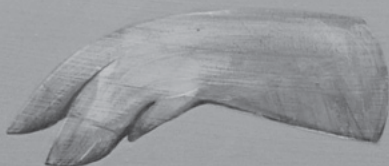


FROM BEER JOINT TO
BARBECUE
TEMPLE



Leo & Susie's
Famous Green Top Bar-B-Q
Dora, Alabama

as told to Amy Evans Streater by Susie Headrick, September 26, 2006

In 1951, Green Top Bar-B-Que opened its doors alongside Highway 78 in Dora, Alabama. Offering cold beer and a jukebox packed with dance tunes, the Green Top was an oasis in a desert of dry counties.

Twenty-two years later, coalminer Leo Headrick bought the Green Top from its original owners. He wanted to get out of the mines and start a second career working with his wife. Susie let the roadhouse clientele have their fun, but she focused on the food. Eventually the Green Top became known for its barbecue, cooked in pits out back. Leo passed away in 1997. Their son has taken over the business, but Susie still stops by the Green Top every day.

MY NAME IS SUSIE HEADRICK , and I was born in 1922 in Sipsey, Alabama. Leo and I met in high school. He was a football player and I was a cheerleader, but I didn't date Leo then. We got married in 1942. My husband made two good decisions in his life, and the first one was marrying me and then the next one was buying the Green Top.

But when we first bought it, well, it was kind of rough. My husband, he worked on the day shift, and our son, Richard, and I worked at night. Sometimes I'd have to straighten people out. On Thursday nights we'd have a big crowd from Jasper, and they'd sing and dance. My husband, he always sang a lot, especially when he had him several drinks. We had a jukebox and after we'd close the grill up, there'd be some people in there that would still be drinking, and a lot of times we'd dance. Sometimes I'd sing with him, but most of the time I was too busy trying to keep everything going.

When we first came down here, people were bad to break in. There's a little building behind the Green Top, so we put us a bed in that and we would night-watch—sleep out there and go home in morning. But then we decided that that was too much trouble, and we bought a trailer and put it behind the restaurant. I liked living here because I could always go out there and check on things. If they needed anything, I could take care of that. And I like it now. I usually go by when I'm going to the bank. I get me a Sprite and come home and eat lunch. And I usually cook for me and Richard or anybody else that drops around. And then about seven o'clock at night, I go back out there and sit and talk.

Through the years I've had a lot of good friends out there. It's been hard work, but it's like I told them: If I hadn't gone into the restaurant business, I'd have to be on welfare now. I never have gotten rich, but I do have a good living. And it's fun at my age. There are people that came out there when they were young, and their mouths will fly open—they're so excited to see me at my age. And they hug me and give me a peck on the cheek, and it's just a joy to know that you've had that many friends in your lifetime. 🍷

Amy Evans Streeter is the SFA's oral historian.

IMAGE, PAGE 13: *Zelda Got Home Much Later Than She Expected to*. Acrylic on wood panel by Amy Evans Streeter, 2011.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE



Picture a Piggly Wiggly without the wiggly. An all-hog supermarket. The soft glow of neon illuminates lowboy cases filled with every conceivable cut, chop, and chitlin. Across the highway, five days' worth of live pigs fatten themselves for the slaughter. Deep in eastern North Carolina, where swine outnumber people, the Nahunta Pork Center sells everything but the hog's hair. In 1975, after decades of farming, founder Mack Pierce stepped down from his tractor to open a retail storefront, focused on all things porcine. Today, his son, Larry Pierce, serves as the general manager. "They see that pig head sitting there in the meat case," Larry says. And they think, "This is real."

—Rien Fertel

