:** But you know uh you can't—this goes back to the whole philosophy of things—you know your neighbor calling your mother and if you don't make the example, if you don't make the phone call, push the issue, say you're going to go into rehab, you know you're—you end up uh uh um ok enabling the whole situation. So do you fix the problem? No! Do you enable it? Yeah! By not getting involved, by staying silent, not uh you know trying to make a difference. I tend to do some things that are looked at as a little off-beat that others say 'why the heck are you doing that for' and in this case I did, we have uh uh trucking company whose I did find out a lot more from one of the local police officers about it so it all connects, this I found out afterwards, in communities smaller than 50,000 GPS companies go toward the county map uh cities larger than 50,000, they go toward the state map so the GPS in Mount Vernon, you know goes by the county map and the county map hasn't been changed since I think he said 67 or 69 so it shows the state route as coming down Main Street . Well for some reason it even butchers the route even more for this one company's system and they have them going down South, down Mulberry Street behind us here, turn on Vine Street, this little narrow street come up here to Main Street and turn down Main Street. It causes traffic backups like you wouldn't believe. I get sick and tired of it because I've stood out there—I watched one semi come down Main Street, turn on Vine, he not only hit the light post and did damage to it, he took out the fire hydrant so you know I'm on the phone calling the police and telling him what the truck number is and I told him 'you pull over on Mulberry Street, I'm calling the police right now, don't try to run it.' And I just got fed up with it and I said you know semis are just not supposed to be downtown. So here comes this one so the truck that I got before him you know hit this light post and you know bent it all over uh so I just said you know uh I got to do just a little bit more so I went out and I got up and I told the truck driver, this is not the way you're supposed to go and he said 'nope, I'm turning here, this is where my GPS tells me to go' and I said 'fine, you'll wait for a police officer' so I stood in front of the semi truck and wouldn't let him go and traffic was even more stalled and I called the police and I uh you know they said they would try to get somebody down well I had somebody come up and you know he was trying to make the corner, he had four intersections totally blocked beside what I'm doing, and this man is yelling at me 'why don't you just let him go' and I said you know 'it's illegal for him to be down here' and you know I finally remembered the one aspect of things and I believe this you know I said 'if not me, who. If not now, when.' When are we going to say enough of these trucks doing this, when are we going to prove a point to their trucking company that they need to get things straightened around and he just you know kept getting more frustrated with me and I finally said ok, I'm not going to be you know uh I can kick dirt all day long and I did start to see cars turning around on Main Street and uh—

**RK:** You made your point.

**RM:** I hoped I had. But I believe that, you know still if goes back to 'if its not right, do something about it.' Don't just watch somebody do something against the law. Going back to, you know talking to so many people over the years, saying this is such a great community, the one thing that I am witnessing throughout town is you know uh these subtle changes and you

know it's like you know you will hear people um you know kind of say the gradual things that creep in and make the change and before long your eyes open and you think 'gee, where is this and this and this' our whole philosophy is different from what I grew up with and you know, it's what I'm seeing. I'm seeing you know uh not as big as emphasis on the historic homes that we have here. We've torn down several historic properties and you know I did almost everything I could outside of stand in front of the bulldozer when they tore down the old jail up here. I tried and tried to do everything I could to get them to preserve at least the front part of that jail. Um, that was historic architecture to Knox County, it still had use, you know they could have done so many things with it but you know they chose to tear it down, as with the old county annex that was a church built in 1871 there on High Street—tore both those down and uh you know, just a lot of little subtle things and now we uh—I look around and I think 'Mount Vernon has four Subways, three McDonalds, two Wendy's' uh you know I did a figuring of you know I based on when I talked to some people about what these stores do. There's \$63,000 spent a day in fast food restaurants in Mount Vernon. Now all those stores are corporate stores, all of that money leaves the county. The more and more you invite in, the less that there are like mine who support and do things for the community. So we sell ourselves to the corporate because they're the ones putting the cute commercials on TV and they're the ones that have all these focus groups, not to say that local businesses don't need to improve themselves—that's why I was trying to make an impact with the SIFE group, which they just kind of fizzled this school year, you know I talked to them last school year and said you know, I want to make this a legacy project for them so that they built on this and every year it would, they would transfer over to another group and they would keep it going, you know because we always have a changeup of downtown. It would give them something, an ongoing project. One guy says 'well what do you want out of this' and I said 'I don't want anything out of this, I want to know that you are going to make a difference.' I said 'you're the ones going to make a difference, I'm just telling you what I think would be a good help to fix some of the issues downtown, you take it and run with it and that's why I'm suggesting making it a legacy thing so you can take it with SIFE and be something you can be proud of because I'm sure SIFE has national meetings and such and you can hold up the project that you did and show how you're really making an impact. But they fizzled out and you know never really did anything and it's sad. Uh but professors, with different agendas and things, guide them down different paths, but us to go back to what I was—I go around the barn several times, luckily it's a big barn—but uh you know I see so much of this small town being transformed into every small town and the thing that I don't want to have happen is all the people who've come to me in the past years who've said 'what a great community this is' and people who've wanted to come and move here like other people have, you know uh all along, I have talked to dozens of people who have moved here who've said 'this is a great town.' Well, if you lived in a town that had four Subways, three McDonalds and you know gee, we've got a Chipotle here now coming—why would they want to come here for hometown values that we keep shoving aside?

