



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Joanne Jung

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TAPE 1/SIDE 1

JAYAMAHA: Welcome Joanne and thank you for agreeing to give us an interview. I just like to start off asking you some questions, sort of background questions. When did you and your family first come to Eastern Market?

JUNG: We start Paik Produce 2006 May.

JAYAMAHA: How many members of your family are involved in the market?

JUNG: My husband and me.

JAYAMAHA: Only the two of you?

JUNG: Yeah.

JAYAMAHA: Did you come at the same time as your husband; did you come together?

JUNG: Yeah, first time I come with my husband early morning, same time.

JAYAMAHA: Do you find that the business has changed over the last few years since you've been here? Have there been a lot of changes in the market after you started?

JUNG: Do you mean since the fire?

JAYAMAHA: No before, starting from the first time that you started at the market after you opened your stall? How have things changed over the years?

JUNG: Over the years—my history is not that long. When I starting in 2006 is only one year after, exactly one year got a fire. I can—a lot of a chance to compare the—before fire, after fire I can not not long time, so.

JAYAMAHA: Right, so I understand. And do you know there have been some changes after the fire? You are working longer hours, more times.

JUNG: Yeah.

JAYAMAHA: Do you think the longer hours are more helpful for the business?

JUNG: Yes, before it closed at six o'clock, now it is seven—one hour's more. So not so much helpful for us. But customers, they like that.

JAYAMAHA: Do you find you have more customers now coming because of longer hours?

JUNG: Almost the same customers, but before they come—arrived market—we are closed—so many complain. But now with people say so thank you about the little longer hour. That sorry for the owners.

JAYAMAHA: Another question Joann. Is there more of a demand for organic produce now?

JUNG: Yeah, so many customers they say, “you got a organic food, organic vegetable?” So might be getting more—people saying that demand. Uh huh.

JAYAMAHA: Have you started bringing in more organic food into the stall?

JUNG: We so many timing—thinking about that, but is—some item is, only some item organic is not easy. If I was starting in organic you know—all kind of item have to start. I don’t know the which ones is the peoples like, which one is more like that. We don’t know. If we starting [organic] we have to get all items just like that. And then if not it’s just like the same. So I can make a what—I can make a choice—say which one is good for the customer—we can do that. So when we—if I were starting organic I, we have to check all kind of item about the organic.

JAYAMAHA: In terms of your suppliers, like who are your suppliers right now? Do you get the supplies from neighboring farms, from different people?

JUNG: Oh yeah. Now we buy from the whole market, no wholesaler. And then summertime we go to their farm and we bring—pick up some more local vegetable or fruit.

JAYAMAHA: Can you talk a little bit about what the holidays are like? Do you have a lot of people coming in—sort of if you can describe a little what the business is like during the holidays?

JUNG: During the holidays much more than normal, normal hour. Much more people coming more, so crowded inside—I like that. [laughs]

JAYAMAHA: It’s good for business I’m sure.

JUNG: Uh huh.

JAYAMAHA: I noticed one of the things you are selling now is the Kim chi. Is that very popular?

JUNG: Yeah. There is more [demand] than I expect. So people say now already read the magazine or newspaper is a [chamfer] specialty is Kim chi is so happy for—they already knows. So I am so happy about that.

JAYAMAHA: Usually do you end up having to throw a lot of food [away] sometimes when they don't sell, or do you normally sell most of it? Do you sometimes do things spoil?

JUNG: Uh, yeah.

JAYAMAHA: Do you have more things spoiling sometimes—do you have to throw things away or is there some way that you manage to sell everything?

JUNG: Almost [all] we can sell because we—we can sell this much this week, and then we buy almost that much. So if I got so many things throw away—I can [not] understand—how do I say—I can keep the business. So almost we going to try to do selling and then in a—for next week everything is—the whole—that is one week. The cycling is one week. So we always try to gear—the exactly on the volume. The little bit more something is the summer time a little bit less so we control the volume.

JAYAMAHA: Okay, very good. What are some of the things that are most popular? What are some of the foodstuffs, some of the produce that you have the most amount of sales with?

JUNG: You mean a best couple of fruit, which one is more?

JAYAMAHA: Anything from everything you sell. What are the most popular things? What goes fastest? What do people buy the most?

JUNG: Any item, people are going to buy the cheapest one. And then good quality and the cheapest one, they like that, uh huh.

JAYAMAHA: And if it's vegetables or fruits, what to people like most? What vegetables do people like most?

