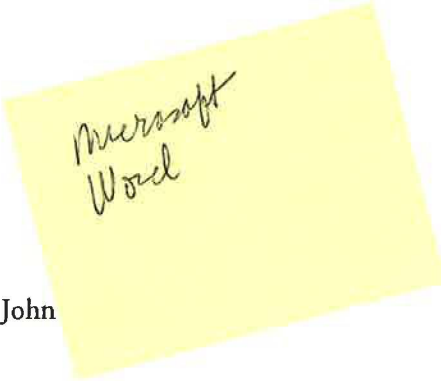


INTERVIEW WITH GENE BIGGI, 25 SEPTEMBER 2000

TAPE 1 - SIDE A

- 006 John Henry grew horseradish (HR) early 1900s in fields all along Cedar Hills Blvd. John
- 009 Gene's grandparents lived nearby, parents met
- 012 John Henry was the HR king in the area
- 015 Gene's parents began growing HR, bought 14 acres, there were HR fields from Cedar Hills Blvd to 5th Street
- 019 Local farmers grew enough HR to supply west coast – Seattle to LA
- 022 1927-8 low prices for HR led farmers to stop growing it John Henry
- 026 Rose Biggi, Gene's mother, began selling the roots
- 029 Fresh ground HR did not last much beyond 2-3 days, it turned brown & lost flavor
- 036 They owned a coffee shop in Portland; told Rose they would buy her HR when they opened their supermarket Mr/Mrs Fred Meyer
- 040 Meyers opened their first store in 1931; this was a big order for Rose; supermarket had a deli; HR was ground at store, sold in cardboard containers, vapors from grinding made customer's eye burn & tear; product bought by Jews, Germans, Scandanavians
- 053 Mrs. Meyer had Rose grind root at home, pack into jars, bring a few dozen jars every few days
- 057 Grinding root in home basement, Gene's father put together a grinding machine
- 060 Hired their first employee, Esther Campanella, to babysit young Gene and pack ground roots into jars; 25c/day, then 15c/hour Esther Campanella
- 076 Esther worked 62 years at BF; ground roots, bottled & delivered it
- 081 Biggis farmed HR for many years; plant has deep roots and keeps coming up – can't get rid of it; no other crop will grow there, therefore, could not rent the land – had to buy it; had about 60 acres – scattered in small parcels
- 090 Gene & brother did some farming – in Jackson Flats, Sherwood, Sauvie Island (for quite a few years); farming one site at a time Jackson Flats, Sherwood, Sauvie Island
- 098 Growing & harvesting was stoop labor – hard to get employees; land was too wet; 1950s & early '60s



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- 104 By late 1960s they were growing HR had moved to Tule Lake area
soil was not muddy or clay there Tule Lake
- 113 Environmentalists will not stop Beaverton Foods (BF)
- 115 Rose Biggi had not previous business experience Rose
- 121 Rose took "Red car" into Portland, worked at a candy , lived at
Commercial Hotel Rose, Merlo family
- 128 Rose wanted to own a business; she was self-taught, Dad was farmer Rose
- 142 Rose thought maybe there is a business here
- 145 A farm worker took Rose to town in a Model A, stopped at small
grocery stores, bartered for other food stuffs Rose, Eve
- 157 When HR began to sell for money, Rose already had a small route Rose
- 167 Rose was still making HR by hand, all the kids helped
- 174 Process of making bottled HR; product lasted about 1 month unrefrigerated
- 187 Gene was high school student, making deliveries on Saturday & checking
color of bottled HR, how to preserve HR Beaverton H S
- 194 Gene studied business 2 years at U of Portland U of Portland
- 196 Worked 10 years developing formula to make unrefrigerated HR that
could last 4-6 months; could ship further away
- 206 No patent on food process
- 212 BF is now largest packer of shelf-stable HR
- 216 Supermarkets restrict refrigerator space; it's very expensive
- 228 BF has no successful competitors now Kraft, Borden's,
Nalley, Heinz
- 252 Rose's advice: be honest, have a fair price & be good Rose
- 258 Business was started as way to get thru Depression, but it gave
Rose a taste of entrepreneurship Rose
- 261 Anything you come up with, Fred Meyer will buy Fred/Eve Meyer
- 266 Gene came up with & made relish, cocktail sauces
- 280 Fred Meyer was #1 store buying it; led other stores to buy it Albertson, Piggly Wiggly,
Safeway, Fred Meyer