**RK:** What are those hometown values that come to mind immediately when you're thinking about Knox County?

**RM:** Well, as I've said this whole time: helping others, being neighborly, doing assistance for you know if you have a girls' softball team you get involved and you try to do something that is going to try to help them as opposed to a corporate entity that you know 'well, we've got to call our corporate offices or we have to talk to the franchise owner' and consequently they don't do much of nothing. So you know all the aspects of you know what the small towns bring—the boy scouts and girl scouts and 4H and uh cub scouts and just you know the Rainbows and just all the other different little groups of things that you see in small towns that get the support from businesses like me and other local businesses—because their parents shop there and they shop there and its so much easier to give something to someone who patronizes you and you know you'll do whatever you can but when you give your money to the corporations, it just goes to feed the pig and you know, I want to feed the community. The more that we can nourish the community, the more that community is going to be there to nourish us and you know it is..

**RK:** A relationship

**RM:** it's a way of life, you know people say that it you know 'you're trying to lose some weight' and ok I am too, but in doing what you have to do you didn't gain that weight because you were treating your body right and feeding it all the good stuff and exercising and taking walks no, it's because you weren't doing the right things. No, it's a change of life; you have to do things you have to do. *Sighs*. I don't know, I get passionate and frustrated you know thinking that everything that we want from life is right there—we can reach it, we can touch it, we can eat it, we can taste it, smell it—but we keep pushing it further and further away from us because those values seem hard. They you know 'I don't want to have to threaten my kids that they're going to be grounded because they did something wrong or aren't doing something right' but 'oh, I'm so happy that little Johnny, even though he is not a very good baseball player, he still got a trophy. No. Let him work harder to get the trophy. Not everybody on the team got a trophy because they participated. You know there are winners and losers in life and you're not always going to be a winner at everything and you know, little Johnny may be much more suited to dance than to baseball, you know you just can't say that he is a lose, you just have to find what he is going to be a winner at. And you know, sometimes that's hard for parents too. Work with him, find out what he's passionate about, what she's passionate about. Make them a winner at what can make them a winner. Ahh, ask me something else.

**RK:** Well, I've learned so much from talking with you and I don't know if there is anything that you think I should have asked or that you would like to add?

**RM:** Well, you know, one of the big things that I wanted to throw in was about you know the corporate coming and taking over what our small town is. That can be a project in of itself. You know, you have sister colleges you could formulate an idea of how much has corporate America has changed the small town that you are associated with and get these other small colleges, you know Dennison and other small colleges around the country, and work with them and find out you know what have we sold our souls for—for a better hamburger? A better burrito? There's a

lot of small companies that pride themselves on good food, fast and inexpensive but because they don't have a billion dollar ad budget, they can't have commercials. There's a lot of people that do look at this, just like my idea of the community that I want to develop. The more people you get to thinking about it, the quicker it can happen. There's a lot of people thinking there needs to be a change out there, and again, I don't know if I said this or not but the people on the left and the people on the right, really have basically all the same fundamentals, all the same. They want their kids to grow up and be successful, they want to be able to work and retire and have life in Florida or Arizona, they want good for themselves, some more than others people around them but uh uh you know the differences are some people look at how their life's going to be improved based on how they can make it themselves and by somebody else giving them money to make it better. The fundamentals are basically the same but it's how you get there. Do you make the rough journey getting the scares and bruises yourself and feel the satisfaction of getting there or do you hop in the government-run bus and sit there and you know wave at the people going by and there they sit at the end ahead of you but with no satisfaction with how they got there. I don't know, I guess uh..i think you drew out of me quite about. How long have we been going?

**RK:** Almost two hours.

**RM:** Oh good gravy.

**RK:** Well, I'm glad the place is still running!

**RM:** Haha well yeah, yeah. Sorry for taking up so much of your time.

**RK:** No, I really appreciate it. I know how busy it is to run a restaurant so I really appreciate you taking the time and for sharing so much. I think this will be really helpful for our class to see how someone is taking their values from their personal past that are born in this area and trying to keep them going,. And I really think you're doing that. Everything that you're preaching, you're doing—which is great.

**RM:** Well, that's well I certainly like to stand behind my word and your reputation is certainly one of the things that should be put on the highest pedestal and we all look up to it.

**RK:** We talk about Sips in my class and all the events and thinks that you for the community. You know, I've only lived here for three years and I am very aware of Sips.

**RM:** Well, that's good. I appreciate that. I do everything 'cause I'll tell ya honestly, has Sips made me rich? God no. I could probably venture to say that my manager makes more money than I do. I just, I enjoy what I'm doing you know. Probably the sad part is you know I always envision um what I would, you know some people when they talk about winning the lottery: 'oh, I'm going to do this and do that' and one of my biggest things was I'm going to buy every house on West High Street and fix it up. Because that's one of our main entrances to Mount Vernon

and it looks a little trashy down throw there and I want to make everyone who comes through this town to realize that it is a great little community and I have good intentions for anything—I guess that's why I get myself so involved, I don't have a lot of money to throw around at endeavors and so forth, you know will my concept come to full-ation? I don't know I hope so; I really think it has merit and would be viewed upon by people across the country as a great thing.

**RK:** I'll let you get back to work, thank you so much again it was really nice to meet you. If I need to contact you again, later on, would that be OK?

**RM:** Sure, sure.

**RK:** Wonderful, thank you again. I'm sure we'll be in touch.