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Interview with Katherine Forrester and Jimmy Linville (FA 189)

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Interview with Katherine Forrester and Jimmy Linville, Bowling Green, Kentucky

November 13, 1992

Interviewers: Trudy Balcolm, Janice Molloy

F: Forrester

B: Balcolm

M: Molloy

L: Jimmy Linville

(Opening announcement)

M: Could you tell us something about the history of the motel? How old is it? Who built it?

F: ...The ones that built it...Mr and Mrs Cornwell. I don't know when it was built...We bought it in 1952...

B: What buildings were here when you bought it?

F: Everything was here...when I bought it...When they first built it...they had one room...

B: And then they built that wing?

F: Yes...the north side. Then they came on around...Those in the back.

B: The wooden structures in the back?

F: Yes...This was the last one they built. The one towards town.

M: There were only two owners?

F: Yes...

B: What was their name?

F: ...J.L. Cornwell...They owned both sides of the road...They lived over there in Number 1...They had a beer tavern over

there...

B: This place started out as a tavern?

F: Yes.

B: Did they ever have any camping facilities before they built the motel?

F: No...They called this Horseshoe Camp...We changed it to Court...

M: That was just an old term?

F: Yes, something they used years ago...

M: Do you know who the builder was or where they got the stone from?

F: ...White Stone Quarry...Keystone Quarry...

M: How did they transport the rock?

F: ...A truck, I figure...

B: Did the former owners build it themselves?

F: No, they had it done...Jimmy could tell you...He and his uncle built some of this stuff...

L: He built this down there.

F: ...The motel towards town?

L: Yes...

B: Who built it?

L: Francis York

M: That was your uncle?

B: Yes.

M: What is your full name?

L: Jimmy Linville

B: Do you know what year he built that?

L: ...Bill Brannen built...Number 1, down to 2 or 3...

M: Do you remember how old you were?

L: Ten or eleven...

B: ^{was} What that in the 1920s?

F: He's 67 now...

M: In '35?

L: That's about right...

B: Did it have the high peaks on it?

L: Yes.

M: Do you remember them bringing the stone in here?

L: No...They were giving fifty cents a square for laying rock back then...

B: Who built the wooden structures in the back?

F: ...They were here when we came...Their son lived in the one next to the stone buildings...The one where I fixed the barn had two bedrooms and a kitchenette...There was another one between those...This one behind me had one bedroom...and a garage.

B: Did all the wooden ones have kitchenettes?

F: No.

B: What about that big one on the end?

F: It had one. It had two bedrooms...There was two that had kitchenettes...Now, number 12 did...a sink...two gas plates...

M: What was in the other kitchenettes?

F: They was gas...

M: Did they have refrigerators?

F: I don't know then...

B: Did they have refrigerators when you owned it?

F: Yes...When we bought this...it was just one room...

B: This house?

F: Yes...it had a kitchenette...

L: Did Frances do the carpenter work on this, too?

F: I don't know...We just built around it...

M: What about your other utilities?

F: We had a well...It furnished water to all these rooms...It was real deep...Good water...

M: Tell us about the laundry.

F: The old lady used to do all the laundry...

B: Did she have a wash house?

F: No, she had a back porch...a washing machine...

B: The porch on the back of the tavern?

F: Yes...They had a kitchen...a bedroom...

B: Tell us about the tavern.

F: We bought this for the tavern and the motel...It was the busiest place between Chicago and Florida...All the surrounding counties was dry...We had this business for about two years...My husband was tired of the beer business...He wanted a whiskey license...It would be package to go...We got those...We still had business...[talks about customers]...We didn't sell to bootleggers...

Then it went dry in '57...We put it into a gift shop...Then they built I-65...That left us with nothing but a motel...They

didn't come this way...We still got some business...The people before us, they were rich. They were the only ones that had a motel...

B: Do you remember the other motels?

F: McBroom...

L: Park City Motel...Me and Francis built that one.

F: There was several motels at Cave City...Park City, maybe one...Here...There's just one building...the Ridgeway...It was block...They had the Bowling Green Motel then...The Mayfair...

M: Were there still hotels downtown then?

F: Yes...There was a Park City Hotel at Eleventh and State...The Mansard Hotel...The Helm Hotel...

L: Jimmy Sidden's motel...I worked on that...

B: The Country Ham Motel?

L: Yes...

F: A lot of people stopped there to get those hams...It was a pretty nice motel...They still operate something...

B: Probably weekly or monthly...

F: Yes. McBroom does the same thing...

B: Did you do that?

F: No, I was just overnight...One winter we had such a snow...The people couldn't get out of here...[relates story about cooking breakfast for the motel guests]...

M: Didn't there used to be a big truck stop down here? Old Fort?

F: Yes...I forgot who ran it...[discusses Ridgeway Motel]...It

was a nice place...This was too...We had benches out in the yard...picnic tables...a lot of pretty flowers...

M: What about the neon lights?

F: Yes, in the triangle. On every cabin, we called them cabins...

M: The gable?

F: Yes, each one had a different color....You could see it for miles...On top of the tavern...My husband had a light...

B: The flasher?

F: Yes, you could see that from Park City...That was pretty...those neon signs...[talks about sign causing a fire] After we closed up we took them down...We had a lot of signs then...They're antique now...[talks about the different beer that they sold]...[talks about beer cans and openers]

End of side one

Side two

B: Jimmy, how long have you lived here?

L: Fifteen years...

B: What year did you come to work here?

L: ...Right after he moved down here...'52 [Mrs. Forrester shows can openers and Jimmy talks about working for Mr. Forrester]

F: My husband...did tuck pointing...

B: Did he do that the whole time while you were working at the motel?

F: Yes...I run the business and he did all this other...

L: We worked all over the country...

M: When was your busiest time at the motel?

F: ...The summertime...

M: Were the people on business or tourists?

F: Mostly tourists...

B: Did you get to know some of them that stopped every year?

F: Yes...they'd write me...[story about daughter's cats]...We had a snow in '66...I shoveled the drive so people could get in and out...

B: Did your kids help out?

F: No, they were young...

B: What did you charge for rooms?

F: At first...it was four dollars for one double bed and eight dollars for two double beds. Then we got up to eight dollars and ten dollars...until we went out of business...

B: How were the rooms furnished?

F: We put knotty pine in every room and panel ray heat...It's gas heat and goes up the wall...

B: What kind of furniture did you have?

F: We had Old Hickory furniture made in Bedford, Indiana...The double bed, luggage rack, little table lamp, a rocking chair and straight chair...A little dressing table with a mirror and a little stool...It was heavy...I still got all that...Old Hickory Furniture went out of business...These tourists would steal anything...[story about people stealing chair and blankets]...

B: Did they have bathtubs or showers?

F: They had showers...one had a tub in it.

M: What about the flooring?

F: ...Most of it was tile...[talks about tourist leaving cigarette burns on the floor]...

B: Was it pretty frequent to have things missing or have other trouble?

F: Not all the time...You just couldn't have anything too good or they would take it...

B: Did you have postcards or ashtrays with your name on it?

F: ...Postcards...I didn't have any ashtrays with my name on them...

M: When did you start using some of these buildings for storage? Was that just a gradual process?

F: Yes...After the Cornwell's son left...We got that for storage...People that worked for us...lived...where I got the barn...After so long, they moved over to the office...[talks about couple that worked for them]...That left me and my husband to rent the rooms...I got afraid to stay over there...It's a headache...[talks about daughter staying at babysitter's]...

M: So what year was it that you closed the motel?

F: ...Nine years or longer...

B: Ten years would be 1982.

F: Might be longer than that...[talks about husband passing away and his sandblasting business]...We just closed it up. We didn't have gates up then....Just after he passed away. To keep

people out of here...

L: They used to come in here squealing tires...

F: ...Tore my hedge up...I got afraid of people...They tried to beat the door out one night...[story about intruders]...

B: What did people do when they stayed here?

F: They'd sit out in the chairs...We had them all around. Benches, chairs, and picnic tables. Most of them would want to go to Mammoth Cave...site-seeing...To town...

B: There was a lot of big trees around the drive?

F: Yes, it was shady, it was pretty...They kind of died. We had to cut them down...We had a pretty tulip bed in form of a horseshoe. There used to be a table...stone, flat like a table...We had neon over this one room...a flower box across the window...

L: I built a flowerbox out of rock.

F: I was so busy, I didn't have time to fool with flowers...

M: That's a big yard.

L: A lot of grass cutting, too.

F: ...The hedge was lower. We put our chairs out there...If anyone came to rent a room, I just stepped over the hedge and rented them a room...I feel more at ease with that hedge being around...

B: Did the rooms have air-conditioning?

F: Yes, we put air-conditioners in them...window units in every one of them...International Harvester...Kept them cool...The tavern didn't have no air-conditioners. All we had was big

fans... [discusses air-conditioning]...

M: What were some of the sites that people staying at the motel might go see?

F: Mammoth Cave was the biggest one... Beech Bend... that was big draw... It was a swimming pool. They had dancing... All kinds of rides... Everybody would go to Beech Bend... They had a skating rink... And Lost River... They used to dance down there... [talks about Lost River and Beech Bend]...

M: Older maps show Duncan Hines' home, would people go to see that?

F: Yes, I believe a lot of people went to see that... It's been well kept... It's nice inside...

B: Did you belong to the 31-W Highway Association?

F: I probably did... [talks about Dinnerbell Restaurant in Park City]... 31-W was a busy place. They would park here... at the far end... all the way around this drive... We was a great attraction at that time...

B: In the summer, would you fill up every night?

F: Just about every night... When Park City would put 'NO' on their sign, we'd be the next one... You would always put your rates up higher when you'd go to filling up... Everybody did... That's when you could make your money...

B: Did people travel much in the winter to Florida?

F: Yes, they traveled in the wintertime... We had a wonderful business... We didn't depend on this like we did the whiskey and the beer... Everything was dry around... They'd come here first.

B: How did you handle the business on holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving?

F: We got to closing the whiskey stores...on Christmas...On Thanksgiving you could...They'd stock up for that...We used to let them drink on the back porch...The colored people didn't mix with the whites when we first got this, see...

End of tape