

An Oral History of Inez Stempeck

4th Street | Prater Way History Project

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Inez Casale Stempeck was born in 1927 at the Coney Island Dairy, then located near El Rancho and Prater Way. Her parents, who both emigrated to Nevada from Italy, founded Casale's as a roadside fruit stand in the late 1930s. The business evolved into Casale's Halfway Club, a popular Italian restaurant named for its location halfway between Reno and Sparks. Casale's remains a family business, as Stempeck works in the kitchen alongside her son, Tony, and some of her grandchildren.

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INEZ STEMPECK

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Alicia Barber, Interviewer

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Barber: I'm here with Inez Stempeck. It is November 19, 2013, and we're here inside Casale's Halfway Club.

I wanted to start out by going back a little bit and ask you how long ago your family arrived in Nevada.

Stempeck: My father came in 1913.

Barber: What was his name?

Stempeck: John Casale.

Barber: Where did he come from?

Stempeck: Genoa, Italy.

Barber: Did he come straight to Nevada from Italy?

Stempeck: Yes, he did.

Barber: Do you know why, what prompted him to come?

Stempeck: I don't know. He came to Tonopah first and he worked on the farm, and then he came to Reno and worked for Shell Oil Company. In the meantime, his sister wrote that she found him a girl, just what he wanted, and so he said, "Send her to me. I'll send you a visa."

Barber: She was writing to him from Italy?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: So she found him a girl in Italy. Okay.

Stempeck: So he sent her a visa to Reno. Well, it was a small community then, and all the Italians knew that John was getting a girl. So he went to Sparks and picked her up and took her and put her in a cab or somebody's car. She had a big hat on and she was dressed in a suit, and she was very thin, stately. So then he walked her down Virginia Street. Several years ago I had a chance to go on that car from Sparks to Reno.

Barber: What car?

Stempeck: The old train car. And then they showed me the Halfway Club and all that, and it was really very interesting.

Barber: So that was your mother?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: So your mother was sent from Italy. Did she know any English at the time?

Stempeck: No.

Barber: Had she known anyone who lived in the United States?

Stempeck: No, but she knew America was where she wanted to be. She was twenty-nine years old, and what she was a—she took care of the children, you know. She gave shots, she did everything.

Barber: She did that back in Italy?

Stempeck: In Italy. So she came over here, and she was here three days and she married him.

Barber: What was her name?

Stempeck: Elvira.

Barber: What was her last name?

Stempeck: Pazzili.

Barber: Did any of her immediate family ever move to the United States?

Stempeck: No. Dad's brother came one time, I don't remember when. But he borrowed some money and then left.

Barber: So your parents were the only members of their families who lived here.

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Did you ever meet their parents, your grandparents?

Stempeck: No. My grandfather on my mother's side had died when she was two, and her mother was hidden in the attic during the war, during the Second World War.

Barber: Where did they live?

Stempeck: In Florence, in [unclear]. They hid her in the loft and every night they'd bring her food.

Barber: Why did they hide just her?

Stempeck: Well, she was the oldest in the family and I guess the Germans killed them so they wouldn't eat so much food, you know, and so they hid her. They'd go up and brush her hair. She had real long hair. They'd brush her hair and talk to her, and then they'd sneak back to the house.

Barber: That's extraordinary. Did your mother tell you that whole story?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: So your father had moved to Reno, and you said he'd worked on a farm in Tonopah?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: How did he get that job, do you know?

Stempeck: I don't know.

Barber: But then he came here and worked for Shell Oil?

Stempeck: Yes. He died awful young.

Barber: I read that.

Stempeck: Fifty-nine, something like that.

Barber: What do you remember of him as a person? What was he like, your father?

Stempeck: He was very quiet like my brother, quiet, but when he got mad, stand by for ram. But he was sick for a lot of years, thirteen.

Barber: So when you were a child, do you remember him being ill?

Stempeck: Yes, he was an epileptic. So every time they'd drag a chair or a barstool, I would jump. But he was good, you know. He was good until he had a seizure. When he had a seizure—this was their bedroom and that was the door out.

Barber: We're sitting in the dining room and this was the bedroom that we're in.

Stempeck: So if he'd go into a seizure, you know, we'd hear him. We couldn't handle him. I was little. My brother was four years younger. We just couldn't handle it. Sometimes there was men at the bar, friends, and we had a neighbor over on this side that he'd come over and help, but sometime we just couldn't handle him. He was awfully strong. So we'd lock the door. We had a little puppy, a little fox terrier, shorthair, and she'd curl up at the end of his bed and that was it. She didn't eat, she didn't drink, she didn't do nothing as long as he was in a seizure.

Barber: Would he be hospitalized at all?

Stempeck: Not until the end. On the death certificate they said that he had pneumonia, but who knows.

Barber: Did your parents speak Italian to each other?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Did they speak the same dialect? Were they from different regions?

Stempeck: They're from different regions, but they talked.

Barber: So did you speak Italian when you were growing up?

Stempeck: Oh, yes, my mom's side, the real Italian. My dad had a brogue, so when he wanted to tease somebody, we'd say it like that. Then when we talked serious, then we talked like my mother.

Barber: So they spoke differently.

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Was that the main language you spoke in the house, Italian?

Stempeck: Yes. I didn't know American when I went to school.

Barber: You went to Orvis Ring, right?

Stempeck: That's right.

Barber: And you learned to speak English in school?

Stempeck: In school.

Barber: Was that pretty typical of the time? There were a lot of Italians around here.

Stempeck: Oh, yes, they taught you, and how she learned to talk was to read the billboards.

Barber: Your mother, you mean? Read the billboards out here on Highway 40?

Stempeck: Yes. Well, they were big letters and she'd just enunciate them out because that's what you do in Italian. If you know the word, you could spell it.

Barber: So when you and your brother started going to school and learning English, did your parents start to learn more because you were learning more?

Stempeck: Oh, yes.

Barber: Did your father work for any other places in town after working for Shell Oil before they started the restaurant?

Stempeck: Yes, he was a janitor for Majestic Theater, and then he went to work for Sierra Brewery and then it got sort of dangerous. He'd have to walk on top of the vats.

Barber: Was this in the Reno Brewery where they made Sierra Beer?

Stempeck: Yes. So it got sort of scary, so he quit.

Barber: Did he work in the building that's still there?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: The bottling plant building?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Did you ever go there as a kid to see him working?

Stempeck: Not much. Well, he worked midnights, and Majestic too. But I went to work for Majestic after I was in junior high.

Barber: That was a beautiful theater, wasn't it?

Stempeck: Yes, it was.

Barber: What did you do there?

Stempeck: Usherette.

Barber: What is that?

Stempeck: Well, you wore bell-bottom trousers and a nice long sleeved button-up shirt, and then you had a flashlight and you held it behind you like this, so they could see the steps. And then they had the loges go upstairs and if they had just regular, well, stay down.

Barber: So this wasn't for movies. This was for theater performances?

Stempeck: No, movie.

Barber: Did people have assigned seats or did they just go sit wherever they wanted to?

Stempeck: Where I seated them. Maybe they had a preference, then they'd tell you.

Barber: Was that a pretty good job for young girls to have?

Stempeck: Oh, yes, it was.

Barber: Do you remember what they paid you?

Stempeck: I don't remember. Candy store right next door. I bet they could tell you.

Barber: There was one next door?

Stempeck: Yes, Majestic.

Barber: That's right, and it was in the same building, wasn't it?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Because it was right by the YMCA. That was a really pretty part of town.

Stempeck: Yes, it was.

Barber: Your parents came here. They got married here in Reno. Did you say what year that was that they got married?

Stempeck: 1920.

Barber: And what year were you born?

Stempeck: 1927.

