

Tarrant County Office of Historic Preservation and Archives Oral History Projects:

## ***Fort Worth Public Market Building***

### **James “Jimmy” Klein Owner of Fort Worth Frosted Foods and Klein Meat Company**

Interview conducted by  
Ann Jacqmain, Assistant Archivist  
In 2023 in Fort Worth, Texas

#### **Klein Biography**

James “Jimmy” Roger Klein was born to Walter P. and Stella Klein on October 18, 1935 in Chicago, Illinois. He was the youngest of four children. At that time, Walter was working at his father’s meat distribution company called Klein Meat Company. Walter worked there until 1941 when he moved with his family to Fort Worth to manage Fort Worth Frosted Foods. Soon after he took the job, Walter became the owner and employed his three sons, Walter Jr., Harold, and Jimmy. His sons eventually took over the business.

Fort Worth Frosted Foods rented space in the Public Market at 1400 Henderson Street in downtown Fort Worth and stayed there until 1969. During that time, the building physically changed, and businesses came and went. The Kleins were a staple in the Public Market and at the center of all the changes. In 1969, the Klein brothers moved their business to a building at 2525 Cullen Street and changed the company’s name to Klein Meat Company. The Kleins continued to operate successfully at the new location until they closed their business in 1996 and sold the building.

#### **Public Market History**

John Harden opened the Public Market in 1930 and rented the store and office space in the building to numerous businesses. The Public Market’s success did not last long, however, and its ownership transferred several times. When R. C. Bowen took over in 1944, he revived it for a short period but ran into issues keeping rental space occupied. The Public Market slowly emptied over the next 30 years, and the building decayed from neglect.

The Public Market received a Texas historical marker in 1980 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. It was recognized for its significant role in Fort Worth’s commercial history and its unique Spanish Colonial Revival Style architectural design. Wilks Development bought the property in 2014 and, as of 2023, they are rehabilitating the building to create a senior living community.

## Topics Discussed

- Klein family
  - Fort Worth Frosted Foods and Klein Meat Company
  - Fort Worth Public Market (1400 Henderson St.) and the businesses that rented space
  - Fort Worth meat distributors, buyers, and processors, grocers, ranches, and restaurants
  - Changes made to the Public Market building from 1941-1969
  - Changes made to the building on 2525 Cullen St. from 1969-1996
  - Fort Worth men in the U.S. Army, World War II, and Fort Hood
  - Presidential visits of Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson
  - Fort Worth Catholic schools and churches
- 

00:00:00 Ann

My name is Ann Jacqmain, and I am interviewing Jimmy Klein today, July 27, 2023, in the offices of the Tarrant County Historical Commission. We are here with Jimmy to talk about his family's business and its connection with the historic Public Market Building located at 1400 Henderson Street in downtown Fort Worth.

Thank you for talking with us today, Jimmy.

00:00:22 Jimmy

Thank you.

00:00:25 Ann

Can you start off by telling us the name of your business and about how long it rented space in the Public Market Building?

00:00:33 Jimmy

Okay. The business at that time in 1941 was called the Fort Worth Frosted Foods. We were there from 1941 until 1969, September the 3rd, 1969.

00:00:51 Ann

Okay. Then I'd like to go back in time a little bit, and can you just tell me about your family, your parents, siblings, and how you ended up here in Fort Worth?

00:01:01 Jimmy

Well, I don't admit it much, but I was born in Chicago. My father worked at the Klein Meat Company in Chicago, which was his father. A marketplace, rather, a small market. My dad, through a gentleman that sold lockers, metal lockers that held about 200 pounds of meat, he sold to this public market 1,000 of those lockers. He was going up to the north to visit other places and he knew my dad, and he gave my dad the suggestion that he call or write for a position down here. And he did get it and he was the manager of the meat department. He came in January of

1941. The rest of the Klein family which composed of my mother, I had two brothers and a sister, and I was a baby, and we came down in May of 1941. And the rest of it's history.

00:02:22 Ann

[laughs] Can you tell us your father's name?

00:02:25 Jimmy

Yes, he was Walter P. Klein Sr. He was the age of 40 when he came here, and he died at the age of 56. My mother died in 1944 at the age of 44 of breast cancer. My two brothers, one was 13 years older than I am and one was 12 years older. They have both deceased. And my sister who was 10 years older, she has deceased, so I'm the only one in the family left. I do have one nephew that's named Klein but he's in the insurance business.

00:03:22 Ann

Not the meat business.

00:03:23 Jimmy

No, not going to carry on. My own son is Chris Klein who worked for Ben E. Keith, and he is not going to get in the meat business. Other than that...

00:03:40 Ann

Did you say it was the grocer that was in the Public Market that bought the lockers from your father?

00:03:50 Jimmy

No, well, it was the whole company that bought the lockers, and my dad inherited them through... I think it was Pickwick Grocery Store department that had the groceries, and they didn't wish to have the meat end of it, so my dad more or less took it over with another gentleman who was his partner and they closed it off. There is a picture [referring to a photograph he donated] where you can see a wooden wall between what used to be the grocery store department, and it was then separated to be Fort Worth Frosted Foods, which, when I came aboard, I changed the name to Klein Meat Company. That was September the 3rd, 1969.

00:04:48 Ann

When you changed the name?

00:04:49 Jimmy

Yes, about that time. My brothers, two brothers, worked there. We had 18 employees and our business... We moved in September the 3rd, and our business tripled by January, only because we bought out another company. It was a good life.

00:05:20 Ann

Do you remember which company that was, that you bought out?

00:05:23 Jimmy

Yes, Leonard Brothers.

00:05:26 Ann

Oh, okay.

00:05:28 Jimmy

Leonard Brothers Food Distribution. They sold freezers and food: vegetables, orange juice, strawberries, broccoli, a few other things. A whole line of things that you would put in your home freezer, which we had already going ourselves.

We ended up on Cullen Street, at the 2525 Cullen Street. They were up the street, I don't remember the address, but the gentleman who was running it had a slight accident. He ran into a bridge and was killed. I can't think of his name. It wasn't Leonard. I've never been able to think of his name. Maybe because I wanted to erase it. [laughs] Okay, so do you have another question?

00:06:32 Ann

You had an interesting story about how your father took over.

00:06:38 Jimmy

Yes, the pictures indicate where there is a wall built to keep separated from all of the larger area where the grocery store was. My dad had a partner, and I don't know where this partner came from, but his name was Gilligan, and they were in together for six or eight months and things were not going real good, so my dad said, "Well, whoever has the most money in their pocket at this very moment can have the business." My dad had \$12 to his name in his pocket. Mr. Gilligan had \$8, I believe it was. He wanted to leave anyway. He might have snuck some out, I don't know. [laughs]

So, my dad kept on with it, then my brothers came along in 1941/42. My oldest brother was in one of these pictures. [referring to the photographs he donated] Then my other brother, who is 13 years older than I am, was, is, will ever be, he was in the business before he went to the Army. My oldest brother went to the Army, and he was a fighter pilot, flew over Germany and bombed the city my grandparents came from.

00:08:25 Ann

Wow, that's interesting.

00:08:27 Jimmy

My other brother went to Korea, and he was an MP. He got shot at but he knew enough to duck [laughs] so he came home. I served in the National Guard for eight years, helicopter mechanic. I

couldn't even spell helicopter, but since I was in the meat business, they put me in the kitchen to help cook, so I made tartar sauce for 180 soldiers. That's it.

00:09:04 Ann

[laughs] That's an interesting military experience, then.

00:09:07 Jimmy

[laughs] Yeah. We went to Fort Hood. If you know anything about Texas, Fort Hood is the last place you would want to be. It's hot, and we always went in the summer.

00:09:20 Ann

How long were you there?

00:09:21 Jimmy

Well, we just went on two-week tour of during the summer, then the rest of the time we met out at Grand Prairie at a hanger because I was in the air section, which included helicopters, but we had planes that... I think we had 19 pilots and we had 19... They were called L19 airplanes. We had to take them out, get them ready, and they flew them around for the two-day tour. But the summertime came then that's when we got real serious and went down to Fort Hood, north Fort Hood.

00:10:17 Ann

Okay, and you were working at the business at that time?

00:10:21 Jimmy

Yes, yes, yes. It's the only job I've ever had. I only interviewed for one other and some reason I didn't get it. That was because it was WBAP TV and my sister-in-law already worked there, so they kicked my name out. That's what they said. [laughs] I didn't want to work there anyway.

00:10:51 Ann

Yeah, I guess it worked out. You had a good long career. [laughter]

Well, so can you talk about the Public Market Building, maybe some of the other owners and types of businesses that were there when your father started?

00:11:08 Jimmy

Yes, R.C. Bowen... Am I saying that correctly? Because I see you have Bower.

00:11:22 Ann

It is R.C., yes.

00:11:24 Jimmy

He was the owner, and he had a brother named Temple Bowen who, every week we serve stew meat, and he would come down for a bowl of stew meat and never put a quarter in the bucket.  
[laughter]

The manager of the building was Mr. Ramming, a very nice gentleman. The maintenance man for the whole area down there was John Pinkerton, and a very nice gentleman. When I wanted to make some changes in the building, he said, "Sure, go ahead and I'll help you as much as I can." So I tore out walls, cooler walls. We had one particular cooler that was like 50 feet long and about 12 feet wide, and we had a hallway between that cooler and the next cooler. So I tore the walls out and made one great big cooler, and our business picked up considerably. What else?

00:12:39 Ann

Were there any other businesses you remember at the time in there renting space?

00:12:42 Jimmy

Oh yeah, yeah, I remember... Now here's one I do not... Well, don't mention it then. Kelsay Lumber Company, I do remember them. Yellow Cab Taxi Company parked their cars there and had the maintenance area under those sheds out in the back, more or less. And I knew a lot of those guys. One of the main gentlemen who owned Yellow Cab was Charles Needham and W.R. Watt, Sr.

Then Air Accessories came along, and they were making equipment for planes being used in the war. They gave us 90 days to get out. Well, their part of it never developed so we were able to stay there, and they moved out. Mr. W.I. Spittler was his name, the business president.

You have Standard Food Distributing Company... That was a gentleman, Wally Wagner was his name. He had a truck that was kind of insulated. He sold cheeses, all different kinds of cheese. He rented a cooler from us to keep the cheese in and he would give us samples of good cheese.

Haynes Meat Company was there for quite a few years. We bought them out in '55, I do believe, and that's when I started tearing out the walls and making it a big place. AMC Supply, it was a division Air Accessories. I knew some of the guys that were in that division. Can't recall their names, but... Alcon Laboratories, two of the nicest gentleman, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Conner. That's where the "Al" and the "Al-Con"... Mr. Alexander and Mr. Conner.

00:15:17 Ann

Oh, I didn't know that.

00:15:18 Jimmy

They were very nice gentlemen, and they rented the floor above our freezer that we had that was 50 by, no, 100 by 100, maybe, feet. Big freezer.

AMC Supplier, a division of Air Accessories. I knew about it, but they didn't do much. And Alcon... Bowen Properties, Temple Bowen managed that for his brother. And there was a Bowen bus line that was here in Fort Worth.

00:16:04 Ann

Yes, I know it... I know of it.

00:16:09 Jimmy

Cadillac Plastic, of course, was there the longest, or a long time anyway. No, we were there the longest. And what I remember about the grocery store, when it closed up there was a ice cream soda fountain in the front. And when they moved out, they left a five gallon, I think, of lime sherbet, and I got sick eating so much lime sherbet. [laughter]

There's one other name you had here was Photo Etch. That was a division of Air Accessories. [Jimmy is referring to a list of public market businesses that the archives researched prior to the interview.] That gentleman's name was Bob Phillips. And State Fair corny dogs. We rented a cooler and dry space for this gentleman by the name of Jim Lee, who produced corny dogs for State Fair and for all year round.

[Referring to the list] Soda fountain... Yeah, I mentioned that. So, as we go, I remember a lot of little details and I don't know how much you all want.

00:17:35 Ann

Oh, we'll take it all. [laughter]

00:17:38

[The interviewer and interviewee took a short break at this time.]

00:00:01 Ann

Okay, we're just coming back from a short break, so we'll get into it again.

00:00:05 Jimmy

Okay, as I say my name is Jimmy Klein. I moved to Fort Worth in 1941 when my dad was here. I attended St. Ignatius grade school, downtown Fort Worth Catholic school. I went to Laneri High School, which was a Catholic boys school. Met my wife in high school. She was at the girls school and I was at the boys school, but they told me I was up at the girls school more than the boys school. [laughs] We graduated from high school in 1954. We got married in 1956. She was a schoolteacher. She had 42 students, and they all came to the wedding. It was at night at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, 8:00 at night, and we had a big crowd [laughs] because of the kids and their parents.

We were married three years before we had a daughter, Lisa Klein Hill, who's now... I better not give her age. [laughter] Two years later we had a daughter named Maria, and then 10 years later we had a son named Christopher. We enjoyed some very nice trips. I've been to Italy 33 times. I've been to Hawaii... Really I lost track after 29 times. I made a lot of friends over there that I couldn't speak to, but sure could use a sign language [gesturing with hands], but that [sign language] doesn't go through. [laughter] Anyway, I enjoy traveling a lot, and when my brothers would let me go for two or three or four weeks at a time, I grabbed hold of it and went.

Then, in December of 1995, my oldest brother, Walter, was coming to work and he had a slight heart attack, and he goes to the hospital, and he never came back to work. My other brother, Harold, his wife was on dialysis in December, the very busiest time of the year because we processed deer. The end of December, the December 29th, I called a broker who had approached us about selling the company. I called him and said I'll sign and sold it within... had it all cleared up within six months.

But personally, now I live in Willow Park. Moved out there 21 years ago with my wife. My wife did die 10 years ago on Christmas day 2012, and my brother, who is 13 years older, died that morning. My wife died in the evening. He died at 9:00 in the morning, she died at 9:30 in the evening. Am I going off course?

00:03:36 Ann

No, you're okay.