JUNG: Oh what vegetable?

JAYAMAHA: Or fruit.

JUNG: This days customers try to be more—eating more vegetable, more fruit, so I think its doesn't matter the fruit or vegetable but try to more, they try to more.

JAYAMAHA: Okay, and now if we can talk a little bit about the fire. After sort of—as soon as the fire happened how soon did you go back?

JUNG: How soon? Might be, I think, two weeks, two weeks after the fire we can set up outside in the Eastern Market. So we can set up outside the vegetable.

JAYAMAHA: Could you tell a little bit about how you prepared in the market, sort of when the fire first happened? How did you prepare to go and work—set up outside?

JUNG: Oh, the time was really hard, really hard time. It was a really hard time because community prepare for the desk, cash register and so many equipments that they prepare for us. We bought the fruits and vegetables wholesale. And then we take the truck every—table put in the truck and put it back the next day. So really hard that time.

JAYAMAHA: And how long were you working outside? How long did you stay outside?

JUNG: We are outside—that is the fire is the end of the day—April. So May, June, July, August. So end of August might be opening the temporary building, so four months I've been working outside.

JAYAMAHA: And that must have been very tiring as you said. Joanne, what do you think of the government's response and the community's response and also the customers' response to the fire.

JUNG: That time is government and the community so many thing is so full to us. So I got big emotion at that time. So my husband and me and say never forget that time so many things help us.

JAYAMAHA: And can you tell us a little bit about what people did to help you?

JUNG: That time the community make the fund that they going to buy for T shirts, and a shopping bag and so many sources that they are going to try to help us.

JAYAMAHA: What is your opinion about; now that there are some changes taking place? What do you think about closing Seventh Street on Saturdays?

JUNG: Oh, the close the Seventh Street? Yeah, that's good for the safety; people coming you know across—and I like that. Yeah that much is safety. But some people got inconvenience because no parking lot. That is a big problem I think.

JAYAMAHA: Right. And now we are all anticipating the reopening of the market, maybe in May or June. What do you think will happen with the new market? Will the market sort of—what do you thing will happen to the second life, the new life for the market?

JUNG: Yeah, so many people want to see—come back and they want to see inside and try to do shopping. But Eastern Market is each store has got some limit item. So totally peoples want the shopping inside and that some kind of item is assured and not only some kind of they sell. This time is I thinking that the other what is that; another big supermarket, Safeway and Harris Teeter new markets they are coming. So many people still—may be stop in about that

JAYAMAHA: We were just talking what you think the market will look like when it reopens. And maybe you were talking a little bit about the challenges that you think Eastern Market has now and also once it reopens; once it has its second life.

JUNG: Might be—new building is much, much better than before. And each owner might be very proud of the Eastern Market. But we try to deal more service to customer, but each store is so small space—not that much enough for items for the customer. But we will do best for the customer; service for the customer. But still outside is new markets [Safeway and Harris Teeter], so we have to be competitive with them—surprise or the quality and then some more bright items. That's not that good for us.

JAYAMAHA: Are you also concerned about other things like rent increase or management? A little while ago you described sort of the challenges around competition with the bigger markets; with the big supermarkets. But what about things like rent, management; those things are you concerned about any of those?

JUNG: Before that is not that good—the little complain about the management, just like that. This time since the government management of the Eastern Market so many things is very good. So especially Barry—I don't know his name—I think Barry. Each time is he coming and what do you need, always asking. And then he tried to get more helpful for the Eastern Market—each owner—to customers. Just so satisfy about that.

JAYAMAHA: Ok good. And also for sort of the future; when it reopens the market. Do have plans to introduce maybe something new, new things to your stall?

JUNG: Yeah. I want to introduce—so many customers for the healthy food. Which one is more healthy, which one is more the good nutrition. And we are always thinking of the good quality and then what's the best price for customer. Yeah, we always thinking about that. And especially I want to introduce so many Asian vegetable or fruit; almost same but some is a little different things. Yeah. And then Asian food, but not easy to do that one.

JAYAMAHA: Well thank you very much Joanne. Are there any other thoughts you have that you would like to talk to us about or tell us about?

JUNG: My husband and me—the real business goal is more friendly to customer and then a more convenience of what they want, what they need. So we are always thinking of that. And then better service than before. Because so many people—the customers always thinking about the Eastern Market. So thank you about that. And then we are more service to the community and then the government and so many have helped us; so we thank you about that.

JAYAMAHA: Thank you Joanne, thank very much for your time as well. We really appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW