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Interview with Larry Wolford and Lee "Buzz" Ickes

Marika West

Larry Wolford

Lee "Buzz" Ickes

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Researcher's name: Marika West

Event: Interview with Larry Wolford and Lee "Buzz" Ickes

Place: Howard Hilton

23379 Coshocton Road, Howard, OH 43208

Co-Workers present: None

MW: Marika West

LW: Larry Wolford

BI: Buzz Ickes

MW: This is Marika West. I'm interviewing Larry Wolford and Lee "Buzz" Ickes.

BI: Ickes.

MW: Ickes. At the Howard Hilton, 23379 Coshocton Road, Howard, OH 43208. And today is February 1st, 2012. So, yeah, thank you for letting me do this.

LW: You're welcome.

BI: You're welcome.

MW: Hopefully you can forget about the mic at some point. But, um, so were you guys both born in Howard?

BI: Actually, Mount Vernon is where I was born.

LW: I wasn't, I was born in [can't hear place on recording].

MW: Okay, well, what brought you here?

LW: Oh, my dad moved here, well southern Ohio, in 1973. So I've been, I've been in Ohio since '73. But I didn't get up this way until about '92.

MW: And both of your families live in the area?

BI: Right.

LW: No. Mine don't.

MW: Okay, Um. So, how long has the Howard Hilton been here?

BI: It's been a year.

LW: Yeah.

BI: As the Howard Hilton. It's been a bar for 30, 40 years.

LW: Probably.

BI: 40 years.

MW: What was it before?

LW: It was called Hutt's Place. Then it was called the Derek Inn. Slick's, Apple Inn. So it's been several different names.

BI: It was the Derek Inn for a long time. Then Hutt bought it. Uh, had it three, about three years. Called it Hutt's Place. Then Larry basically leased it off him. And we ended up buying it.

MW: So you guys have just owned it for a year?

BI/LW: Right, yeah.

MW: Same people been coming through all the name changes?

LW: Yeah. Pretty much.

BI: Pretty much.

LW: Younger crowds coming in now, that's never been in here. You know.

BI: Some newer ones, but the core, yeah I'd say, the same guys.

MW: What types of people, what people usually come in here.

LW: During the day we get mostly an older crowd. Then at night we get a younger crowd that comes in.

[Buzz briefly directs someone making a delivery]

MW: So, how did you guys decide to buy it, start running it?

LW: It was sitting here empty. Somebody said something about wanna start it back up. So we come and talk to the guy. We leased optioned it for about a month. He ended up passing away. So we ended up buying it.

BI: And it wasn't before—I, I joined in here in September, bought half of it in September—prior to Larry and the other, Nate, leasing it in February of last year. In the last year or so, really, business had really drop off here. A lot of people—for various reasons, so. It was kinda, pretty, pretty dead really for the last year that it was open. And then it was down for a good two or three months until you leased it.

LW: Before we ended up taking it over.

BI: So, but we. There's been a lot of changes made too. So, it's changed, you know, bring a lot more people.

MW: What changes did you guys do?

BI: Well, I cleaned it up number one. Put some new TVs in. Put that menu board over there.

LW: Lighting.

BI: Mood lighting.

LW: We just cleaned the place up.

BI: Cleaned the place up a lot.

LW: Built some.

BI: It needed new shelving for more storage.

LW: Good food.

BI: And the food yeah. The food. The food's good. So, a couple extra taps, another cooler. But mainly just cleaning it up and good food, good service.

MW: Is it rare that a person comes in here that you don't know?

LW: Yeah, been getting more of a new crowd. I mean

BI: The word's getting around. I think-there's

LW: More older people coming out of Mount Vernon, down and eating on Taco Tuesdays.

BI: The ones that come in a couple three times. We can remember there faces and get to talking to them.

LW: Yeah

BI: But you need a constant flow of new to, to offset. You can't have the same guy sitting here every day and try and make a living, you know, so.

MW: Is Taco Tuesday your most popular night?

LW: Yeah, I'd say overall probably so.

BI: Taco Tuesday on Tuesday night, Friday night we got a pretty good-

LW: Friday night is a pretty good crowd. And we gotta, a little club drawing in here on Monday. Which has been a pretty popular thing.

MW: So, you have an older crowd during the day?

LW: Pretty much. And at night. But then, I'd say from 9 o'clock on, in the summer time we've got a real good younger crowd, 21 to 28, and 30.

BI: That's one thing. We get a steady crowd of say 50 to 80 year-olds. Which is good. I'd say a good 40% of our business is that. So, which is nice. We also have the younger crowd of course. It's nice, there's no trouble out of them.