00:03:38 Jimmy

My mother died at the age of 44. So, my father was doing well physically, we thought, and he started volunteering at the U.S.O., which was downtown here in the Pennies [JCPenney] building, if it's called that. He met this young lady and they dated, and I went on a few dates with them, and he finally told her, "If you don't marry me, I'm going to put Jimmy in an orphanage." They got married. [laughter] She was a wonderful, wonderful stepmother and she was in business with us at Klein Meat Company.

00:04:22 Ann

Okay. What role did she play?

00:04:24 Jimmy

Bookkeeper and she'd call people up at midnight and say, "Hey, you owe us some money," which is against the law now. [laughs] It wasn't then. She played a very good role. She was a very good person, even though my sister didn't like her.

00:04:43 Ann

That's another story? [laughs]

00:04:44 Jimmy

That's another story, [laughter] but we won't even get into that.

00:04:50 Ann

So you said you and your brothers owned the business together?

00:04:56 Jimmy



Yes, we were, yes. Then we had to... We thought we were in partnership, but that didn't work good. We had to incorporate, which for insurance purposes and other reasons incorporating was better than partnership, legal-wise, I guess.

00:05:22 Ann

Okay. And you took over right after your father passed away?

00:05:27 Jimmy

Pretty close, yes. I graduated from high school in '54 and I went out to Arlington State College, but they didn't seem to want me back after six weeks because I was working at the Klein Meat Company all day and wouldn't go to school. And I'm glad to this day that I did not go to college because I learned so much more in the meat business and the construction business because I remodeled a building that Klein Meat Company moved in September the 3rd, 1969.

It was a building that was about 30 years old, been vacant for 10 years. It was originally built for a poultry house... I was going to say Fort Worth Poultry, but I don't think that's correct. I went in there and it was raining like crazy, and there was a big hole in the roof, and it was flooding in the place. So I went through a contractor, got prices to do different things. I came back and it was raining, and I called my friend who had a front-end loader and some dump trucks, and he knocked down 300 feet of Haydite block that was divisioning different sections off. He hauled them off for \$300.

00:07:03 Ann

That's a good deal.

00:07:04 Jimmy

Yeah, the bid was \$3000.

00:07:11 Ann

Wow. And where was that building located?

00:07:13 Jimmy

At 2525 Cullen Street. People say, "Where is that?" I said, "You know where Angelo's BBQ is?" "Oh, yeah." It's two blocks north of Angelo's. Angelo's was one of our largest buyer of briskets. We did sell sides of beef to individuals, like you all, who had kids. They'd come home from school and the wife would always have that meal on the table at 6:00. Then so many kids started staying after school playing basketball or football or baseball, all of that. The dining time of 6:00 kind of went away and they were eating out more. And so, our business changed from selling sides of beef to just briskets. We would order 40,000 pounds of brisket a week because we were servicing... Can I give names? [Ann shook her head yes] Angelo's BBQ was a tremendous buyer, Railhead on Montgomery, Walter Jetton... I don't know... That name is long gone, but when Alan... not Alan Johnson. Who was the president? Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson...

00:08:47 Ann

Lyndon.

00:08:48 Jimmy

Lyndon. Whenever he had a rally going someplace, he called up his friend Walter Jetton, and he would buy enough briskets to serve maybe 2,000 people. He would cook it in Fort Worth, he had trucks that kept it warm, he had trucks that refrigerated, and he had trucks that carry the tables and the chairs, and he would go wherever Johnson was. That was big business, and from there we had a lot of other places that we sold briskets. That was probably our main business from then on.

00:09:30 Ann

Okay, so you serviced a lot of individuals and a lot of businesses.

00:09:33 Jimmy

Yes, yeah, we did.

00:09:38 Ann

And you said that a lot of individuals rented the lockers from you, right?

00:09:46 Jimmy

Yes, they did, because if we sold them a side of beef... Back in the early '50s, people didn't have home freezers like they do today, and so they would take some of it home and then store the rest of it in the lockers that we rented for \$15 a year, I think. Something like that. We had a thousand of those and that business went down slowly. So, when we moved to Cullen St., we only brought over 500 lockers.

Well, we had some wonderful people that were customers that would go into that freezer, it was, you know, five below zero, and take out meat themselves. I don't wish to drop names, so I won't, but we had a very good customer that she did it herself. She would stay in there 5, 10 minutes, which was a long time, and she would pull fish out that she had caught up in Alaska.

00:10:47 Ann

[laughs] You can share names. Do you remember who it was?

00:10:52 Jimmy

Yeah, it was Mrs. Perry Bass.

00:10:53 Ann

Okay.

00:10:54 Jimmy

She would have it flown down from Alaska, her pilots, her plane, and she would call me up and say, "Can you meet my boys at 2:00 Sunday afternoon?" I said, "Sure." And she said, "Well

now, here's my personal phone number. Keep it in case there's some troubles along... something happens.” And we had some others that were very good. If I could only think of their name. [laughs] Anyway, she was very nice person.

