

Bennie Massey Interview
with Abby Huggins
Dumplin's and Dancin' Event at Hindman Settlement School
December 2, 2017

00:01 Abby Huggins: This is Abby Huggins. I'm here at Dumplin's and Dancin' with Bennie Massey. It's December 2nd, 2017. Bennie, can you introduce yourself?

00:12 Bennie Massey: I'm Bennie Massey. I spell my name B-E-N-N-I-E M-A-S-S-E-Y. I'm from Lynch, Kentucky. L-Y-N-C-H. And I'm a coal miner. I worked in the coal mines thirty years. I've been a city councilman since [19]71 and I'm still on the city council. And I'm a deacon at the Greater Mount Sinai Baptist Church. And we are talking about my all-purpose sauce. My mother taught us from nine-year-old, all us had to learn how to cook in the kitchen. So, she taught us all what she knows. She passed it on and I picked up the all-purpose sauce. And I've been making it for a little over fifty years, making the sauce. And I have been to the Smithsonian Institute and I've sold sauce there. I did barbecue ribs, chicken, all different kinds of meat, shrimp. Used it for shrimp dip, dipping your shrimp in it. It's a good sauce. And I sell it around the mines, at home, anybody that wants some good sauce come to see Bennie's All Purpose Sauce. [Background laughter, recording paused]

02:14BM: I've been making sauce for a little over fifty years and my ingredients I put in it is, I use ketchup, vinegar, lemon juice, red hot sauce, Louisiana hot sauce, sugar, brown sugar, A1 sauce, butter, and mustard. And, I mix it all up to make my best sauce. I don't tell you how much I put in it, but it's all in it [laughs]. So, if you want any, all you've got to do is get in touch with me on it. And, I have sold sauce for a little over fifty years and it's a real good sauce and I always tell you don't dip meat into the sauce, you taint that sauce. Always use so much into a glass or plastic bowl and kind of rub your meat with it and then you don't taint it, don't mess it up. And, if you want to get in contact with me, just, my number will be there, is 606-848-3289. And, it's a real good sauce. That's all I can tell you.

04:00 AH: What makes it good?

04:02 BM: Because my mother taught me how to cook it and I have used it for over fifty years. I have a shelf life of leaving it on the shelf for a year. The vinegar and stuff keeps it. You don't have to refrigerate it unless you want to. Long as you don't dip meat in it and taint it, it will hold up for you. And, I always use vinegar and water when I'm cooking my ribs or chicken or mix vinegar and water - brown vinegar and water - to cure my meat. And you can leave it out and it won't taint on you, it won't spoil on you. And, so, and then I put my sauce on it, put it in the oven. But not on the grill, not open flames. Baste it down, my sauce on my ribs or chicken or shrimp or whatever you're using it for. And, then, I kind of warm it up a little on it and into your stove, warm it, warm it up and serve it. And that's my sauce.

05:38 AH: Talk more about how your mom would have used her sauce.

05:41 BM: Well, what she did, she said the only thing she could leave us was how to cook. When we was coming up, she really got married early. She was a family, had her first child at probably 15, 13 or 15 years old, she had her first child. And it was eleven of us. And she felt like she should leave us a way to take care of ourselves. And learn us how to cook. So we had to cook in the

house. We had fourteen in the house and we had to cook a whole year, one year. And she taught us how to cook all different things. And how to take care ourselves. And so, I really picked up the sauce then. People, different people wanted the sauce and I just started making it. Then, I got an invitation to the Smithsonian Institute to do the sauce at the Folk Festival. It was the Folk Festival at the Smithsonian Institute. And they had people from all over the world there and we cooked there. I cooked there for seven days. Different chicken and different kinds of meat. And I carried my sauce and sold everything I had there. Ever since, I've been selling barbecue sauce. So, that's what I'm doing today, talking about my sauce. It's not a barbecue sauce, but it's a sauce you can put on anything. Any kind of meat you want to use it for, you can use it. That's all I can tell you about my sauce [laughs].

07:55 AH: Earlier, when you were giving your class about it, I wrote that down, you said, "That's what the sauce is all about." I think you were talking about community and people taking care of each other. I wonder if you could talk a little about that.

08:09 BM: Yeah. You know, that's what I learned at home. Mother taught us how to take care of each other and watch out for each other. And then I carried it on into the coal mines. Started in the coal mines at nineteen years old. Thought I wanted to go in the coal mines. I begged the old man to go in the coal mines. Then I got kind of, it was just hard work and I was going to work there long enough to get me a pay day and I was going to leave. But, I fooled around and got hurt and one of my bosses was running too fast. My hand went under the scoop and I cut three of my fingers about off. I had surgery and then I started preaching safety in the coal mines. It was uncalled for. And then I found my calling, you know. Do things the safe way and taught how to use the sauce. The reason I said the sauce in there, it learned me how to take care of people, how to do it the right way. Not doing it unsafe, not taking no chances. And learning people how to go in and out of the mine being concerned of each other. No discrimination, just watching out for each other. And that's what God put on my heart to do and I went into the safety department and I've been preaching it and I did it in the coal mine for thirty years and I got to come out safe. We lost about two guys going from under supported roof. But I learned a lesson from the sauce. If you work together and do it right, do everything the right way, you know, you can help each other and you can learn how to be concerned of each other. And, it just, I think God put us on this earth to work together as one. I love to go to church. I'm a deacon in the church, but I love people. And the only way you can reach people is go out and mingle with them and be around them, and that's what the sauce is doing. It get me out here to express how I feel about everyone and how I want to work with everyone and how I want everybody to be safe and take care of themselves and pray for each other and learn how to take care of each other. So, that's what the sauce is all about. Not so much selling the sauce, but just being around people and you don't know what people got on their mind or what they want to talk about. And that sauce kind of brings it in, bring everybody in and you know, they just look at you and look at your love you got for them and they pass that love onto somebody else. And I think that's great [laughs].

11:42 AH: The sauce as a starting point for love.

11:44 BM: Yes, it's got a starting point for love. And that's all God put us here for, to love each other. And work with each other. And He already prepared a place for us. A lot of people get into churching, but once you accept Jesus as your personal savior, you accept him as your personal savior. He said you accept me as your personal savior. He didn't say you had to be in church or nothing. He said you accept me. And you will be saved, you will be with him and when you help

others, God said, you're helping him, so. That's what I look at it all about. And you can reach more people out here in the community, fellowshiping, although with the sauce and whatever, if I don't sell no sauce, I thank God for the fellowship that we can come together and talk to each other and be concerned of each other. That's what it's all about. [laughs]. So that's where I'm at. Now, if I didn't get a penny for the sauce, I just love the fellowship with each other and God will bless me going in the coal mining, working, being able to come around people, being around people. That's enough, you know. So, that's what I think the sauce is all about is really putting me out here to fellowship [laughs].

13:29 AH: Spread it around. Pass it on.

13:29 BM: Spread it around, yeah. Pass it on. And, teach people how to do different things the right way and be concerned of each other and learn how to work together as one and I think that's what he's keeping me here for because I didn't have no idea I'd be over here talking about no sauce. But, Randy had an idea that he interviewed me at my house and he wanted me to be able to come over and talk to everybody. So, here I am, talking to you about the sauce and talking to you about the love of Jesus [laughs]. Ok.

14:14 AH: Anything else you want to say about it?

14:14 BM: That's it.

14:17 AH: Well, let's go learn about dumplings.

14:19 BM: Ok, let's go check them dumplings out because she going to kill me if I don't get in there.

14:24 AH: Thanks, Bennie.

14:25 BM: Alright, because she sit in here and watch mine, I've got to get in there.