Barber: And your brother is older or younger than you?

Stempeck: Younger. He was born in '31.

Barber: And where did the family live when you were born, and where were you born?

Stempeck: Well, I was born at the dairy down the hill, just as you turn where that trailer park is. I lived there in a rock house.

Barber: So the family was operating the Coney Island dairy at the time?

Stempeck: At the time, and then I think a year or two after, they left there with me and the check writer. That's all they left with.

Barber: And the what?

Stempeck: Check writer.

Barber: What's that?

Stempeck: You know, they put the check in and then put the numbers in.

Barber: So they had another business at some point and they would need one of those. That's great. Did the building you were talking about remain there for a long time, do you remember?

Stempeck: Oh, a long time. It was rented. Well, we had sixty cows at one time, yes.

When I was born, my dad was so disappointed I wasn't a boy. Terrible. So the doctor, big man, said, "John, don't worry. When she gets about eighteen months old, you take her over the hill," because I had black hair, "and take her over to the Indian colony and just drop her off. Pick up a boy, and they'll never know the difference until the blue eyes show up. Then you'd have a little trouble."

So that satisfied my dad for a while. Then four years later my mom wanted a boy, so they told her, "Don't. You can't have any more."

"Oh, yes, I can," so she did. She had a little boy, and then he was happy. Named him Jerry John Casale.

Barber: Your little brother.

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: So you were actually born on the dairy.

Stempeck: On the dairy, yes.

Barber: Did people have doctors come to deliver at home at that point, do you know?

Stempeck: Yes, and then there was a woman across the street and she was like a midwife, and she took care of my mom. My mom had lost a couple before, so right away the old gossips in town said, "Look at that. That John has got her washing the bottles," you know, washing the bottles, to lean over the big sinks. Well, she never washed a bottle in her life.

Barber: So what did that mean?

Stempeck: That means that he worked her over that sink and that she'd lose the baby. Just gossip.

Barber: There were a number of other dairies in that area, weren't there?

Stempeck: Not right there.

Barber: A little further east, I guess.

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: On Prater Way. Were you too young to remember living there?

Stempeck: Oh, I don't—

Barber: You don't remember that. Where's the first place you remember living?

Stempeck: Here, but we did have a house up on West 7th and we lived there for about a year till this house got built.

Barber: Were you just renting that other place?

Stempeck: No, we owned that property. They did salvage that property there in the Depression.

Barber: So was the house that you lived in next the house that's now the restaurant or is it the one that's behind the restaurant?

Stempeck: The one that was beside the restaurant.

Barber: There used to be a house there?

Stempeck: Yes. But we had that other house up on West 7th and that's where I remember because I've got pictures of me on top of the—you know, those houses used to have the

things like this. There was a porch with the steps right here in the middle, and then two sides.

Barber: Steps that went up with cement stoops on the sides?

Stempeck: Yes. So we went up there and then we rented for a while, and then we got so far in this, and then couldn't do it no more, so we sold it.

Barber: And that house may have been demolished for the highway, or is it still there?

Stempeck: It's still there.

Barber: Where is that house?

Stempeck: Seventh and Canal.

Barber: So did you start going to school when you lived in that house?

Stempeck: No, here.

Barber: It was later.

Stempeck: My brother was born here, yes, and I sold him right off the bat. Sold him right off the bat. "Twenty-five cents, you can have him," because they got me a little rocking chair. I had that rocking chair and I'd be outside the door, and they'd go in and I couldn't go in because I was little, so I just sold him. So then they came out and showed the baby, and I said, "Oh, no, no, no, you can't have him."

"Well, you can't have a quarter either."

"I'll get you some more money."

Barber: So you bought him back?

Stempeck: I bought him back, but they didn't take the money.

Barber: That's a house that doesn't exist now, but then there's the house that became the restaurant and one in back. When were those different houses built?

Stempeck: This [the current restaurant] was always built for a building and business and the bedrooms, this was, and this house here was built later when my mom remarried.