00:11:39 Ann

A lot of great customers.

00:11:40 Jimmy

And her sons were very nice. We rented them space for... They had a dance hall on the corner of White Settlement and Crestwood, which is a shopping center type, and they made too much noise and the neighbors complained, so they had to shut it down and stored all of the tables and chairs with Klein Meat Company. I shouldn't be talking so much. [laughter]

00:12:08 Ann

No, you're fine. We appreciate it. So you moved buildings in 1969-

00:12:16 Jimmy

Yes.

00:12:18 Ann

... and do you remember what made you decide to change locations?

00:12:23 Jimmy

Yes, I do. We had to because of the state inspection law. We were under the city inspection law, which meant that the man from the city health department would come in once a month and would give a cup of coffee and say, “Carry on boys.” Then the state put out rules and regulations that we had to have our draining lines had a 5 to 1 pitch, I think, and we also had to clean everything with hot water. Where we were on Henderson St. there was a basement and there were so many cracks in the floor that the water would have drained down in the basement.

Now another good story I know about the basement is in about 1944/45, Our Lady of Victory School was at 3300 Hemphill St. run by nuns, Sisters of Saint Mary's, had a peach orchard. They had a crop of peaches, big crop, so my dad offered the basement for them to come down, peel the peaches, put them in these five-pound containers. They had over 150 of them, and we froze them, and they'd come pick them up every once in a while and make peach pie. That's another memory.

00:13:58 Ann

Did you guys get to try any of their peach pie?

00:13:59 Jimmy

Yeah, [laughter] we knew the sisters very well. My dad helped one of the nuns. When she was transferred there, she wasn't a cook and that's where she was put, in the kitchen. So my dad would go up there at 4:00 and help her get things ready for the evening meal or whatever.

00:14:20 Ann

That was nice. So, with the new regulations, besides the basement, did you run into any other issues with cleaning equipment?

00:14:34 Jimmy

Yes, we did. All the walls had to be impervious, I hope I'm using the right word, and we couldn't make them that way on Henderson St., so when I built the building, we use what is called glass board, which is white glass board, which is very good, easy to clean. So I had to do that. And the sewers... We all had to make... I had to tear up the whole floor of the whole... The building was 28,000 square feet. We only used 14,000, so it left some, but that 14,000 was all government inspected every day. In fact, I had to provide an office for the inspectors, which I was able to do. They were there every day, and we had some good inspectors and had some bad inspectors.

00:15:52 Ann

I guess I'm just wondering a little bit more about your relationship with the other businesses. Did you guys interact a lot, the owners of the other businesses in the area and the public market?

00:16:07 Jimmy

No, there weren't any really. The hospital was right up there. No, I really got to know other people in the meat business, because when I built that building, and I say we used 14,000 so I had 14,000 left over, so there was one guy who came to me and said, "Hey, the law is changing for me also and the rest of the little wholesalers. Can you provide me with a cooler and a freezer?" I said, "Well, yes. All I have to do is extend the wall here and here and had the freezer space." And that went on, I was adding. At one time we had nine different meat companies on Cullen St. One of them was a two-man operation. One would go out and sell while the other one was making cutlets or whatever. And we had a corny dog place there. And we had a fire in 1980 caused by a electrical problem in the corny dog department.

00:17:20 Ann

That was all on the Cullen St. building, right?

00:17:23 Jimmy

Yeah. Yeah, the other corny dog place was called Jim Lee's Corny Dogs. And this guy bought him out but moved in with us. Bad memories. [looking at the IT man] Can you erase things? [laughter]

00:17:45 Ann

We can strike that. [laughs]

00:17:56 Jimmy

Oh, I do remember the, more or less, the grand opening of the public market in 1941. As I say, my dad came in January, the rest of my family came in May, and that's when the store kind of had a grand opening, although it got started a little before we got there. But Swift and Company made a bologna that was six feet long, 24 inches in diameter, just for display. [laughter] I don't know what was in there, but it was for display.

We also had... Virgil Borland had an appliance store, and he had freezers in there. He became the manager of Colonial Country Club. And I do remember Mr. Alexander and Mr. Connor real well. They were just nice gentlemen. And when they built that place out on South Freeway, it was big, and they invited me out to see their offices. That was very nice.

Coming back to Yellow Cab Taxi Company, that was owned by several people, but the main one was Charles Needham and Billy Bob Watt. Billy Bob Watt was the president of the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show, which they changed the name. But then his son took over after Billy Bob died, and his name was just Bob, I think, Bob Watt. So anyway.

Oh yeah, at 1400 Henderson one summer, we had a rodeo down there in the back portion of the thing. I don't remember much about that because I wasn't into rodeos.

00:20:08 Ann

It was just a one-time thing that year?

00:20:10 Jimmy

Yeah, they just rented that space for the summer or three months, whatever. Other than that, kind of brings me up to date, unless you have other questions.

00:20:27 Ann

Well, do you remember the day of the opening? Was it a big turnout?

00:20:33 Jimmy

No, I think it happened actually before we got here. It might have happened a week before or a month before. I never found out, never questioned, because at that time, I didn't know what a grand opening was. [laughter] But I do know that it was very well attended, somebody said that. What is very well attended? 90,000 [laughter] or were there four or five people there? I don't know.

00:21:07 Ann

Okay. Can you tell me more about your suppliers since you've told us who you supplied? Who supplied you?

00:20:14 Jimmy

Yes, yes, we had a lot of very good suppliers. One was Ebner Brothers in Wichita Falls. They killed large beef and that's what we wanted. When we got it, it was called hanging meat and it came from a steer that weighed at least 700 pounds dressed, meaning...

00:21:44 Ann

[laughter] Still has all of its parts?

00:21:47 Jimmy

[laughs] Yeah, has two legs and... the hind legs and the front legs. We bought a lot from Swift and Company. We bought some from Armour and Company. Bluebonnet Packing Company was on the north side of Fort Worth. We bought some from them. Then Borger, Texas, I believe... Border? On the border of Oklahoma up there someplace. They were killing large beef, so we got large beef from them. Then we got into the brisket business. We dealt with a place in Nebraska, Schuyler Nebraska Meat Company, because they killed big animals up there, meaning that the brisket part of an animal weighed 12 to 15 to 18 pounds. And that's what a lot of, especially Angelo, one of the bigger ones, and the others did also. So we bought a lot from them. We bought frozen vegetables from... I see you have a name down here which I don't recognize, Booth Frozen Foods. That's not the name I remember, but maybe that was a corporate business. I don't know.

00:23:27 Ann

Did you buy from any of the big ranches in the area, in Texas?

00:23:28 Jimmy

Yes, we did. We sure did. Are you acquainted with Walsh Ranches? Okay. They had a foreman by the name of... Knew this guy very well, and his wife was lovely. [laughs]

00:23:52 Ann

Maybe his name will come to you.

00:23:53

It will because... Marshall, Lewis Marshall was a manager of the beef part of it, the raising it and selling it, and so forth. And we did buy quite a bit. Anything that they took to Bluebonnet Packing Company to get slaughtered, if it graded Choice, U.S. Choice, then we purchased it. In fact, we practically bought all of their Choice meat. They had some that wasn't quite Choice, so it went someplace else.

And then Beggs Ranches out on 20. In fact, Walsh Ranch was here, Beggs was here. We bought some from Beggs. Not a whole lot. Very nice gentleman, and his wife was nice. [laughs]

00:24:52 Ann

Did you buy mostly beef or did you do any other meats?

00:25:00 Jimmy

Yeah, we did some pork, but there is no real pork slaughtering around this area. So what we would do is we'd buy 60-pound boxes of pork loins and cut them up into chops, or we'd buy 60... It all came in 60-pound boxes of pork shoulders, which we smoked part of it and made sausage out of the rest of it.

00:25:31 Ann

Did you do any like chicken or...?

00:25:32 Jimmy

Yeah, we did. We slaughtered chickens ourselves in the basement of 1400 Henderson. Yes, we'd get about 150 chickens from this one particular guy. So, after hours, after we closed the Klein Meat Company... no, Fort Worth Frosted Foods, my brothers and myself went in the basement and we picked chickens until midnight. We had ice buckets that we threw them in. I had one brother who would tie up five chickens on a string and cut their throats and then they slap all over. My other brother, the oldest one... We had a chicken picker that a man gave us, and it was a barrel like this, had rubber finger. He would dip them in hot water, had to be exact temperature, and then he'd defeather them. I was the youngest and the last on the line, so I got to... I'm sure there's a nice word... Whatever that word is.

00:26:50 Ann

I have never heard of that machine.

00:26:52 Jimmy

I took the guts out and the heart and the gizzards. That was my job.

00:27:00 Ann

Yeah, the youngest one. [laughs]

00:27:01 Jimmy

Yeah, they always gave me a hard time.

00:27:09 Ann

Did you get any fish or...?

00:27:11 Jimmy

Not a great deal, no.

00:27:12 Ann

Okay.

00:27:15 Jimmy

Frozen five-pound boxes bought from Waples-Platter, but not a whole lot. Back then fish was not too popular.

00:27:35 Ann

Okay, and I remember you telling me a story about some turkeys.

00:27:40 Jimmy

Let's see, let me make up a good one. [laughter]

00:27:42 Ann

Did you get some...?

00:27:43 Jimmy

What about turkeys?

00:27:44 Ann

A large order of turkeys became a regular-

00:27:48 Jimmy

Oh, yes. Yeah, those were extremely large turkeys because they were raised by Dr. Brown, who was a skin specialist who married Mrs. Hamilton... or Haltom. Haltom City is named after her parents. He raised these turkeys out there to give us presents, and they would weigh, dressed, would weigh 35 pounds where normally your tom turkeys in these days will run you maybe 18 to 20. Some stores might get a little larger. And we dressed those and Dr. Porter Brown gave them away to his friends, his customers, I guess, or to-be customers. But that was a lot, and we did a lot of other turkeys also, but that was the largest.

00:28:52 Ann

So you mentioned that your business was able to physically alter the building. Do you remember if any of the other businesses in the Public Market altered it at all?

00:29:03 Jimmy

No, no, not in the public market. Only one, Haynes Meat Company. They rented a cooler from us and we bought them out. But when we moved on Cullen St., that's when I had nine different meat companies in there. And as I say, a couple of them were small two-men operations. The other one, Taylor Meat Company, was quite large.

In 1982, we had a fire in the building at midnight and the fire chief was going home down Henderson St. ...pardon me, down White Settlement St. and he saw smoke two blocks over. So he whipped around over there and called in the fire department and saved half of the building for us.

00:30:00 Ann



Oh wow. And in that building, you invented a freezer system, right?

00:30:15 Jimmy

I can't say invented, but I made a freezer because freezing meat quickly is very important. We had an operation where we would cut up sides of beef... I introduced a wrapping machine that everybody's got now but it was new in... forgot the year. The freezer itself was 12 feet wide and 24 feet long, and on each side we had rollers that would put the boxed meat on and it would slide down. And at the same time, we have fans blowing down circulating the cold air, and by the time that that first box went in in the morning, it was frozen by that night, or at least by midnight. And we kept stacking them up so the last ones done at night got the top shelf where the fans hit the most.

00:31:25 Ann

Interesting.

00:31:26 Jimmy

Yeah, in fact, the gentleman who built... who was with Armstrong Cork Company was my subcontractor. He was quite impressed with it and he introduced that to a company in Dallas. No big deal. [laughter] But he's still living and he's 92 years old and I went to his birthday party in Dallas last year.

00:31:54 Ann

Oh, that's great.

00:31:55 Jimmy

Getting off the subject.

00:32:00 Ann

Well, you moved out in 1969, and so at that time, as I recall, there weren't many businesses left in the building, and-

00:32:10 Jimmy

Correct.

00:32:11 Ann

... I was wondering, do you think that the things that were happening in downtown were affecting the success of the businesses in that building, like the construction of I30 or just anything else? Did you see any of the changes going on in downtown have an effect on any of the businesses?

00:32:32 Jimmy

I honestly can't say. I don't know because there was one business when 30 came in there, they tore his business down and I knew them quite well, Bassham Foods company. Other than that, there weren't a great deal of other businesses close by. No, I don't remember any other.

00:33:04 Ann

Okay. All right. Well, I guess, is there anything else you'd like to add?

00:33:19 Jimmy

Well, I thank you very much for this opportunity. I am hoping that the gentleman who said we know nothing about Fort Worth Frosted Foods or about the Public Market from 1941 to 1969... And that's my heyday right in that time. But he refused to... No, [laughs] I shouldn't say that. He never called me back after I called him and told him I knew all about the Klein Meat Company, or the Fort Worth Frosted Foods, or 1400 Henderson, and he didn't call back.

00:33:53 Ann

We're glad that we got to talk to you today then and got you to share your memories with us.

00:33:59 Jimmy

I'm very happy to do so and-

00:34:03 Ann

We appreciate it. Yeah, I guess we'll conclude the interview then. And thank you again.

00:34:12 Jimmy

All right. Thank you all again very much. Adios!

00:34:17 Ann

Did you have anything? [talking to Jaimi Parker, Archivist] Did you think of anything?

00:34:18 Jimmy

Did you guys have anything? [talking to Bryan Howard and his 2 assistants from the county IT department]

00:34:20 Ann

Yeah. I mean, we could still add it on.

00:34:23 IT man

Did you sell to any grocery stores back then?

00:34:34 Jimmy

Very few. No, not really. Another one of our big customers was Risky's Barbeque-

00:34:36 Ann

There's a lot of barbeque places around here.

00:34:37 Jimmy

... and then Risky died and we lost that business.

00:34:42 Ann

Well, I think you got some good stuff down here.

00:34:48 Jimmy

Well, I hope I did because I've been studying in my own brain the different things that went on. Like I say, there was... Maybe I said that Virgil Borland had an appliance store in there. There was Kleinschmidt Bakery started, I think. I don't know what my full German name is. Maybe it was Kleinschmidt, but when they got to that big lady up there in New York, they cut it short and made it Klein, which Klein in German is small, little, insignificant. That's me.

00:35:37 Ann

Oh my gosh, I think you're the complete opposite of that, right? [laughter]

00:35:44 Jimmy

Of course, this is off the record, I take it? We're closed down?

00:35:48 Ann

I think he's still recording just in case you wanted to share anything else.

00:35:54 Jimmy

Oh, well, I'm very proud that I was an altar boy at Saint Patrick's Church from the fourth grade all the way through high school. In fact, on Sundays I would be there at 6:00 in the morning and serve the five masses that were after six, whatever they were, and I knew the Monsignor O'Donoghue, who was the pastor at that time. Knew him very well. Very nice, kind gentleman. And the best thing between the 9:00 and the 10:00 mass, he'd say, "Go over and Julia's got some pancakes for you." So that was good, but... That's it. That's it. That's it.

00:36:43 Ann

That's sweet. All right.

00:36:46 Jaimi

That was great! Thank you so much, Jimmy.

00:36:49 Ann

And if you think of anything else that you just want to share, you know we can always just write it down and keep it, you know, record it.

00:36:59 Jimmy

Well, as of right now, you know, I studied it and studied it, went over this list that you see. Now, you got William Davenport Grocery. I have no idea what that was.

00:37:10 Jaimi

It may have been winding down right as you came in, you know? I mean if it was only there for a year.

00:37:19 Jimmy

But Pickwick Grocery store used to be a chain in Fort Worth but not a big chain. In fact, Buddie's Supermarket bought him out, I think, the few stores that they had. And you all probably never heard of Buddie's Supermarket.

00:37:37 Ann

I haven't. I've heard Pickwick.

00:37:39 Jaimi

Yeah, Pickwick sounds more familiar.

00:37:43 Jimmy

Well, it was up in the north a lot, but Buddie's was a locally owned. Markham, Mr. Markham... I forgot. Maybe his name was Buddie Markham. He built the first one on 33rd St. and North Main. And it was big then, and then he bought out a lot of other stores that made him into Buddies. Buddies was the biggest name in this area for a long time. And then... Albertsons came. At one time Albertsons had two names.

00:38:27 Ann

Tom Thumb and Albertsons or...?

00:38:32 IT Man

Skaggs?

00:38:33 Jimmy

Skaggs Albertsons, yeah.

00:38:35 Ann

Oh, I haven't heard of that.

00:38:36 Jimmy

Well, they didn't last long. They didn't stay partners very long at all. But that's where my daughter met her husband was at Skaggs, or Albertsons.

Anyway, I enjoyed this very much.

00:38:55 Ann

We did, too.

00:38:56 Jimmy

I hope I gave you something to go on.

00:38:59 Ann

You definitely did.

00:39:00 Jimmy

My mind right now can't think of anything else that I could call you about or...

00:39:09 Ann

I know. Well, I feel like I questioned you enough for the morning, right? I'll let you relax now.  
[laughter]

00:39:13 Jimmy

I did know I did skip over one about a TV something, which is not important.

00:39:22 Jaimi

Yeah, that was a minor thing.

00:39:23 Jimmy

Yeah. A brother and a sister built some wooden racks and it wasn't worth it. It didn't last long.

00:39:34 Ann

Oh yeah, yeah. You told us about that, the brother and the sister with the TV business. Did you remember their names?

00:39:44 Jimmy

No, I don't.

00:39:45 Ann

Okay. That's okay. But what time was that? What year? Do you remember?

00:39:50 Jimmy

No.

00:39:52 Ann

Because it was pretty early for televisions.

00:39:55 Jimmy

Yeah, televisions were-

00:39:56 Ann

Did they recently get released?

00:40:00 Jimmy

Well, the first TV station was WBAP Channel 5 and their first live broadcast was made at the T.P. station. And the train was pulling in and on the back of the train was Amon Carter and Truman, Harry Truman.

00:40:24 Ann

Oh, really? [laughs]

00:40:25 Jimmy

Yeah, and my friend was the announcer for WBAP, Frank Mills. And he was giving the minute-by-minute of the train pulling in, and Amon Carter giving... Well, I just mentioned the president... A hat from Peter brothers, Stetson? It might have had another name. And my friend, Frank Mills was facing the train station, but he was up on another part of it and the sun was beaming down so hard or bright he couldn't see what was going on. So he had some guys put a piece of cardboard to block out the sun so that he could see what was going on. There's more to that story. [laughter]

00:41:25 Ann

That's an exciting day.

00:41:26 Jimmy

I was there. I was at the train station since I went to school right four, five, six blocks up. Sister let the good boys go down there.

00:41:38 Ann

Oh yeah, I was going to say did you have to skip school for that? [laughter]

00:41:43 Jimmy

School wasn't very big at the time so...

00:41:51 Ann

Okay. All right. Well, thank you.

00:41:52 Jimmy

Thank you all.