MW: Why do you think they come?

BI: The good food. Uh, Larry knows a lot of people around here. He's grown up around here. They're our age or older. They know there's not gonna be a problem around here, so they're in here comfortable. Good food, cold beer. Bottom line.

LW: And good atmosphere.

MW: Are there other places in Howard that people would gather to socialize really informally like this.

BI: There's a little barbeque grill up the street that's pretty good. They don't serve the beer and alcohol. People just go up there to get something to eat and leave. They don't stick around, you know what I'm saying.

MW: How long do your typical customers stick around?

BI: Well, we have some of them sit 2, 3 or 4 hours.

LW: I'd say on average, probably 2 hours, 2 and a half hours.

MW: They just come with friends? Or do they usually expect to see friends here?

LW: Both, I'd say both.

MW: Um, let's see... Do you think that you are a meeting spot in the community generally? Or do you see the bar functioning in a way that brings people in Howard together who might not otherwise see each other?

BI: It's a gathering spot.

LW: Yeah, it's definitely a gathering spot.

BI: People know when they come in their gonna generally see friends, their friends. Larry knows just about everybody around here. I know about half. So, you know. They do come in. We're here a lot as owners. Even though we do have bartenders that help but, we're here quite a bit. I think it helps. But it's definitely a gathering place.

MW: So you spend most of your time working socializing?

LW/BI: Yeah.

BI: Do the books. Do the cleaning. Do the stocking. And then, you know, socializing a little bit. Gonna build a shed out here sometime today or tomorrow. Always something to do.

MW: Anything you like to add? Like, do you get the sort of general direction we're trying to explore?
Meeting places, gathering publicly.

BI: It's definitely a meeting place, a gathering place. There's no question about that.

LW: That's what they come in here for.

BI: Virtually, everybody that comes in here, I would say, knows 80% of the people that are in here.
Except maybe some of the younger kids. When they start coming in a little bit later on at night.

LW: We do have a school down the road, the training center, that does send people up, that's from out
of town. So there, at one time there might be 12 or 15 people of those coming up, so. But they're not
from around here.

BI: But they love it up here cause, again, it's just a good place, no trouble. Cold beer and good food,
you know. Good service. Pretty girls behind the bar, if that helps.

LW: You don't want a job do you?

[Laughter]

BI: If you would... are you 21?

MW: I'm 23.

BI: Well great, you're legal to serve.

[Conversation about a student bar-tending class at the VI, and employment more generally.]

MW: My friends and I like karaoke, so maybe I can bring some on Tuesday.

BI: Tuesday nights. Matter of fact, last Tuesday the karaoke speaker broke, so we didn't have it. But
he'll have it fixed next Tuesday.

MW: Is it the same guy that runs it at Rookie's?

BI: Yes, Ryan. He's good.

LW: You sing there, have you?

MW: I can't sing very well, so I rap.

BI: We got a couple of them. That white guy?

LW: Rapper man?

BI: Baby Got Back or whatever the song he was singing? I can't remember. Oh my God he was funny.

MW: I like 99 Problems and I'm sorry miss Jackson.

BI: It's a good time. I tell you, It's a fun-it's a good good time in here on Tuesdays.

LW: We got woman who comes in here, when she sings, she don't sing every Tuesday. She is unbelievable.

BI: She's a pro, she really is.

MW: Yeah, I heard about Rookie's cause I was asking around for a karaoke place. But that place can get kinda rowdy at times.

BI: It get very rowdy from what I hear.

MW: Yeah, sometime people are... they hit on you a little more than you really want.

BI: Well this is closer to home too. Bring em over Tuesday nights. Tacos are good. Only a buck and a half too.

MW: Okay.

LW: It's a good taco.

BI: Tacos, nachos. Plus the grills open too.

LW: Sold 15 pounds of taco meat last night.

BI: Usually sell like a hundred, hundred and twenty tacos.

MW: Oh wow. Um, Tuesday nights might be kinda hard just cause people are busy with work and school and stuff. But, yeah, I'll see if anyone's interested. Maybe people from my class too.

BI: There you go. Get a car load and come.

MW: Um, so, anything else?

LW: Nope, that's it.

BI: No, but the only thing is there's a lot more work to a bar then standing behind here serving beer. I'll tell you that. Seriously. Larry'll tell you.

LW: There's a lot. There's a lot more that I thought. There's a lot. It's running a business you know. It's like running any other business.

BI: No, that's about it guess.

MW: Well, thank you guys.

BI/LW: You're welcome, thank you.