Barber: The one behind this house?

Stempeck: Yes, behind. And then Steamboat and I moved in the front. We had all the kids.

Barber: Into this building?

Stempeck: To the store.

Barber: The one next door. So your mother did get remarried. Who did she marry?

Stempeck: She married a man that she knew for years, you know, and they traveled a lot.

Barber: Your parents had already started the restaurant. Did they start it because he was having difficulty working in other places? Was that part of the reason?

Stempeck: No, well, it just started out with, like, a fruit stand. The trucks would come out of Idaho—oranges, apples, stuff like that, and we'd just take the overflow.

Barber: Where were they delivering most of their produce? Into the cities of Reno and Sparks?

Stempeck: Yes, Levy-Zentner for the big deliveries. Well, we had one south of town, too, but I can't remember the name. Nevada Produce. But then they took all the rest, and then when it came time, like October, my mom and dad would go down below and they'd pick out grapes for the wine.

Barber: Where would they get the grapes?

Stempeck: Like Lodi, Colfax.

Barber: Would those be on those delivery trucks, too, or would that be a special trip just to get grapes?

Stempeck: Just to get grapes.

Barber: And then the wine would be made here in the house?

Stempeck: No, we'd sell it. We'd sell the wine grapes here, and they'd take them home.

Barber: So other people were producing wine.

Stempeck: Everybody always made wine.

Barber: I've heard a lot about that. But you never made wine here?

Stempeck: No, next door to the house when we lived over there. We never intermingled the two.

Barber: So in the home. People were able to make wine even during Prohibition at home?

Stempeck: Oh, yes.

Barber: And then afterwards. Do you know why your parents bought this property here, of all places, the location?

Stempeck: They were together. They were together, two lots. The man that sold them the dairy said, "You gave me a lot of money. I'll give you a couple lots up the street." So he gave them two lots.

Barber: So that was the reason for the location. Those were actually pretty close to where that dairy was.

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Do you know what his name was?

Stempeck: Cafferetta.

Barber: So he purchased the dairy from them and gave them this land?

Stempeck: No, he owned that property where the dairy was. So then when my dad left, he said, "Well, you need some property," so he gave them these. Little did he know this was going to be the main thoroughfare.

Barber: That's right, because that was very early on. Do you think they got a lot of business early on for the market? Because this was far out of both towns at that point. Did a lot of people go by and buy the produce, do you think?

Stempeck: Oh, yes.

Barber: Were there other people living in this immediate area, too?

Stempeck: Yes, all the motels. Motels were all full with little garages next to them, you know, a lot of kids. And when they'd get a divorce, well, they'd leave the kids there and they'd go gambling or whatever. I fed a lot of kids. There was mine. Heck, one more, one less didn't make no difference. One comes to see me yet. He's in his forties, I guess.

Anyhow, there was two brothers and a sister, and the dad was a longshoreman and he'd come here to get a divorce from his wife. The kids would fight over clothes, you know, every morning and everything, and so when they'd come home from school, they'd come over, play with the kids. So when I fed them, fed them all, and all he can remember was the meatballs. He says, "Oh, Inez." He comes to see me yet. He said, "Inez, if it wasn't for you feeding us, we'd have died."

I said, "Yeah, I guess so." And you know what gets me? After all that suffering those kids did, they remarried.

Barber: The parents remarried? How soon, do you know? Pretty quickly?

Stempeck: I don't know.

Barber: Funny. But they stayed here?

Stempeck: No, no, they moved.

Barber: Do you remember, then, the motels that were close by? I guess the Star has been there for quite some time. Were there others that were close by?

Stempeck: Restwell.

Barber: That's right. That's very close.

Stempeck: And then the Star is right next, that brick house, and down a little ways where the garage is, that was the Home Auto Court, right there where the road goes back that way.

Barber: To the east of us?

Stempeck: Yes. Then across the street was the Tahoe, up that way, and I don't know if there were others.

Barber: West of here. Did the families who managed those motels usually live on the property, that you remember?

Stempeck: There?

Barber: At any of these motels. Were they usually run by someone who actually lived on the site?

Stempeck: Oh, they lived right there.

Barber: So did you know those families often who ran the motels?

Stempeck: Oh, yes. The motel was like this [stretches out hands] and there was an apartment in the middle. That's where they lived. Well, that's the way you keep track of them, you know. And I see now they're combining them, but you can't keep track of them.

Barber: Do you remember who some of those families were who ran some of those motels? Did you know them pretty well?

Stempeck: Oh, yes, we knew them well, but I don't remember the names.

Barber: So when your parents had the restaurant together, it was the market, the fruit stand, at first, and then later developed more. But how was the work divided? Who did what around the place?

Stempeck: Well, we were too little. My mom and dad, they did it all.

Barber: How did they split the work between them, do you know? Did they both just share everything?

Stempeck: They just shared it and did what they had to do.

Barber: After your father passed away, did your mother reconsider having the business here?

Stempeck: You know, Reno Army Air Base opened and a lot of new people come in, and it sort of scared her, so she rented it out for eighteen months.

Barber: What scared her about it?

Stempeck: She slept all the time. She was so tired. So that was it. Then they sold all the liquor that was there, everything, and they were going under. She'd come back and took it, because we owned the property.

Barber: So she took the business back again from the people who were leasing it and then decided to expand a little more? Because at some point there in the forties—I'm trying to remember when this was—it kind of expanded a little bit and started to have eat-in as well. Maybe that happened earlier. It was take-out and then eat-in also. Some of those ads we have are from 1940, 1941, and it was definitely a restaurant by then.

Stempeck: Yes, when those other people took over, they made it a restaurant, but before then we had cold ravioli.

Barber: For take-out?

Stempeck: In the cases.

Barber: And then when it was leased to them, did your family continue to live here in the other house?

Stempeck: Next door.

Barber: So you were all close by.

Stempeck: Yes, but then they didn't have that end of the house.

Barber: The back end that's now the kitchen?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: It just wasn't built yet?

Stempeck: No. Soon as they left, then she built back there. Well, my brother and I were getting older and couldn't stay in the same bedroom, so she built the ravioli room and the storeroom. We had that. Then we got a real stove, not just an old-fashioned wood stove because we didn't cook here.

Barber: So you remember getting the big stove?

Stempeck: In there?

Barber: Yes.

Stempeck: It was already old when we got it.

Barber: Where was it from, do you know?

Stempeck: No.

Barber: Some other restaurant maybe or—

Stempeck: Oh, probably.

Barber: So things got more professional or at least more like a regular restaurant at that point.

Stempeck: Yes. That was after my dad died.

Barber: So you went through school here. You went to Orvis Ring and then where else?

Stempeck: Northside. And then I didn't like Reno High because they all had pearls and angora sweaters and I didn't have any, so I said, "I'm going to Sparks High." So I quit, but that didn't go over too good with Mother and Father. So he gave me a lickin'. He turned me over his knee and spanked me, and I thought, "Boy, that must be pretty bad when you quit school like that." So I quit school in about April and I told him, I said, "I'll finish school if you let me go to Sparks High."

He said, "Okay. You finish school and you go."

Barber: So your intention when you quit at Reno was not to go to school at all? You just didn't even want to be there?

Stempeck: Didn't want to be there. I'd go to Sparks. But all my girlfriends went to Sparks, you know, from this little area.

Barber: So why had you gone to Reno in the first place then, Reno High? That was further away.

Stempeck: Well, it isn't where it is now. It's closer to town. Well, I didn't like it there. Snooty.

So anyhow, so I just started Sparks. But anyhow, this was April, and in June he died. I knew I was going to go to school and I was going to graduate, so that was settled. But then I started helping my mom with the checks and the money in the bank and stuff like that. But I always said I'd never come in this business and I'm not bringing my husband in here either.