- 290 Other HR producers Williams, Bordens
Kraft, Heinz
- 299 Originally called R L Biggi Horseradish Co
- 303 About 1940 it was Beaverton Horseradish Co
- 307 Started blending mustards; M-W making product, delivering it
T-F; no other work on T-F, needed more items, not enough income
- 314 Gene thinking about opening a restaurant, brother a service station
- 320 Began packing for Bordens – a big account Bordens, Blue
Bell Potato Chip
- 326 During 40s & 50s, just the house & a small office
- 331 During 1930s in old house & basement; that house gone
- 337 In 1942, moved out of basement
- 340 The big companies never visited BF
- 344 Gene flew to SF to meet with a big company San Francisco
- 355 BF would pack for Bordens & get WA & OR as their distri-
bution area Bordens
- 358 Changed name to Beaverton Foods; too difficult to sell other
products when named Beaverton Horseradish Co
- 363 Gene saw OSU beaver mascot at football game; took that
image in late 1960s for the Beaver line
- 381 Early purchase of land was cash only, Rose saved, there was no credit Rose
- 399 Gene & brother fixing up old houses on land family had bought;
Dad died 1953;
- 404 Several kinds of HR – cream style Wisconsin
- 409 END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE A

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

- 001 Took a couple of years to develop a mayo-based HR with an

8 month shelf-stable life

- 006 BF developed four more HR varieties
- 010 Put out a Kosher version
- 017 Gene would bring home jars with brownish HR, Rose would refill with fresh HR, Gene put them back on the shelf
- 029 Gene & his brother did some of the farming, worked with different HR strains; no gov't. regulations
- 037 In early '50s Biggis had a chance to sell; Gene checked out markets in western states; Gene urged family to hang on for a year or so
- 066 Right after that they got the Bordens contract, then packing for other producers Bordens
- 068 Gene's sister did not get a % of company; worked there as secty
- 079 Brokers in San Fransisco urged Gene to get more products San Fransisco
- 093 While eating in a Chinese restaurant, Gene hit on idea of hot Chinese mustard
- 106 Was first company to offer pre-mixed ready to use hot Chinese mustard; now they are largest producer in the world
- 115 Supermarket managers could, in the past, decide what products to sell, led to BF getting the Chinese mustard into stores
- 121 Gene was learning merchandising as he went, including cross-merchandising – put mustard and sauces by the fish dept; late 50s, early 60s
- 140 Fred Meyer
- 143 Rose met the Meyers during the 1920s, in their coffee shop
- 160 New products need more markets, can cut production costs at new site; Son Dominic is national sales manager Dominic Biggi
- 165 Schedule now is 2 shifts/day, 6 days/week, 8-9 thousand cases a day
- 172 Will need a lot more business when new plant comes on-line, can increase production 4-5 times
- 176 Has 4 lines now + 2 semi ones; will have 3 more lines at new site; each line will be able to do 4,000 cases/day; currently developing new products, new packaging, pretzel dipped mustard, salsa (they will pack shelf-stable version for Reser)

- 206 Gene knows lots about mustard; they pack about 120 varieties; beer mustard becoming popular – they'll make that & mango mustard
- 224 BF employs 2 food technologists; Gene is the food engineer – comes up with new ideas; can test something & identify spices used
- 235 Honey Baked Ham
- 250 BF is often not mentioned on the label; often says “packed for Honey Baked Ham distributors”
- 260 Gene came up with recipes for Hoisin, sweet & sour, black bean sauce
- 266 Does packing of other products for Japan Foods – Kikkoman
- 285 BF must clean the lines between different products
- 292 No warehouse space; supplies are stored at a Tektronic site; need to bring in supplies as needed – there is no space to store anything; synchronizing shipments
- 300 BF does \$17,000,000 business at current site
- 310 BF products sold in Canada, Mexico, Caribbean, France, probably into Korea & India; doesn't push sales in Europe
- 338 Doesn't sell in China or Japan; BF packs for their companies in the US; (Sun Luck – Seattle & Dynasty) Sun Luck, Dynasty
- 340 BF provides faster service, better product for American tastes than those made/packed in Orient
- 360 Started making imported mustards – Dijon, Dusseldorf, English
- 374 In James Beard article (1973), 5 BF mustards were listed among the top 11 best sellers James Beard
- 388 Bought Inglehoffer Co that made just one product; BF expanded to more varieties
- 394 Also bought Old Spice name/line from a Portland company that used that name in the 1930s, before the shaving lotion used that name; BF expanded that line
- 409 Bought Napa Valley mustard
- 410 END OF TAPE 1- SIDE B

A few more comments on original tape about these other brand names

Dominic, his son, is VP of sales & marketing