So I married Steamboat, and she said, "Oh, Steamboat, what a good name for a bartender." I knew I was sunk. [laughs] So anyhow, he come out of service and we went to Detroit, my mother and my brother, me, Steamboat, and our baby, Charlie. We went to Detroit, and then we came back, and he became a partner of the Halfway Club. I started having kids, but once you've got kids, boy, you don't get to—so she cooked for him and everything, and she talked Italian to him. She'd get mad, she'd start talking Italian.

Barber: Did he understand her?

Stempeck: Yes, he understood her.

Barber: What was his background, his heritage?

Stempeck: Polish.

Barber: What was his name?

Stempeck: Casimir Stanley Stempeck.

Barber: Why did they call him Steamboat?

Stempeck: Well, when you go in the service, you know, they'd call him Steam, Stem, then Steamboat, and Steamboat stuck.

Barber: How did you meet him?

Stempeck: Well, he was stationed at Fallon, and my mom and I and two or three other girls went to open house. He was behind a torpedo and, you know, naturally, when the girl gets up there, well, then he'd let the air out, you know, hit the floor, and the air would come up and blow your skirt up. And my mom said, "You're making me lose all my milk." [laughs] You know, if you're going to have a baby and you get scared or something, you lose your milk.

Barber: So was it a pretty common thing to go over to Fallon? Was it a dance or something?

Stempeck: No, you'd just go through and see the torpedo and some stuff, just their stuff they had.

Barber: How did he end up there? What was his story? How did he get there?

Stempeck: Well, he was sent overseas for ten months or something, whatever it was. Twenty-seven months later, he loses his ship in Okinawa. And he was okay. I met him again a little later, and a guy that I knew a long time stood me up.

Barber: He stood you up?

Stempeck: Yes, so he moved in. And I'm biting my nails, and he says, "Quit biting your nails. If you don't quit biting your nails, I'm not dating you anymore."

I go, "I didn't know that you knew that you were going to date me anyhow." So I thought, "Well, I better not," so I didn't. I said, "Listen, I drive my own car, I have my own checking account, so there it is." So anyhow, we had a few drinks, and then he had to go back to Alameda because he had transferred from here to Alameda.

So anyhow, two weeks later he comes back. He played ball and played all kinds of sports. He had his thumb in a cast. He broke it, so he couldn't play ball, couldn't work. So he took a week off. So he stayed here. This was May, June, and we were married in August.

Barber: What year was that?

Stempeck: Forty-six.

Barber: Then where did you live when you first got married?

Stempeck: Well, we went to Alameda.

Barber: For how long?

Stempeck: We were in Alameda a year and a half, or two years.

Barber: Did you always intend to move back here?

Stempeck: I did. I don't know about him. This is my home. But, yes, he had a chance to go to a couple of big colleges and he didn't go because at that time you didn't go anywhere when you had children. So he turned them down.

Barber: When did you move back here from Alameda?

Stempeck: When we got out, when we got out of the service.

Barber: Maybe in 1948 or so?

Stempeck: Maybe '48.

Barber: Then where did you move? Where did you live when you came back here? Right here?

Stempeck: Yes. Oh, sure. Came home.

Barber: And then did he start working for the family business at that point or did he do other work first?

Stempeck: No, he went right back there. And then he went to work for a commercial transfer, moving houses, but he always came back here.

Barber: How had things changed in this area since you'd left? Had they changed very much? Had there been more construction or building?

Stempeck: No.

Barber: It was about the same?

Stempeck: Same. The auto courts were more active.

Barber: So you could tell that business along U.S. 40 was picking up?

Stempeck: Yes.

Barber: Did you have much of a relationship with the other restaurants that were just down the way here, the Coney Island and Copenhagen?

Stempeck: Copenhagen, no, we didn't much, but them days, I didn't drink, you know. Gallettis we knew because we were in the ranch business when my mom and dad were alive—but after mom and dad died, then we had less contact. Once in a while I'd see the kids, but I don't know them.

Barber: I wondered if there was much of a sense of community among either families in this general neighborhood or the Italian community, or who you kind of tended to socialize with.

Stempeck: Well, they were in Sparks. We were in the county and then Reno is up the way, so we didn't have much to do with them.

Barber: That's interesting because they're in eyesight, basically. But just being in the county seemed like a different kind of identity?

Stempeck: Yes. Then when she came back, could have been before she left, before she rented out, maybe before my dad died, we applied for a liquor license, and my mom and dad, they asked them to come up to the commissioners, and the sheriff was the head of the commissioners. So she went up, and you know who was fighting us, was our good friends and neighbors who had motels or rented rooms or something like that. So she got up and sat down, and she said, "I'll tell you what. My bar will be a lot cleaner than their motels."

And the sheriff went, "Okay, Casale, I'll give it to you for two years and I don't want no trouble."

She said, "Okay."

She came home, opened up. But all the time we had sheriffs and everybody else drinking in the back room.

Barber: So the motels were objecting because they thought it would bring down the neighborhood, it would bring kind of a bad element around? That's what they thought?

Stempeck: Must have. Too easy to get liquor, but we didn't have liquor to go. We kept it low key because, you know, we didn't want to do that.

Okay, anything else?

Barber: Well, I guess I just wanted to know just a little bit about how the running of the restaurant has changed, or the cooking, or just the way you do business. The business has been here so long. What are the biggest things that have stayed the same and what are the biggest things that have changed?

Stempeck: It's mostly stayed the same, even the food part. The liquor has changed a lot, but the food has been the same. Now Tony's making the gravy or, you know, helping with it, and I'm checking it, and if I don't think it's right, then change it. And his girls are helping a lot. They're writing everything down. They wanted to measure this, this handful, so we did.

Barber: All your children kind of grow up in the business then?

Stempeck: Tony mostly. He's the middle one. Charlie was in the service. He went to Vietnam. Then he come back and he went to work for Sierra Power, so he's always worked for them, and then the last ten years he's changed. He went to Bell Tel [phonetic] because he didn't get all his papers from the university. He knew everything there, but he didn't have the paperwork, so they let him go. So anyhow, he moved to Winnemucca and he went in as a warehouseman. And, you know, there they asked him, "Stempeck, what in the hell are you doing down there?"

"Well, it's the only way I could get in here."

They said, "Get your ass up here now," and he had to run upstairs—they took him right away, took him upstairs.

Barber: So how many sons and how many daughters did you have?

Stempeck: Three and three. I had Charlie, then John. Let's see. John and then Madeline—she's the one that's living with me now—and then Tony, then Helen, and then Maria. But Helen just moved to Mexico.

Barber: You were telling me about her.

Stempeck: She's so happy.

Barber: That's good. Your husband passed away. It was in the sixties, wasn't it, in the 1960s or seventies?

Stempeck: Sixty-nine.

Barber: Did you think then that you would definitely continue the business?

Stempeck: Oh, I did. I did. A lot of people tried to get me to stop, go with welfare, go with this, go with that. No. I don't like to fill out paperwork, so I didn't. "You can make \$1,400 a month."

"No, I don't want it. I want to work."

So I just stayed and plugged away and I kept it going for a lot of years. In fact, Tony said, "Mom, I don't know how you did it."

Barber: Have the people who've come in changed over the years, the types of people who come in?

Stempeck: Oh, yes. Yes, that's for sure.

Barber: But a lot of regulars, a lot of people who come all the time?

Stempeck: A lot of people that come back, yes.

So, okay, I'd better go.

Barber: Thank you so much for taking the time. I might come back and have follow-up questions at some point, but I really appreciate it.

Stempeck: That's okay.

Barber: Thank you so much.