

## Stan Clark

Stan took Eskimo Joe's from a small college town bar to a national brand known worldwide for its quirky logo and cheese fries.

### Chapter 01 - 1:06

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** The fortieth anniversary of Eskimo Joe's in 2015 recalls the story of two graduates of Oklahoma State University, Stan Clark and Steve File and their dream of opening a bar in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The bar opened July 21, 1975 and took on the name Eskimo Joe's, which came from their desire to have the coldest beer in town. Originally, Eskimo Joe's was only a bar, but in 1984, when the drinking age was raised from 18 to 21, the business became a restaurant as well.

In 1990, during his OSU commencement speech, President George H. W. Bush endorsed Eskimo Joe's cheese fries. In 2006, President George W. Bush followed his father's footsteps and mentioned both the restaurant and the cheese fries during his commencement speech.

Native Tulsan, Stan Clark, has built one of Oklahoma's most recognized brands. Eskimo Joe's branded clothing has been seen in most countries of the world.

And now Stan tells you the story of Eskimo Joe's on Voices of Oklahoma, where we preserve Oklahoma's legacy, one voice at a time.

### Chapter 02 - 2:18

#### World Headquarters

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling. Today's date is September 6, 2012. Stan, will you state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age?

**Stan Clark:** Well, my name is Stanley Kent Clark. I was born February 15 of 1953, so I'm fifty-nine years of age.

**JE:** Tell us where we're recording this interview.

**SC:** We are at 516 West Elm. My corporate office is in an old Victorian home in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**JE:** Who used to live here?

**SC:** This home was originally built by Dr. Connell, who was the third president of Oklahoma Business College. So originally it was the president of the college's home. I've seen pictures of that era, there weren't very many buildings in this part of Stillwater. There's, I believe, two buildings on the campus and then this house just stood in the prairie. So a lot of history right here.

**JE:** It was built when?

**SC:** In 1906. And then a family by the name of Swim bought it in 1917, and they owned it up until the '80s when I was able to purchase the property from the descendants of theirs. So I'm the third owner of this piece of land since before statehood.

So it's kind of interesting, you know, in Oklahoma we still abstract properties and this abstract is tiny because there's only been three owners since 1906.

**JE:** And now it's the World Headquarters for Eskimo Joe's.

**SC:** Well, that's correct. This is our corporate headquarters. We have a legal entity, Stan Clark Companies, Incorporated, and we are the management arm for all of our operating companies. So here we provide accounting services, we provide leadership services. Director of Restaurant Operations, for example, offices here are president of all the operating companies' offices here.

Today my title is CEO, so I am here, my assistant is here, our IT is centered here, our public relations are centered here. And the rest of our staff basically is an accounting staff, plus our Human Relations director. That's the kind of services then that we provide to the other operations.

**JE:** Operations—

Also, by the way, I almost forgot one of the most important people of my whole deal and that's our creative director for Eskimo Joe's Clothes, Mike Stavas. He's just had such a huge, huge stamp on this brand and why the brand became what it did. So much of that creative flows from his left arm. Mike's a Vinita native and just a phenomenal artist.

## Chapter 03 - 5:55

### Mother and Father

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**John Erling:** Tell us where you were born.

**Stan Clark:** I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at St. John's, right there at 21st and Utica. You know, it was different in 1953. My dad had gone across the street and have some breakfast, you

know? And, uh, you know, today we've got to be right there with Mom and, you know, and birthing classes and all that. Back then it wasn't quite the same.

**JE:** Your mother's name, maiden name, where she was born and grew up?

**SC:** My mom was born in Southeast Kansas out in a very, very small rural community called Elk City, Kansas. My father was born in Independence, Kansas.

**JE:** Your mother's name?

**SC:** My mother's name was Marvene Fern Rothgeb.

**JE:** So she grew up in Kansas?

**SC:** She grew up on a farm in Kansas.

**JE:** About her personality, how would you describe it?

**SC:** She is the most upbeat and positive person I've ever known, and modeled that behavior for me. And I think I've got a very positive outlook and spirit as well, and I always accredit that to my mom.

**JE:** Your father's name?

**SC:** Emerson Herbert Clark. As I said, he was born in Independence, Kansas, raised there primarily by his grandmother. Interestingly, the first day my mom went into the big city to go to high school, and back then that would have been her ninth grade year, my dad was hanging out with a friend by the name of Stan Lewis, my namesake, by the way. And he told Stan on first laying eyes on my mother that, "That gal's going to be my wife." How's that for a story?

**JE:** What was his personality like?

**SC:** My father was very entrepreneurial and instilled in me that spirit from a very young age. He was a very hard-working man. When I was born he was actually going to night school at the University of Tulsa, and was already working for Engineering Construction Company, which was a division of Helmerich & Payne. So he was working hard all day and going to school at night to earn his business degree.

**JE:** What did he do?

**SC:** Well, at Engineering Construction Company, you know, I'm not certain what he did clear back when I was born, but eventually he became the Vice President of Engineering Construction Company, which in a conglomerate like H&P meant he ran that division. In effect, he was the Operating President of the company and reported to Walt Helmerich. So he basically was the figurehead or the hands-on operating leader of that entity.

**JE:** Your brothers or sisters?

**SC:** I have one sister, her name is Linda. She lives in Bakersfield, California, today, but Linda is five years older than I am. She was born in 1948. My folks just had two kids. Being five years apart we weren't just really, really close. That was a lot of difference in age. We always were amicable, loving family, all that, but enough difference in our age that she was

kind of doing her own thing. And then as I grew up I was kind of sports oriented, that's what I cared most about. Our interests were somewhat divergent.

**JE:** The first house you remember?

**SC:** Well, the house that my folks lived in when I was born was at 5945 East 4th Terrace in Tulsa, Oklahoma. That was in the Burbank Elementary School district and the Bell Junior High district. Those campuses abutted one another at roughly Admiral and Sheridan in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**JE:** Elementary then was?

**SC:** Was Burbank Elementary. One of my fondest memories, a friend who was on that team came up with a picture of the Burbank Pirates. I remember my coaches, Mr. Stags and Mr. Hopper, and actually my father is in that picture. He was one of the assistant coaches. But we were the Burbank Pirates, I'm almost certain it was a second grade image. So that's one that's real clear in my mind.

But I do remember playing baseball at that era. I actually was written up in the *Tulsa World* a couple of times as a pitcher. I had a couple of no-hitters in very, you know, early deals. And when I say written up I'm talking a blurb like, you know, one little sentence. But, uh—

**JE:** Goes back to your elementary days?

**SC:** This goes back to elementary days. So that was exciting and obviously, as a child, that was my focal point, or it was what I had a lot of passion for was sports.

I'll go back to discuss my father and his interest in and his mentoring, modeling, encouraging me to become entrepreneurial. When I was in the fourth grade my dad formed his own company. And basically was able to take all of the customers and many of the people that worked at Engineering Construction Company, formed his own company. And I say his own, he became an owner, he was not the sole owner, but he had about a sixth interest and became the President of Distribution Construction Company. So much of that revenue and that business followed my father's new company, that Engineering Construction Company was basically liquidated by Helmerich & Payne after that move.

The reason I tell that story in context of my life was I really saw what it meant to watch my father going from being an employee to being an owner. In fourth grade we moved from basically Admiral and Sheridan to the far south edge of Tulsa, Oklahoma, at 5225 South Irvington Place, which was indeed that particular year, this was the Parade of Homes. So it was one of the nicer new homes being built in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It had gone from maybe a nine hundred square foot house to a thirty-three hundred square foot house, back in the early '60s. Pretty good evidence to me that there might be something to working for oneself or to be an owner of a company or something like that.

At any rate, my father instilled that in me from very early on. We talked about it often. There was no doubt when I came to Oklahoma State University years later and

went into the College of Business I was thinking of how I would apply those principles to my own business. Not so much about how I was going to try to get a job from having gotten that education.

## Chapter 04 - 4:56

### Passion for Work

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**John Erling:** Sports in junior high school? You played?

**Stan Clark:** I did play a little bit. When we moved south I ended up going to Francis Scott Key Elementary, then to Nimitz Junior High. And then in my seventh grade year, Byrd Junior High School was built and opened by Tulsa Public Schools, so for the second semester of my seventh grade, eighth, and ninth grade years I went to Richard E. Byrd. That was an exciting time, new school, that was pretty cool stuff.

I was still trying to play sports into junior high. Played some basketball in junior high. Played football through the eighth grade, after which time I had to quit. Literally I was hurt on every play. I was just too tall and skinny to be getting smashed by linebackers, one of whom ended up playing for the University of Oklahoma. I mean, every time that kid hit me I was literally in pain.

**JE:** His name's Rick?

**SC:** Gambrel. He did end up playing for the University of Oklahoma. I didn't have any business competing in tackle football, that's for sure. I was probably six foot tall by then and weighed about 125 pounds. I was a string bean.

**JE:** High school then.

**SC:** I went to Memorial High School. Started in '69, graduated in '71. I enjoyed high school very, very much. By then I was able to get into sixth hour Gym, which was a big deal so you wouldn't have to carry your gym bag to school and everything. But the only thing I could go out for by then was golf. I never made the golf team but it at least got me in sixth hour for that year.

So that was pretty much the last of my athletic endeavors. I did play some golf through the rest of high school but not very much and certainly was never very good at it. Bu I loved it as a kid. And today it's absolutely my passion if I have free time. And can be away from work and family, then I'm going to try and play some golf.

**JE:** Any other activities in high school? Memories of memorial?

**SC:** I wasn't real active, I wouldn't say. I did try to run for class president my senior year and I was not successful in that endeavor. I thought that might be kind of fun. For some reason

I was drawn to make that attempt. But when I turned sixteen and I got a car my focus was pretty much girls and driving around in my car and just being a teenager, you know.

**JE:** Were you even then at that age in high school thinking business or thinking what you wanted to be when you grew up?

**SC:** I'd have to say, not a whole lot at that point probably. Pretty ornery and just kind of having a good time. But you know what's kind of funny about that as I think about it, I was definitely a people person, I was very social and I did very much enjoy having a good time.

You fast forward, I'm fifty-nine today. My job is to show people a good time. That's what I do, that's our core product, what's made Eskimo Joe's special is that we show people a good time. That really couldn't be more natural for me. The hospitality business is just, you know, it's like falling off a log. I love doing it. You know when you're enthusiastic about what you do and you love what you're doing it's not even like working. And it's pretty easy to get people to follow you when you're that enthusiastic about what you're doing. I think it's the most important ingredient in success and certainly in effective leadership is to be enthusiastic.

I heard Tom Peters say one time that leadership is all about enthusiasm, not administration. I tell our folks, "Hey, if we're not enthusiastic about what we're doing how can we hope to earn the opportunity to serve a guest? If we're not pumped up about it, you know, if we're just kind of standing around, moping around, no one is going to be attracted to that. Why would they even want to come?"

Anyway, really my core philosophy is enthusiasm or passion.

**JE:** Are there any friends in high school that you could name memorable, or that you still are friends with today?

**SC:** Absolutely, several. One of them was Steve File. Steve and I met each other the first day of fifth grade. I had just moved into the district as had Steve. We became fast friends. We were neighbors from around the corner, so all through elementary, junior high, high school, all through Oklahoma State University. Just two weeks after graduating in May of '75 from OSU I was actually over at Steve's house and he walks in and goes, "Hey, Clark, I'm going to open a bar."

I go, "Well, God, File, that's a cool idea, I'll go in partners with you." So my original partner at Eskimo Joe's was a friend from fifth grade forward.

**JE:** And we'll pick up on that, of course.

Entertainment then, were you cruising Peoria back then in high school? Memorial in your cars?

**SC:** Indeed, indeed.

**JE:** Yeah?

**SC:** I was very fortunate. My dad grew up in the Depression era, raised by his grandmother, just didn't have anything. And I think something he took great pride in was that he bought

my sister and I both brand new cars when we turned sixteen. I know that meant the world to him to be able to give those to us.

In 1969, I got a Mustang Mach 1, 428 Cobra Jetta, coolest car in Tulsa, as far as I was concerned. I loved running the strip. Tooling around in my car was just a joy.

**JE:** It made you a very popular person. Talk about that.

**SC:** Oh it was a lot of fun, it was a lot of fun. I didn't have a problem getting somebody to go with me, that's for sure.

## Chapter 05 - 2:35

### OSU

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**John Erling:** So then you're on to school at OSU. Was that an automatic? You knew you wanted to go to OSU all your life?

**Stan Clark:** You know, I can't say that. Truly I was raised more of an OU fan, my parents were big OU fans. I remember sometimes whole bus loads of neighbors and friends would get on a bus and they'd go over to Norman to a ballgame. And I can certainly respect that. While my parents never went to the University of Oklahoma they were OU fans during that Bud Wilkinson era, when they had the forty-seven straight wins. And really one of the great brands in college football. I understand that.

In fact, in my travels all through my adult life and professional life you say you're from Oklahoma about the first thing that's going to back is OU football. Kind of what we've been known for. But no, I actually had a neighbor of ours, his name was Greg Norris. He had come to OSU two years before I graduated. I really didn't go on a lot of college campus visits, I just sort of thought maybe OSU would be fun. I came over for one visit and decided, "Hey, I'm going to go to OSU." So it was kind of a last minute deal.

In all candor, I remember my mom saying, "Oh why do you want to go there? The football team's terrible." But that was not an "I won't let you," or "We're not going to pay for you," or anything like that. It was just kind of an off-color comment that she made.

But my parents were very supportive of my coming here. So indeed I did. I started in the fall of 1971 at Oklahoma State and graduated in May of '75.

**JE:** Upon entering OSU business degree was your focus from the beginning?

**SC:** It was. I definitely declared as a business major. I really did enjoy the College of Business, the educational process. In fact, as I went through school, really, the only other thing I thought I might ever want to do if I couldn't work for myself, I thought I might enjoy teaching at the college level. Because I did enjoy the experience, very much admired the

professors. I was a good student, I had a 3.8 overall grade point average so I certainly able to be successful in that academic setting. And I actually did actualize through that process a lot.

And had Steve and I not started the bar when we did, I actually had a graduate assistantship lined up and had intended to pursue an MBA right after school because I did not get any job offers. You know, when you go into an interview and they say, “What do you want to be doing in five years?”

“Well, basically, I’ve always wanted to work for myself.” I obviously didn’t have the right answers and I’d had no job offers.

## Chapter 06 - 2:25

### Watering Holes

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**John Erling:** Do you remember hangouts for the OSU students then '71, for those years? The bars that you would have gone to? The names of the places?

**Stan Clark:** I do. In fact, the very first visit I made over here I basically went to the Coachman, which was a hamburger joint and cold beer outlet right on Washington Street, just a half a block, basically south of the campus on what they call the Strip still to this day, here in Stillwater. I pretty much decided to go to OSU sitting in a booth at the Coachman. I mean, I really didn’t have a big tour of the campus too much. Kind of went to the Coachman and decided to come here. Which is kind of telling in what field I ended up in.

But, there was the Coachman, there was a place down there called the Mason Jar, which basically sold ice cold beer in mason jars, which was kind of a neat little hook. There was a place called the Wet Olive. There were several watering holes. And while I always kid Steven, my deal was an absolute spur of the moment wild hair. No real research or anything like that done. Truly we had done a little research for those four years we were in school because basically the rule was back in 1971, if you had an OSU ID you could go to bars. It was eighteen to drink legally anyway, and pretty much an OSU ID indicated, “Hey, you’re okay.”

**JE:** You were doing research, is what you were doing, weren’t you? Huh?

**SC:** I had no idea.

**JE:** You had—

**SC:** I had no idea.

**JE:** ...no idea doing it. So then you graduate in '75, in May?

**SC:** Yes, May of '75, that’s correct.

**JE:** Of '75. So then pick up on the story then of Steve, your friend. And he comes in that same month?



**SC:** It was actually two weeks after graduation. Let me tell you about my graduation. In May of '75 it was much more important to me to have the opportunity to earn twenty dollars than it was to walk across the stage. So I never rented a cap and gown. Graduation day, May of '75, was also Mother's Day weekend and I had the opportunity to go back to Tulsa and at Woodland Flowers, located at 1st and Sheridan, Markedo was the owner's name, I remember, I could deliver flowers for her. That was one of the biggest days of the year for her and I could make twenty buck in cash. And that was so important to me that I forewent the opportunity to walk across the stage. And I did deliver flowers on the day that my class graduated from Oklahoma State.

So I think that puts maybe where I stood financially in some kind of a context.

## Chapter 07 - 9:11

### Start of Eskimo Joe's

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**Stan Clark:** Two weeks later on a Sunday, my partner, Steve File, I'm laying on the couch at his house. He lived at 303 South Ramsey. Here's a really great story about Steve. His parents bought this house that he lived in, it's a three-bedroom house, pretty good size little frame house very, very close to the campus. In '71, when he moved over here to go to college, they paid eleven thousand dollars for that house. All through college Steve leased those bedrooms out to friends of ours from Memorial. He basically had this house, our friends sort of paid the mortgage for him for these four years.

So anyway, he still had the house, I'm laying on the couch, I'm watching reruns of *Star Trek*, and File walks in and goes, "Hey, Clark, I'm going to open a bar."

I go, "Gee, File, it's a great idea. I know all these bars around here are doing great. I know where there's this cool little two-story building for rent. I'll go in partners with you."

So immediately I jump up off the couch and we got into his 1953 Chevy and drove about four or five blocks around the campus to what's now Eskimo Joe's. And I always say, "As fate would have it the owner of the property was there that Sunday afternoon." He was a gentleman by the name of Dave Lambert. Dave had a construction company here in Stillwater. He had been the mayor of Stillwater, very long-standing family name here in this market, in this town. He and a marketing professor by the name of Bob Ham had just bought this building.

We walk in, we're looking around, we're thinking it's pretty neat. Very unusual old building, very stately kind of stone. Had a little cornerstone on it, "1938." We just thought it was neat. We expressed our interest.

The owner said, "Well, fellows, if you want it just like you see it I need \$350 a month. If you want me to put air-conditioning in it for you I'd need \$400."

Steve and I look at each other and said, "We're going to need air-conditioning. Let's go with that." We shake hands and that's the inception of Eskimo Joe's. I mean, it literally happened in about a fifteen-minute window on a Sunday afternoon in May of '75.

**John Erling:** What had the building been used for?

**SC:** Well, its first occupant, beginning in 1938, was a place called Andy's Grocery. Zula Mae Anderson was the woman's name, and her husband, Andy, was his nickname, Anderson. They were in there for a couple of years and the owner of the building tried to raise the rent on them and it made them mad. And Andy's dad built a building right next door to it, moved the grocery store there. The grocery store was still there when I opened in '75.

The tenant that came behind the Andersons, in our building, was a family by the name of Williams. And they ran a Williams Diner from 1940 or '41, all the way up into the early '70s. They lived upstairs and they had a concept downstairs, it's kind of a family style. If you worked there you got to eat for free. So that's kind of how they paid their help. You'd get one portion of meat, kind of the center of the plate, and then from there you had bowls full of peas and mashed potatoes and gravy and fresh-made rolls. And it was really an all-you-could-eat deal with one portion of the meat. And the place was famous. It was there for north of thirty years. They were there for a long, long time.

The thing turned about three or four times in the last two years before we got it. The last tenant before us was a place called the Foos Roost, F-O-O-S as in foosball, Foos Roost. It was pretty funky looking and it had a psychedelic graphic on one of the walls or whatever.

But Steve and I just had a vision of a place kind of like maybe a Colorado or a New Mexico after ski hangout. We'd been out to Colorado several times skiing and to Estes Park and just seeing this kind of rustic look that we liked. And so that was sort of our vision of what we wanted the place to look like. And we thought this old building fit that well.

**JE:** So in that fifteen minutes you tell a gentleman, "Yes, we'll pay you four hundred dollars"?

**SC:** Right.

**JE:** Are you guys independently wealthy or did you even think about where we're going to get our money? Or what's going on here?

**SC:** Not so much. So the next morning, Monday, we drive back over to Tulsa, you know, where our parents live. And like I said, we still live around the corner from one another. I'll just never forget going in to Mom, "Well, thanks for the education. We're going to open a bar!" I mean, I just, the look on her face was not the typical positive person I've described.

But when my dad got home that day, the entrepreneurial guy, the guy that always pushed me and steered me, he definitely saw the sparkle in our eye and he could tell we were serious. So he gave us good counsel and good advice and he said, "Fellows, you need

to get back over there and you need to get started. You need to prepare performance statements,” which we knew what that meant from our accounting backgrounds and education. We needed to mock up financial statements and try to figure out if this thing was actually a business idea.

So we came back. Here’s the deal, top line you don’t have any idea what it’s going to be. That’s a wild guess. We could figure out the expenses. You could make a phone call and figure out what it’s going to cost to insure a bar that’s nine hundred square feet. Most of the expenses you could somewhat figure out. What you couldn’t figure out was revenue you might be able to generate.

But we put together a business plan. I’ve actually still got a copy of it in my closet right here at work today. But it was just a small business plan, kind of told what our strategy was, how we thought we could attract people, what we were going to do that was going to make us a little bit different from everybody else. And, of course, the crux of it was these financials.

We sat there and we scratched our heads and we thought, “Well, surely we could do at least this much revenue. And hopefully we might do about this much. And, gosh, if things went really well...” So we had three different scenarios of potential revenue and with no more expenses than we had it really looked like it could be a good business idea.

So we took that down to Stillwater National Bank. A young vice president at the time by the name of Rick Green listened to our spiel and was willing to loan us a little bit of money. My partner, Steve, had five thousand bucks that he had saved up from an insurance settlement. When he was just a boy he actually had one of his eyes put out. So he had a little bit of money, he had five thousand dollars, which back then was actually a lot of money.

I had twelve hundred bucks to my name. I had actually earned that in my senior year at Oklahoma State. I peddled some hats in football stadiums that said “Cowboys” on them. And had some that said, “Go, Big Red.” And I have to admit that the ones I sold down in the stadium at Norman sold a lot faster than the ones that said “Cowboys” on them. Because OU was fantastic in ’75. Jack Mildren was playing quarterback. Joe Washington was one of the backs and Greg Pruitt was one of the backs. I mean, they were a fantastic team that year.

**JE:** So you’re selling these hats for?

**SC:** For myself. I was peddling ’em. My dad was the one that talked me into buying them.

**JE:** You went out and bought the hats?

**SC:** Yeah. Well, actually, my dad called me and said, “Hey, Stan, you’ve got to come over and look at this. Our friend Mavis Macaffery is repping these hats. It’s a brand new technology. The name of the school is knit right into it. Never seen anything like it, you’ve got to check this out.”

So I bought twelve hundred of these “Cowboys” hats, twelve hundred of these “Go, Big Red” hats. I signed a note at the bank over in Tulsa for \$6,700 to buy these hats. And the reason we bought twelve hundred of them was the unit price went down to \$2.45 a piece if you bought a hundred dozen of them. I just took them into the football stadiums and sold them for five bucks a piece. Basically I had the chance to double my money. By the end of football season I had grossed over twelve thousand dollars, so I made about six grand off of that deal.

And I had twelve hundred bucks left when we decided to start this venture. You know, I had a little entrepreneurial spirit in me.

**JE:** The dollar was the vision for you.

**SC:** Absolutely.

**JE:** Yeah, all right. You’ve got the twelve hundred, you put that together with Steve’s five thousand?

**SC:** Yeah. And so I borrowed thirty-eight hundred bucks just basically on a note. In effect I was kind of leveraging his five thousand. I mean, I didn’t pledge his five thousand, but it allowed us to both put five thousand on the table. Thirty-eight hundred of mine is borrowed, and then we borrowed another five thousand jointly.

But before we got it open we’d gone back and gotten five thousand three more times. So we ended up actually jointly having debt of twenty thousand. And I still had the thirty-eight hundred of that personally. But that’s really all it took was to capitalize and open this very simple business.

**JE:** So for Rick Green this was a pretty big gamble, you think, back in those days? I mean, here is two college kids with a dream of opening a bar.

**SC:** Well, I think it was a very high risk deal, even in ’75. I guess twenty thousand was probably not a whole lot of money, but I thought it was a pretty big leap of leap. And I so appreciated him then. I do remember looking him in the eye and just saying, “Rick, I promise you if you’ll give us this chance we’ll pay you back.” And we meant it. I would have given and done anything in the world that it required to make that happen.

But it’s interesting, you fast-forward thirty-seven years. Rick is the CEO of Southwest Bank Shares today, which is the parent that owns Stillwater National Bank. And he’s just had this illustrious career.

But I’ll just never forget that first loan, it means the world to me and I remain loyal to them. And they still do, by far, the lion’s share of my banking today. It’s just special because we started with nothing.

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**Chapter 08 - 1:30****Rustic Wood**

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**John Erling:** Did you have to do a lot of renovating to the building before you opened it?

**Stan Clark:** We did, and we didn't have enough money to hire contractors so we really did most of it ourselves. Steve was something of a handyman, had done some fix-it stuff. Having owned a house he'd done quite a bit to that house. We didn't hire an architect or anything, we just pretty much chalked off on the floor the place where we wanted things to be and then we just built right on top of it. It's got this wooden floor in it so we just kind of built right on to the wood floor that was there.

There were a couple of risers in the front windows that face north, still to this day, that Steve and I actually built by hand. We went around looking for rustic materials. We tore down a barn in South Payne County that was owned by then by Judge Hurt. We got that barn just from doing some cleanup work after we tore the barn down. So that's where the rustic wood and the barn wood effect came from.

In our travels we found a little sawmill over in Coweta, Oklahoma, from a fellow by the name of Eddie Gilbert, who had this sawmill. We bought some split logs, two of which are still in place over there in Eskimo Joe's today. I love to show those to people, tell them that I helped build the platform they sit on. We paid fifty cents a piece for those split logs. I like to kid thirty-seven years later, "I think those two logs are fully depreciated."

So that's kind of what we were like and what we were up to.

**JE:** You were having fun, weren't you?

**SC:** We were certainly having fun.

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**Chapter 09 - 7:00****Opening Day**

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**John Erling:** So then you come to opening day. What was that day?

**Stan Clark:** Well, it was a Friday night, as I recollect it, it was July 21. But since, with the advent of all these electronic gadgets we have, one of my managers of a couple of years actually went back and realized July 21 was not a Friday night in July of '75. So while we still celebrate it as our anniversary that is not the accurate date. It's a couple of days one way or the other. But it was a Friday night.

Summer school was about to let out and we decided, “Man, we got to get this place open before all the kids leave.” Because back then you had a spring semester, there’s kind of a three-week lull, there wasn’t anybody in town. Then they came back for eight weeks of summer school. Then they all left again and then it was about two or three weeks before they came back for the fall semester. So we thought, “Man, we just got to open.” I’m not saying we were particularly ready but we just felt like we needed to get the place open.

I always like to tell this one too—sometimes ignorance is bliss. You know, we were too naïve to understand that it was illegal to advertise on the state property. So we printed off these handbills: “Eskimo Joe’s, Stillwater’s newest bar. Coldest beer this side of Antarctica. Four hundred watts of free music power.” That was one of our real edges, we were going to have music that part of the ambience that was free. All the other bars in town you had to pay a quarter to get the music started. The jukebox was really a great revenue stream, I’m certain, for those operations. But we thought music was an edge and a way to set ourselves apart. So that’s kind of what that first flyer said.

And there was only one dorm open that year, it was the Wilhelm Complex. We went around and shoved these flyers under every dorm room door. Opened at six o’clock in the evening, and our special was ten cent beer all night. So it was ten cent drawn beers for the whole night from six to midnight. And, you know, we’d been open a couple of hours and the place kind of started jumping. Now it was only nine hundred feet, so if you’ve got twenty people in there it was fairly hopping. If you got sixty people in there it was wall to wall. So it didn’t take a lot of folks to get it going.

But our first two nights, Friday and Saturday, with that special we got a lot of people through the door, a lot of people had a great time. We were spinning great tunes, had it cranked up. You know, we’re off and running.

**JE:** And you were selling only beer? Any food at all?

**SC:** We had some salted snacks. The Frito guy would stop by and so we had a bag of chips or a bag of nuts or something like that, but no food. We had one pinball machine, it was over in the corner. It was ten cents a play. We had two foosball tables in the middle of the room and we had a pool table that was actually a quarter a play, as were the foosball tables. And we would empty the pool and foosball tables every single night, because we needed the money just to get enough deposited to try to make things go.

**JE:** What brand of beer did you sign on with early on?

**SC:** We signed on with Coors. We served Coors Banquet Beer, the local distributor’s name was Drew Borsman. Borsman Beverage was very good to us. They came in, they ran our beer lines for us and they really helped us get started, for which I was eternally grateful. I never tapped anything but Coors and then eventually Coors Light until Drew sold the business and then, even after he sold the business I stayed completely with Coors or

Coors Light only until the gentleman that had been supporting us for all the years finally was terminated by the new owner. Because the new owner basically did what he did.

Drew was a hands-off accountant type owner and he had a guy that basically ran the market, was out in the market, and was really supporting the accounts directly. Once Jim Slippert left then we did actually let Budweiser in with some taps. And it just changed the dynamics completely.

But for those early days it was all Coors and we remained very loyal to them. We sold Budweiser longnecks, don't get me wrong. I mean, we had to have some breath of product offering, but in terms of our taps—and back then it was not all, but it was mostly draft beer.

**JE:** How many employees did you hire for that opening day?

**SC:** Zero. Steve and I opened it ourselves. Had some of our buddies come down just in case. The most infamous one was a guy by the name of Paul James. Paul was a year younger than we were. He had a brother exactly our age, his name was David. I don't think David came to Oklahoma State but Paul did. Paul and I had been friends since we were in Byrd Junior High. We used to play poker together every week. Just buddies, you know. So he was here.

And another one, Dave Buxton, went all the way back probably clear to grade school. Just some other cronies, you know? Anyway, they came down and they helped us wipe a few tables and whatnot. Again, it's a pretty simple operation.

We actually hired our first employee out of the first night's crowd. And I'll never forget this, we'd been open maybe two and a half hours and this young lady comes through the front door. Well, the place was so tiny you could see everybody and by the time she got about halfway back to the bar I'm checking her out. I'm kind of punching Steve and saying, "Hey, maybe this can be our first employee." Very attractive young woman.

Anyway, by the time she got back to the bar I kind of mustered up the courage and I said, "Excuse me, ma'am, but would you have any interest in maybe working here?"

She kind of grinned and looked at me, looked at Steve, she said, "Yeah, I might go to work for you and Steve, Stan."

And I was just taken aback. Come to find out she was the younger sister of a fellow I'd played basketball with at Byrd in junior high school. And her father had been our coach. The other teammate's name was Doug Knight and her name is Stacy Knight. So she wasn't intimidated by me or Steve, but I love to tell the story because I'll tell you, she'd sure changed a lot from grade school. When I was in eighth grade she would have been in grade school.

But anyway, the main reason I like to tell that story so much and have told it so many times was she was the first person we hired and she worked with us for more than two years. So I think that speaks to the fact that I understood that people were going to be the most important part of the business from the get-go.

And again, I learned that from my dad. I saw the way he treated his employees, how important those relationships were to him, and then also how he treated his customers. And how important *those* relationships were to him. And then, even his suppliers. His suppliers were his best friends. The guys who sold him the construction equipment, they were the most fun people I'd ever been around. Construction equipment sales guys were pretty darn fun guys.

So again, my parents lifestyle, the people I was able to be around, and the fact that my parents included me in their lives.

Another aspect of my sister being five years older that played into all this was that she married very young. So from the time I was in about eighth grade I was basically an only child. Because she married and moved out of the house. So I was around older people, I saw how they related to one another. It was exciting to me. I loved my dad's friends, and candidly, they were drinking.

My dad bought a pool table when I turned sixteen so we had a little bar back there by that pool table. And I kind of was raised doing what I ended up going into business to do, and that was entertain.

## Chapter 10 - 9:35

### The Name

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**John Erling:** You opened as Eskimo Joe's.

**Stan Clark:** Right.

**JE:** So let's talk about how the name came about.

**SC:** Well, Steve File, great idea, "Let's open a bar." Steve File, great idea, "Let's call it Eskimo Joe's." Now I got to admit I wasn't totally all in on that name from the very get-go, but it seemed like anytime the discussion would even come up Steve would get all of our friends to just go into this chant, "Eskimo Joe's, Eskimo Joe's," so I knew real quickly that was going to be the name. What I liked about it was that it rhymed and it was so unusual, kind of like, "Eskimo Joe's, what in the world is that?" Especially in Stillwater, Oklahoma, that I thought it might kind of cut through clutter, as they say in marketing. It would stand out, it would be memorable. So I was little bit bought in, but I became fully bought in when we hired an eighteen-year-old freshman commercial arts students by the name of Bill Thompson to design the logo.

He sat in the front window at Eskimo Joe's and on an art pad, just that big right there, that size of a pad, with a magic marker, designed our logo, first one he ever



rendered. And I just totally fell in love with not only the logo but then the name, because it made sense.

So here's Eskimo Joe, he's got the biggest smile I've ever seen. And right alongside is his slobbering canine companion, as I refer to Buffy the wonder dog. The first time a customer asks what the dog's name was, we hadn't even discussed it, we kind of looked at each other. We were standing behind the bar, we threw that out so that's how Buffy was named. No reason other than that.

But I did, I fell in love with that design. I've had all these years now to reflect on it and, for crying out loud, it's an universal theme. It's a boy and his dog. You know? It's so simple but think about how appealing that is. And thirty-seven years later and tens of millions of tee shirts later it's an universal theme.

**JE:** So the first time Bill drew any concept—

**SC:** Yes.

**JE:** ...that was it?

**SC:** That was it.

**JE:** You went with it.

**SC:** Yeah.

**JE:** It was his first attempt.

**SC:** Yeah, it—his first attempt.

**JE:** You just threw the name at him and, "What do you envision, Bill?" and he did it?

**SC:** Yeah. And honestly, he had started to do it and Steve and I had left to run errands or to do something else and when we came back, I mean, literally, I walked in and I go, "Oh, that's it! It's fantastic. I love it!" And I go to Steve and say, "What do you think?"

And he goes, "Aah, it's all right."

You know, it's just the way things were but I totally loved it. I just thought it was fantastic.

**JE:** And I guess, you liked Eskimo because you wanted to show people that you had the coldest beer in town.

**SC:** Well, certainly that related to the cold beer. And really, I mentioned it earlier, the three kind of edges we thought we were going to have was, one, colder beer, because it's an homogenous product, it's the exact same beer you can buy at any other bar. How are you going to differentiate it? Make it really cold, make sure it's ice cold. That's probably the one thing that we really stood for the most.

The other thing was going to be the music. And just the way we were going to present and have music, be something that was appealing.

Lastly, and what ended up being the most important, was just how excited we were about what we were doing. The way we played to befriend the customers.

**JE:** Did you know in fact that you were serving it colder than anybody in town or were you just telling people it was colder?

**SC:** Well, I have to admit, you know, that piece was probably a little bit of—who knows, who knows? I didn't go to all the other ones and measure the temperature of the beer, but we did buy a brand new walk-in, I mean, it was a fabulous piece of gear. And we could crank it down. We were very, very proud of how cold the beer was.

**JE:** From '75 on you're swimming along with a very successful business.

**SC:** I'll put it this way, our expectations weren't real high. One thing the bank required me to do from the get-go, there was a requirement of the loan, we had to hire an outside accounting firm to do a compilation statement where we could report to the bank every month how we were doing. Great advice, because I said, "Hey, heck, I've had accounting, I know how to do that."

And they said, "No. You need to run your business. This is a requirement, you have to do it, it's not an option."

It was great advice, so we didn't spend a lot of time working on our books. In fact, it was such a simple business, literally the beer companies delivered the beer every day. We sold it just as they brought it to us, I mean, you know, you either pulled the tap handle and served it that way or you pulled it out of a box, took the lid off, and handed it over the bar. So it was a pretty simple operation.

Really, you know, we just got our bills from the city or from the insurance guy or whatever, and all the receipts from the beer that we bought. And then, of course, the sales were just adding up all the deposits. We made a deposit every day, so sales minus all the expenses. It was a simple process.

But we closed our books at the end of August. We opened, I thought it was July 21, you know, we opened some time mid-July, '75. And by the end of August we actually were in the black. We had generated more revenue and more gross profit than all the added up expenses were. So we showed some profitability.

Now, Steve and I did not pay ourselves. We were most of the labor so we had no labor, in effect. We just took money if money was available. And that's the way we ran it for the two and a half years we were partners. Anyway, it looked like it was doing okay. For us, we're having a party every night, we get to be the host, it was a blast. And the fact that we were at least not sinking, were able to make our note payments, we were very, very happy with that.

**JE:** Personality wise, how does Steve compare to you?

**SC:** Steve's a lot bolder than I am. It was his idea to open it and he had a lot more practical experience like, you know, when it came time to build out the things he was the guy that kind of had the mindset and the competence to do all those kinds of things.

But when it came to being a hospitality guy I think that was a little bit more my personality. Not that Steve wasn't good at it, he can befriend anybody and people really like Steve. But Steve was so entrepreneurial that very quickly he was ready to move on to the next thing.

And I think I had a little more passion for actually running the business and maybe a little more interest in actually standing behind the bar and engaging the guests. And just doing that.

I think he became interested in moving on. In fact, very quickly after we opened we actually came up with the idea, we wanted to open a bowling alley. We have a business plan, I've still got it as well, for Cowboy Bowl. But, you know, when you're twenty-two, twenty-three, you got a little beer joint going and you go down, now you want to borrow a couple million bucks to build a bowling center. We didn't get anywhere on that idea.

**JE:** So Stillwater turned you down on that?

**SC:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, that deal didn't fly. That deal wasn't even close to flying.

**JE:** And you're probably glad to this day?

**SC:** In hindsight, yeah. We were probably way too green. I'm probably better off that I stayed focused on the little business that I had and didn't go on.

Then additionally, very shortly after we opened, Steve met what was to become his bride. Once he kind of settled into that relationship I think he was even less interested in being behind the bar every night and working a bar and all that.

So in January of 1978 Steve was ready to sell and I was ready to buy. So it was a very natural dissolution of the partnership. In January I just wrote the check. I had to borrow it but I was able to borrow enough money to buy his half interest to become the sole proprietor. After that point, it became a lot easier for me to work all the time. You know, it was my business, I was interested in doing that, and I felt I could grow that business.

**JE:** Steve went on to other businesses then?

**SC:** He did, he did. He was very entrepreneurial, actually ended up working in his in-laws' companies and also started some businesses of his own. So he had a very interesting career, post Eskimo Joe's.

The only other thing I might comment on was that after having bought my partner out I began to commit a lot more of my personal time to running and growing the business. And from a financial standpoint, the note payment I had to pay off the lump sum payment to buy Steve's half interest was a whole lot less than what Steve and I each had been drawing out of the company for those first two and a half years. So for the first time I actually had a little bit of excess cash flow.

And at that point I started reinvesting more in the business. So it kind of had a little bit better first impression, if you will, after sprucing up the upstairs, particularly. And again,

just paying maybe a little bit more attention to it. So really, it was just a nice steady growth curve from '78 through '83. And we truly became Stillwater's "jumping little juke joint." We coined that slogan a couple of months after we opened.

On a Friday night, I remember, a buddy of ours from Tulsa came in with a new record by Elvin Bishop, who actually was a Tulsa native himself. And the title of the record was "Juke Joint Jump." The opening line to that song was, "There's a jumping little juke joint away out in the sticks." And it was Friday night, people were dancing on the chairs and the place was just going nuts. When I heard that line to that song I turned to File and I said, "That's it! We've been trying to come up with a slogan. We're Stillwater's jumping little juke joint." That's where that came from. That's been printed on the back of literally millions of tee shirts today.

So through '83, we really became Stillwater's jumping little juke joint. Great business. Really rockin'. Supposedly the biggest outlet for Coors beer in the state of Oklahoma, except for when Remington Park got built, and that seated, I don't know, umpteen thousands of people, so it was a very successful business.

## Chapter 11 - 8:10

### Drinking Age: from 18 to 21

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**John Erling:** In those ensuing years you were increasing your square footage. You were at nine hundred? Is that true to begin with?

**Stan Clark:** That is true.

**JE:** And then you increased?

**SC:** Yeah. Even in the fall of '75, there was a guy that lived upstairs, I kind of mentioned we blasted him out the first couple of weeks, for a little while, for about a month, Steve and I moved upstairs. We literally lived up there. I had a mattress on the floor in one of the bedrooms and he had a mattress on the floor in the other. We shared a bathroom. Then there was kind of a kitchen area, dining room/living room, which was the other half, the west-most half of that upstairs. But we realized real quickly we needed to go find somewhere to live and we needed to expand the business.

So by the OU game of the fall of '75, we had actually opened upstairs. We did the simplest possible remodel. We just made the kitchen the bar. There was one restroom in that apartment so we built this diagonal wall. The women got a sink and a toilet. The men got the tub, we created a little makeshift urinal, if you will, with some PVC pipe and a little bit of water running. So basically the guys were peeing in the bathtub. That was what Joe's

was like. I mean, you talk about rustic, it was rough, it was rustic. But it was fun and the kids loved it and we loved it. And we were having a blast.

**JE:** And the biggest, you were probably attracting more people than any other because there were still other bars in town.

**SC:** I can't say that. When we opened there was a place, it's right next door, in fact, John, look into your left, my right. That building was a place called The Grey Fox Inn when Steve and I came to Stillwater in '71. That was the biggest Budweiser outlet in this part of the country. So that place was smokin' hot, ultra popular, and that's one of the reasons why we thought our location might work. Because we thought we might get some of that overflow crowd from the Fox. Because really, everything else was down on the other side of the campus.

The crowd we had was loyal, they loved Joe's, but it was a very small crowd. It really just grew a little bit at a time for all those early years. You know, everybody looks at Joe's today and they, "Oh, man, everything that guy touches turns to gold." What they don't know is how many long days just working all the way to close. And then a lot of times, honestly, I would take whoever was left at close and say, "Hey, come on over," and everybody would go over to my place. I mean, I truly befriended the customers. It was more than just to come to the bar, I mean, they were really my friends.

And I did that for an awful lot of years, clear up to '83. We had thirteen employees in '83, all of whom I hired and worked with behind the bar at Joe's. So that's how big we were still in '83. When in the fall of '83, the state legislature changed the drinking age from eighteen to twenty-one. And I mean, just totally pulls the rug out from underneath this party I've been hosting every night. And in effect, is going to take away the target market. Because it was OSU students that we were appealing to. They had always been able to come in and drink. When that law was enacted there were a lot of kids, they'd been drinking legally for a year or two, if they're eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and then they couldn't until they turned twenty-one. So that was really a bizarre time.

I remember the last Saturday night before the law went into effect like either on Sunday or Monday of the next week. All the TV stations in the state showed up to see how it was going to affect us. I was on the front page of the *Tulsa Tribune*. Remember that? That goes way back. They had a cut line about "New Law Chills Tavern Owners." Pretty clever little cut line I thought. They took a picture of me with a glass of beer sitting in front of me and they said, "Quit smiling, you need to kind of look glum."

And as you've seen from our interview this morning I have a hard time not smiling. I kind of beam, it's just my nature, but at any rate, I tried to give them my best bummed out look. That was literally on the front page up in the header. At any rate, that was a big deal.

**JE:** You saw this, you knew the legislation was being discussed in our capital.

**SC:** Right.

**JE:** Did you try to interrupt it in any manner?

**SC:** No.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** I was too naïve.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** I'm not even sure I knew they were doing it. Probably the beer guys had told us. But I was in La-La Land. I was partying every night, running a beer joint, and I had not joined the Oklahoma Restaurant Association. I was not really affiliated. I was a member of the local Chamber, I'd joined that very early on. But I was probably not all that up on public events. But I was scared to death. There's no doubt about that.

**JE:** Really? What did you think then? What are you going to do?

**SC:** Well, it's really funny. I thought back to my macro economics class at Oklahoma State. I remembered our studying about how, you know, oh gosh, if the government or a competitor just kind of fundamentally changes the playing field that you'd better be ready to move quickly and do something drastic if you're going to remain viable. And I thought to myself, I said, "The only thing I can think up that might allow me to leverage our trade name that we had already had established, and the location, obviously, was to increase the mix of products that we offer and expand the hours of operation." I thought maybe I could make it a restaurant and bar, not just a bar. I was concerned, I was concerned that it would mess up the ambience, frankly, but I just didn't see any other way.

So the way the law was written, once this law was enacted we had six months to establish that we were generating more than half of our revenues from nonalcoholic products, or we would have to post "21 and over" to come in the place. So I didn't have any time to waste. I called one contractor and began building an atrium on the east side of Joe's to increase the seating capacity.

At the same time, I had another contractor start building me a kitchen in the backend. Went down to Oklahoma City, a gracious and wonderful gentleman by the name of Wayne Curtis was aware of Joe's and had heard a little bit about our success and that we were doing well. Basically said, "Hey, you tell me what you need. I will get the equipment for you and you can pay me as you can." He offered to finance the equipment for me. Which he did, and his designer, a guy by the name of Jeff Swindle, still helps us with our kitchen design and we still buy all of our equipment from him.

You know it is interesting how when people help you out you just remain loyal to them. And I'm very proud of that record that we've got as a company.

At any rate, all this stuff started moving pretty fast and in all candor, even my bank got kind of cold feet at the time. And I ended up getting the kitchen financed by Bank First, which was right down the street from Stillwater National Bank, as I was moving a little too

fast. Bar guys, you know, not exactly the most stable, most trustworthy, the overall track record, I'm sure, around the country, that's not a very quality group to be taking a risk on. And I got that. I had learned to not to take things personally.

As young as I was when I started, a lot of testosterone, a lot of ego wrapped up in all that. And that accountant that I was forced to hire gave me some great counsel. Because I had come back from the bank and they'd turned me down and he'd say, "Now remember, this is a real small town. You don't want to burn any bridges. Don't lose your temper. It's not personal, it's a business decision." That was great counsel.

**JE:** The week or two or three after this drinking age went into effect, did your revenue drop off drastically?

**SC:** It did, it did. Indeed it did. We were scared, we were really scared, it was really the pivotal time in my career and it was the most important decision we made.

**JE:** So Bank First took a big gamble on you as well?

**SC:** They did, and again, I'm not sure how big, big is relative, because it didn't cost us a whole lot to do what we did.

**JE:** What kind of a loan did you get?

**SC:** But I'm, I'm going to guess that was maybe twenty-five thousand dollars or something.

**JE:** On the business—

**SC:** I hate to admit I'm a little foggy on that, that's been a long time ago. And I continued to bank with Stillwater National. I didn't move the accounts and everything, but it was certainly a significant loan and I've remained loyal to First Bank ever since as well. Today, roughly, I owe each bank about half as much, and that's really how they make money is on loans.

**JE:** Sure.

## Chapter 12 - 7:40

### Onion Fried Burger

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**John Erling:** So you expand your offerings. What kind of a menu did you come up with and did you do it by yourself? Or how did you come about that?

**Stan Clark:** I realized I needed to hire somebody that had a little bit more food experience than I did. I hired a fellow by the name of Scott Linten. I actually was introduced to him by some good friends who were great customers at Eskimo Joe's. We actually went on a ski trip together. We got in the back of their van and they were driving us out to their place in Colorado. I say they, their family name is Lippert. They've got Lippert Brothers Construction in Oklahoma City, lovely, lovely people.

Twins, John and Tom, were Scott's age and they were all patrons of Eskimo Joe's. That's how I met them. So we jump in the van and we're heading off to Colorado. And Scott and I get to talking and I'm telling him what I'm going to have to do. Scott and I just hit it off like gasoline and matches, I mean, we were having a blast. I really liked him, I thought he could do it, so I hired him. Driving out there is when I decided he was going to be my guy.

We got back and we got busy. The first guy that Scott Linten hired was a fellow by the name of Robert Williams. Robert was his right-hand man and together they opened the kitchen at Eskimo Joe's. To this day, Robert is the Director of Restaurant Operations at Eskimo Joe's.

**JE:** Yeah.

**SC:** And Robert had been a great customer of Joe's long before I ever put food into it. Anyway, we have, obviously, a very, very long term relationship. And Robert's contributions have just been phenomenal. He was an engineer by degree. He's a great space planner. Every time I've built on Robert has been integral in figuring out how to lay things out and everything. So his stamp on everything Eskimo Joe's and the other restaurants coming forward are just unbelievably significant.

**JE:** So it was a no-brainer to put a hamburger on the menu then, right?

**SC:** That's correct. When we got started, as I ask restaurateurs for advice, they came with almost invariably the same thing. They said, "Start out with a really simple menu. Don't do anything that you can't do exceedingly well. You can always expand it, but just make sure what you're delivering is an excellent product." I thought it was great advice.

So we started out with a little onion-fried burger. I remember as a child I went to a place in Tulsa called Clods. They used to be on Admiral, they're now on Peoria, and I just love that place. My parents loved the owner. It was a family tradition way back when I was really young, out on Admiral, we'd go on Friday nights. My dad would have been working all week. He'd get home, we'd go to Clods. So I wanted that style of a hamburger because I loved the flavor profile so much.

And then the other burger that I loved, growing up, was Goldie's Patio Grill at 51st and Lewis. So we had our Little Joe, we called it, and that was basically the best copy I could do of Clods. And then our Joe Special was as close a clone as we could muster to be like a Goldie Special.

And then the other thing we did was fresh-cut french fries. They were fabulous. There's just nothing like fresh. We just always did fresh. We had a little deal on the wall and you'd stick a potato in there and you whoo [sound] and boom, out they'd come. We learned how to deal with all the starch in the potato and that you have to run cold water through it until the water clears. I think we actually had a Joe's Dog on there so we had a big quarter-pound, all beef hotdog that we grilled.



And that was it. That was how simple the menu was, that's what we started with.

**JE:** Did you learn how to flip burgers yourself? Were you back in the kitchen?

**SC:** No, to be honest, Scott and Robert really didn't need my high-strung way of being back there. They thought I would be disruptive so they asked me to stay out front. "You're the hospitality guy, we'll handle it."

I'll never forget, a couple of days in, I go back there and there's all these tickets going all the way around the steel saw. I'm looking at all the tickets and I'm looking at how many burgers are on the grill. I remember yelling out, "You guys, put on more burgers!" And it's still a joke to this day.

Robert and Scott said, "Look, whatever that last one says, we can't do that right now. We can only do so many burgers on this limited amount of grill space. We know what we're doing. Get back out there."

So I had to just kind of bide my time and go on. But I will say this, we did have a high quality product. We were too slow early on and we made some mistakes but, by and large, the product was very, very good.

What I was naïve to was price. I way underpriced the product because what I didn't realize was the bar business had almost been self-serve. I mean, we went out and we asked if you wanted a beer, and if you did we'd bring it to you. But, by and large, people just walked up to the bar, we served them right over the bar, and that was the nature of it. To put in this very simple menu I went from thirteen employees to forty-five, just like that.

So the dynamics changed drastically for us. Just the intensity of what we were doing and the complexity of what we were doing was just night and day different.

And here's the other thing that was fantastic, I was thrilled. We got the kitchen open in March of '84. I was thrilled to find out in 1984 that more people eat every day than drink every day. You know, there was really a market for this stuff. So all of a sudden, our target market goes from just college age kids that want to party to everybody eats every day. It was unbelievable. I got real excited by that because now, man, we're just, we're seeing so many more faces than we'd ever seen. We've got a chance to give this true spirit of hospitality that was absolutely innate in me and that I'd been teaching people to deliver all these years and we're just going to touch so many more people that I very quickly decided I was going to open a second restaurant.

By fall of 1984, we opened our second restaurant, which is called Stillwater Bay Oyster Company. Scott took that one on and he moved over to open Stillwater Bay and Robert stayed on as the kitchen manager of Eskimo Joe's, and continued to run it.

By '87, I decided to do a third one. There had been some issues, you know. The Oklahoma economy actually had had a huge downturn in the early '80s. During that timeframe there was a nice restaurant in downtown Stillwater that had been built and

it was called Tingles. It was on the second story of a twelve thousand square foot building and the restaurant was six thousand feet on the upstairs. And the owners had spent a fortune remodeling and making it very, very nice. But they had gone under and then the bank had actually gone under that had loaned the money on the deal. And it was in receivership.

So the FDIC had that thing in receivership and they were ready to sell it for whatever they could get for it. The public had bid on it. I actually submitted a bid a little bit late and someone else bought it. The guy that bought it had no restaurant experience. I think realized real quickly that he was probably in over his head. He got wind of the fact that I wanted it. So he actually came to me and offered to sell it to me. And I actually bought him from for three thousand dollars than what I'd offered the FDIC. And he was willing to carry the paper on it because at that time I would not have been able to borrow that much money from any bank.

So it actually worked out. It was probably the only way I was able to get it all done. Now, the rest of my career, I'm not sure that was a great, great move, or that it was really long-term helpful to me. But it was a big move at the time.

**JE:** So then you have three restaurants at that point: Eskimo Joe's, Stillwater Bay Oyster Company, and Mexico Joe's.

**SC:** That's correct. So—

**JE:** All right.

**SC:** ...when I moved Stillwater Bay downtown to that nice facility it left a rented space where I had started Stillwater Bay and I had to fill it up because I had an obligation on that lease. I needed to do something. So as I assessed the marketplace I thought there was a niche for Mexican food here. That's when we decided to give Mexico Joe's a shot.

## Chapter 13 - 4:15

### Tee Shirts

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**John Erling:** We haven't talked about the tee shirts yet. When did that thought come to you? What year? What time? How did that come about, "We need to do a tee shirt"?

**Stan Clark:** Well, golly, I, you know, it's funny to think we can talk so long and I haven't talked about that, which has actually been the most rewarding. But we had tee shirts for sale day one at Eskimo Joe's. That very summer when we were doing the remodel work, a couple of guys came by. They had just started a screen printing business here in Stillwater. And they said, "You guys ought to print that cool logo you got on some tee shirts."

And I remember thinking, “Well, you know, I don’t know, it might work.” My parents had taken me to Hawaii in 1972, and I’d bought some imprinted tee shirts over there from an outfit called Crazy Shirts. Crazy Shirts is still in business in Hawaii today. And I wore those shirts almost every day the rest of my college career. One of them said, “Keep on truckin’.” Those big old feet coming out. So I kind of had a frame of reference for it. But, boy, printed tee shirts, that was a brand new industry really in the early ’70s.

But anyway, thankfully they talked us into doing it. You know, we had that logo, what’s in the round circle, Eskimo Joe and Buffy there, but we didn’t have an actual lettering style to go with it. So there was an architecture supply store here in town and we went down there and we picked out a little lettering style. And it was kind of a round shape, and we thought it looked kind of neat. So we picked that. And that’s what was on the very first shirts.

And then the next batch of shirts we actually went back and we picked a slightly different, kind of a western looking lettering style. And it just said, “Eskimo” at the top and “Joe’s” underneath the bottom of the circle at the point. So we printed some that looked like that.

And then finally, one of our guests, at some point in time, said, “Hey, you ought to make your letters snow-capped.”

[finger snapping] “Great idea!” So that’s when the snow-capped letter idea came along. And those were actually hand-rendered. So then we came up with the idea of the snow-capped letters.

And then the customers started saying, “Hey, you ought to put Stillwater on the shirt. That’d make the shirt more appealing.”

So again, in reaction to customer feedback we put “Eskimo” and “Joe’s” at the top and then “Stillwater, OK” at the bottom. The shirt then, within the first year, kind of came around to looking about like what it looks like today. That was an evolution.

But we had them day one. I remember clearly they were \$3.75 a piece for a tee shirt, and you got a free beer with it. That was part of the hook too was that you got a free beer. Beer was only thirty cents so that wasn’t a really whole lot of an add-on, but it was a beer.

**JE:** Was it a pretty good item? Were they buying it?

**SC:** Interestingly, our first order was for seventy-two shirts. We had three-dozen yellow ones and three-dozen light blue ones. We sold every one the first week we were open. Every one of them. And we were sold out for a while. I wasn’t really thinking about that, I was thinking about beer and how to get the customers in the door and make them happy and all that. But we did replenish, and, hey, they all sold out. And then we’d replenish and they all sold out. It took me quite a while to really understand the up side, financial up side of it, but I absolutely thought it was awesome if someone would buy the shirt. It was kind of the ultimate affirmation. They got to really like the place to buy the tee shirt, you know?

**JE:** It's a walking around advertising for you.

**SC:** And then they're walking around, we knew it would generate word-of-mouth advertising so we were really proud of that and excited by it. But not so much that we were very effectively managing it. I just have to be honest. That was years later until we really kind of got in the groove of trying to forecast and order ahead.

Now another thing that was concurrent with when we had to put food in and when they changed the drinking age, when they changed the drinking age to twenty-one they also, for the first time, made liquor by the drink available in the state of Oklahoma. Prior to that we kind of had liquor by the wink, if you would buy a membership and brought your own bottle you could actually get liquor by the drink. But that was a pretty hokey deal and I never wanted to play in that arena. But once it was legal, and once it was twenty-one anyway, I thought, "Heck, I should offer a full complement, whatever someone would want." So that was also when we added liquor to our mix.

## Chapter 14 - 6:10

### Eskimo Joe's Clothes

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**John Erling:** Let's follow the tee shirt thing because it's become such a big part of your business—

**Stan Clark:** Right.

**JE:** ...right now. Where did the light come on that said, "Well, this could be another business for us?" It was probably seen around the world or what had—kind of talk about that.

**SC:** Well, truly, the shirt sales were very popular. We always sold them right over the bar. They were stored in a little, bitty closet right behind the bar. And then all the actual back-stock was in an apartment behind the grocery store, which sat next door to Eskimo Joe's. So at one point, once we got the restaurant going we needed storage. So I rented that apartment as storage. Some of it for tee shirts, some of it for restaurant supplies, etcetera. And it got truly to the point where the bartenders were selling so many tee shirts that they were very much distracted from making milkshakes and making cocktails and providing beer to the servers and the guests at the bar. They were just about to explode, they were hounding me constantly, "You've got to do something for us to give us some help. Get somebody to sell them for us or something." And at one point in time, they were beginning a skunk works, they were going to try put them up in one of the front windows of Eskimo Joe's.

And finally in 1987, when Zula Mae Anderson died, a family by the name of MaQuelah bought the grocery store. They offered it for lease and I was able to lease it. So in the fall

of '87, we were able to get a lease on Andy's Grocery and we opened a retail front for Eskimo Joe's Clothes for the first time. And our sales just took this huge leap forward.

I was scared to death to take them out of Joe's, I thought, "Oh my gosh, it won't have the magic. You're not in there, you're not having the experience." We found out that people loved it. They could walk in, they could see, touch, feel, you know, for the first time they actually could see the products. We had a few pinned up on the wall but you really couldn't even see them. And yet we sold ten thousand tee shirts that way.

**JE:** Did that require going to the bank again and getting another loan to—

**SC:** Oh I'm sure it did.

**JE:** Right, right.

**SC:** I'm sure it did.

**JE:** And so you were in tee shirts but then you expanded to most every other piece of clothing that a person can buy.

**SC:** We actually dabbled in some other products even before we got into the retail space, but yes, it really made it great for people to be able to come in and look and touch and see and feel.

Another very significant development that I've skipped over was in 1983, we for the first time decided to celebrate Eskimo Joe's anniversary with a tee shirt. A good friend and customer by the name of Chuck Stewart suggested, "Clark, everybody's coming back from all over the place to celebrate your anniversaries every summer. Why don't you give us a special tee shirt?"

I said, "That's a great idea, I'd love to do that, but I don't know how I would pull that off or how I would get that done."

Chuck says, "Well, that guy sitting there at the bar can do it."

There was this gentleman sitting at the bar, his name is Mike Stabbis. So I meet Mike and I tell him, "Hey, I'd kind of like to do an anniversary tee shirt."

Well, Mike was a senior at OSU at that time and he was living in the basement of a house with Chuck, one of his roommates, and they called it the Mansion. It was a four-bedroom house upstairs and had this huge basement underneath it. And Mike had kind of a graphic design and screen printing business going in the basement of that house. Mike and I became friends. Mike created an eighth anniversary tee shirt. I remember we did two hundred of them. It seemed like a ton to me. We sold every one of them.

The design was real simple. We had a pair of snowshoes on the wall at Joe's that had been there from day one. Actually a customer had given me those. He took a photographic image of those snowshoes, put them on the back of this tee shirt and made a little cut line underneath it, "Eight great years, '75 to '83." And then just a straight Joe's logo on the front. That was the beginning of a relationship with Mike Stabbis.

And from 1983 forward Mike has done all of the work you see. If Eskimo Joe was in it, it's Mike's work. He's just a genius, I mean, his creative skills, graphic design, artistic skills are just off the charts. And he's so much the reason why Joe has the look he's had and the cohesiveness of his artwork has carried that brand. I'd liken him to Disney or anybody else that's made so much out of this style of art. I mean, I'd just put it up against anybody.

So he began to add characters. Joe has all these compadres and Puffins, Walrus, the Polar Bear, and all these characters that he's brought into the mix. But I just cannot say enough about the contribution that Mike's creative talents have brought to the brand.

**JE:** Whatever happened to Bill Thompson? The man who originally drew?

**SC:** That is a great question. Bill came back the last time to Stillwater where I've been aware he's been around, in the late '80s and he was just blown away with what we'd done. You know, by then we had the little store next door. Just the fact that this had frankly even made was amazing to him. But he was very proud for our success and I think very proud of the fact that he designed that logo.

**JE:** Did you pay him for that originally?

**SC:** We did, for the design itself.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** And hand-painting both sides of our original sign we gave Bill thirty-five dollars. Thirty-five bucks. You know, I really thought it was fabulous. I told Steve, "Man, that's worth fifty."

File throws out, "Thirty-five!"

Bill goes, "That's great."

So we cut him a check for thirty-five bucks.

**JE:** The tee shirt business has grown and grown and grown so that's it's what percentage of Stan Clark Enterprises?

**SC:** At one point in time, in one of our best grossing years, I had three restaurants going and Eskimo Joe's Clothes out-grossed all three of those restaurants combined. So that will give you an idea how significant it is.

Today we also have a Promotional Products Division, which is doing very well. So this year I would say Joe's Clothes will be 30 to 35 percent of our top line. But it is bigger than any single restaurant that we have. Still to this day. It is by far the most profitable company as well.

**Chapter 15 - 1:55****Promotional Products**

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**John Erling:** And then you've just mentioned it, out of that then you realized, "Well, we can help other companies with promotional products."

**Stan Clark:** That is correct.

**JE:** And so that's another company for you.

**SC:** That's right. We actually incorporated September 1 of 2002 to basically take our skill sets of marketing and leveraging promotional products into our mix to build our brand to help others. The promotional products industry is about a seventeen billion dollar a year industry in the United States. So it's not like it wasn't a great industry.

And I'd actually been a customer of that industry at Eskimo Joe's Clothes. We were able to buy what a lot of companies would basically give away to promote and resell them at a profit. I'd always been fascinated by it and part of the reason that we got into it was the screen printing facilities that we had built that we opened in 1998. Our capacity for production far exceeded the demand that our brand was creating for it.

So I had this excess capacity, these fabulous artists, and this expertise in screen-printing. So we thought we could go out and sell those services to other companies, other institutions of all types, it was much more difficult business, a much more competitive business. I was somewhat naïve going into it but I felt like if we would use the same core principles that we had used to build our brand and to build our restaurant businesses that long-term we could be successful at it.

Ten years later I'm very proud to say that that has indeed borne out and that we're doing very, very well. But it did take a while and it took a lot of subsidies, to be honest, to get that into the black.

**JE:** But you didn't give up on it, you could have.

**SC:** I did not. You know, if I'm really honest, there were certainly times when I wondered but I never wavered. My commitment to it was all in all the way; I never doubted that we were going to turn the corner. It just took longer than I thought, and it took a few more dollars than I thought.

We had enough things going well that I was able to subsidize it and I certainly do not regret having to subsidize it.

**Chapter 16 – 5:00****Stillwater Bay**

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**John Erling:** You had a fourth restaurant at one point.

**Stan Clark:** That's correct. Stillwater Bay ran from first opening in fall of '84. It's last day of operation was June 30 of 2005. So ran it for almost twenty-one years. Two more months would have been twenty-one years.

**JE:** And why did it close?

**SC:** I closed it because it wasn't profitable. It was just that simple. We just were not throwing off economic profitability. I just felt like, you know, it's a drain of our psychic energy and it's a drain of our financial resources. And I just basically gave up. And when I did I put a for sale sign on the entire building. I sold that twelve thousand square foot building in downtown Stillwater. Right before the end of 2005 it had sold and, candidly, I was so glad when that check cleared. It was just, it was freeing, it was a relief.

The thing I'm most proud of in that process, all forty-one employees that worked at Stillwater Bay on June 30, 2005, we placed them within our company. Everyone was offered a position. No one was terminated or handed a pink slip over that decision. About four people opted not to do it, but the other thirty-seven all took a job, many of whom flourished in new roles.

Jim Owens, for example, who ran the Bay the whole time it was in business and worked for me years prior at Eskimo Joe's is still working at Eskimo Joe's Clothes today. So I'm real proud of that. Jimmy's worked here longer than anybody.

**JE:** Everything you had touched turned to gold, it seems.

**SC:** Ha.

**JE:** This was the first time, though, that something is failed, is the correct word? Or that something—

**SC:** Well, that, that—

**JE:** ...you had to close?

**SC:** ...that's absolutely right.

**JE:** And so how did that affect you?

**SC:** Oh, it—

**JE:** Was it bothersome to you?

**SC:** Emotionally it was very draining. It was very draining. Gosh, the first year I was open Mexico Joe's lost literally a fortune. But I was too proud to shut it down. That was not an option. To not honor that lease was not an option. And so I felt like, I knew by the end of '87, even though I'd lost a lot of money, that we had the concept ironed out, that we were executing it well, and that the product itself was fantastic.



Actually, the marketing pitch that got us back on track that next year was something we already did but we'd never positioned it so strongly. And we were able to buy local avails on local cable television advertising starting at about that point in time. So on ESPN and MTV I stood in front of the camera and said, "Hey, if this isn't the best Mexican food you've ever had it's free. I'll buy it. Come give it a try."

And I remember the guy that was selling me the ads was actually a little concerned. Maybe he didn't like it, I don't know. But he thought, "Are you sure you want to do that?"

You know, we didn't buy a handful of meals, but it was a strong statement of our competence in what we were doing. And that was not the main reason why we turned it around. It was a part of the turnaround, certainly. But the main thing was, hey, we started executing, we were delivering great product, and eventually, we were able to build it back.

But when we first opened up we were under-capitalized, we were under-trained, and we did not execute well for a ton of people. It's a problem a lot of independent operators have and they'll open too early and they'll make a bad impression on a lot of people. It's tough to turn that around. So it was a huge lesson learned for us.

In '88, we turned it around; we broke even. '89 forward it was a phenomenal success, in fact, in the early '90s we started counting how many guests we were turning away because how small the place was. We realized we were turning away as many as we were serving. So we ended up buying land out on Hall of Fame and building a building from the ground up that opened in 1994.

Today, Mexico Joe's is a 6,700 square foot facility that's just world class. It's truly a prime location with ease of ingress, egress, tons of drive-by traffic every day. You know, it's just a phenomenal success story. We just celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary this year.

**JE:** Then Giuseppe's.

**SC:** Giuseppe's followed; we opened in 2000. You know, I was scared to death to do another one because of heartache and the financial strain that Mexico Joe's was when we opened it. But I did feel like there was a niche there. No one had really come into our market with an Italian dining concept. There were a lot of pizza places, including the Hideaway, which has been here since 1957, and a legendary pizza place, but not really a full-on Italian concept.

So I really wanted to give it a try. We broke ground in '99, and we finally got it open in May of 2000.

**JE:** That was then known as the Fab Four.

**SC:** That's right. We collectively referred to the four restaurants at that point as Stillwater's Fab Four, obviously playing off the slogan that the Beatles operated as the Fab Four. And of course later, the University of Michigan had called themselves the Fab Five. It was just

an easy way to collectively refer to these operations. And I thought it had a pretty good hook to it.

**JE:** So to this day now then it's the Three Amigos.

**SC:** That's right. When we closed Stillwater Bay we just kind of fell back into that Three Amigos.

## Chapter 17 - 13:00 (5:58)

### Pres. George H.W. Bush

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**John Erling:** You had mascots?

**Stan Clark:** We do for Eskimo Joe and Buffy. We've never actually acted out and gone forward and created mascots for the other two restaurants. Something I've engaged in, I've thought about, but we've not pulled the trigger and done that. I still think it's great marketing because you should see the looks on the faces of young people when Eskimo Joe and Buffy come walking up. You know, the kids just go nuts.

To this day, Eskimo Joe and Buffy will be on the field at the football games, and they're in the homecoming parade. They make an appearance at kids' night every week at Eskimo Joe's. Just any time and every time we can get them in front of the public the response is just off the charts.

**JE:** Who launched cheese fries for you?

**SC:** Well, you know, Robin Williams gets the credit for putting them on the menu, it was really his idea. To take these fresh-cut fries, which people were raving about, just basically top them with Monterey Jack and Cheddar cheeses, just like basically nachos. I mean, just think of nachos in your mind with the melted cheese on the top. Instead of putting your corn chip underneath it you're just putting a fresh-cut french fry. So it's a very simple concept.

We had them on our menu starting in 1984, but in 1990, in May of 1990, President George H.W. Bush, president number forty-one, came to Stillwater and in Lewis Field at the commencement address for the graduates that year. And one of his opening lines was, "I wish Barbara could be with me here today. She did tell me to get a beer and some cheese fries over at Eskimo Joe's."

That comment, by the president of the United States, absolutely made cheese fries our signature item from that day forward. In fact, after the commencement exercise, every table we sat ordered cheese fries. Now the way we do cheese fries, we send them through the cheese-melter on a piece of china, we use Fiesta Ware China. The cheese gets melted right onto the fries and that plate comes out piping hot. So that we can serve it we just set it on top of another piece of china and we present it that way.

Well, we ran out of china. Because we'd never sold that many cheese fries before. It was just a turning point, but truly, twenty-two years later, in 2012, cheese fries are still our signature item. And that was the day.

The other thing he mentioned, the crowd settled down after his first comment about cheese fries and a beer over at Eskimo Joe's, he said, "Hoping at the same time they have enough tee shirts for all the grandchildren."

And the crowd goes nuts again. So we took that cue, we did a little research, found out about all of the extended family, the mothers and the dads and all the kids and everybody. Everybody in the Bush family got Joe's tee shirts that next week. That would have included, of course, George W. and Laura Bush and their twins. All of them got tee shirts that next week. So...very exciting time.

I've actually got photographs from that day and a nice letter from President Bush, who followed it up and thanked us for the shirts. Later on, Barbara Bush came and gave an address on the campus and I've got a beautiful picture of her sporting her "Joe for President" button.

And then in 2006, George W. Bush came and gave the commencement exercise and again gave Eskimo Joe's a nice little plug. So the Bush family are true heroes to me.

**JE:** Yeah. We called this earned media. On NBC, Jimmy Fallon mentioned you.

**SC:** That was fantastic.

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**SC:** Well, Jimmy Fallon came and was a comedian at what they called Orange Peel. The students put on this fabulous entertainment opportunity for everybody to come and see bands and entertainers. Fallon found out about our big Thursday night promotion and, you know, he said, "Boy, if I'd of gone there I don't know if I'd of ever gotten out of school," or something, how inexpensive it was to drink beer. But anyway, he held up our Joe's Cup and gave us a very, very nice plug on the *Jimmy Fallon Show*.

**JE:** *Sports Illustrated* also online magazine named Joe's as the third best collegiate sports bar in the United States.

**SC:** That was just phenomenal. You know, some of that stuff just crops up and you don't even really know who they've done their research. You know, we were never interviewed for that, but wonderful press. The *Sporting News* called us the best post-game hangout one time. And there was actually a quote from Coach Bill Self, who, of course, is the head coach at the University of Kansas now, but was an assistant to Eddie Sutton and he played at Oklahoma State. And Bill told him it was the best post-game hangout and to try the Skylab Fallout, which one of our famous drinks here at Eskimo Joe's.

Awfully appreciative of Bill giving us that plug and I will proudly tell you that when Bill comes to town with the University of Kansas, all of his staff and team always eat at Eskimo

Joe's. And Bill's a big fan of our Fowl Thing as well.

**JE:** What is the Fowl Thing?

**SC:** Well, the Fowl Thing was really the next menu item we added after the very simple menu we started with. And a young man that we hired, his name was Jeff Casey, I remember like it was yesterday, said, "Hey, when I worked at this other restaurant they had this fabulous marinade. They just did a great chicken breast sandwich."

We said, "Well, can you replicate it?"

He said, "Well, I can get pretty close."

Well, anyway, he makes up this marinade and we say, "Ooh, that's pretty good." So anyway, we started selling a marinated chicken breast sandwich. We called it a Fowl Thing.

I mentioned a fellow before in this interview, his name was Chuck Stewart. Chuck was just a fun and funny guy, and his nickname was Fowl Thing because he was such a foul individual. Obviously there's a play on words with fowl here. But at any rate, Chuck was so significant to our business in that, one, he was a good customer. But, two, he introduced me to Mike Stabbis, he talked me into creating this first anniversary tee shirt, so really, a very significant character in our history.

We wanted to name that chicken sandwich after our friend, Fowl Chuck, Chuck Stewart. We decided to call it Eskimo Joe's Famous Fowl Thing. Today that is a registered trademark with the United States Patent Office because we didn't ever want to see a Fowl Thing on anybody else's menu.

## Chapter 18 - 2:35

### Marriages

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**John Erling:** From the day Steve File said, "Hey, let's start a bar," to today, is it fair to ask you the overall worth of your companies, Stan Clark Companies?

**Stan Clark:** Ah, you know, it's a great question and it's a pertinent question. I'd have to say I don't really know. I'm not planning on selling. The only time I guess you would care to truly evaluate that would be if you were looking for that last payday or whatever. I just don't see myself doing anything but operating these companies as long as I'm around to do it. I don't have an exit strategy and I just want to keep trying to remain relevant and hopefully special to our guests and hope to keep growing it.

**JE:** I wonder how many marriages are a result of Eskimo Joe's.

**SC:** I can assure you, plenty. Many, many, many couples met their eventual soul mate at Eskimo Joe's over thirty-seven years in the bar business in a college town. I mean, it's

just that age, that's about when lots and lots of people hook up. But I know of countless stories just like that.

I've actually been enticed to solicit for people to submit their stories. I think there would be a wonderful book in that. Just to hear people's stories. The only caveat would be, "Did you meet your spouse at Eskimo Joe's? If so, please submit your story." There's a lot of them, including my own.

You know, I met my wife at Eskimo Joe's. She started as a hostess there. Her older sister worked there so that's why she applied there, and was immediately hired because her older sister, Sandra, was a great employee and just a lovely person. And that's enough for us, we're hiring people everyday anyway. It doesn't take a whole lot. If you've got a big smile on your face and a good attitude you've got every chance in the world to get hired at Eskimo Joe's.

So I met Shannon very soon after she became an employee. She just kind of caught my eye. We started dating very shortly thereafter. Gosh, we've been together for twenty-three years now. Been married for eighteen years now. It's just been the love of my life.

We have three beautiful children to show for our marriage. Gabby and Hudson are twins and they're eight years old. Our oldest child, first child is Maguire, and she's ten years old. The twins are in second grade at Westwood Elementary School here and Maguire is in fourth grade. Having children certainly changes your perspective on the world and what's important.

I was forty-nine when we had Maguire, our first child. I was fifty-one when the twins came along. I was very late in life getting started with that but, boy, I'm sure glad I didn't miss that phase of life because it's just unbelievable.

## Chapter 19 - 7:30

### People Are Our Business

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**John Erling:** When you hire people for your companies, do you put them through a battery of tests?

**Stan Clark:** You know, not so much. We know what we're looking for and we're mainly hiring for attitude. We can train the skill sets for hospitality very, very quickly, if you've got the right approach and the right spirit, the right attitude, the right enthusiasm. We're a lot more methodical about it than we used to be, I'll admit. And hired that first young lady, Stacy Knight, out of the first night's crowd. We didn't know much about employment practices and discrimination and harassment and all the things we deal with, obviously, in being an employer today.

By the way, we employ about five hundred people at any one time today, so obviously things have changed considerably. But what was important, we did have an appreciation of how important people are to our business. Our people are our business and when they interact with our customers, absolutely our whole reputation goes on the line with every one of those interactions.

So our people are special to us. They've got to deliver a nice experience, one that people want to recreate over and over and over again, for us to be successful. So we spend an awful lot of time coaching people up, trying to catch them doing things right and reinforcing those positive behaviors. That's who we are, that's how we're made, and we realize that it takes a lot of great people every single day to continue to build the brand. And we'll never have it made.

Like I said, every time we interact with another customer the whole reputation kind of goes on the line. So you've got to keep building it. It's eternal. As long as we want to be in this business we've got to be working hard to make sure that we're doing that and delivering that every single day.

**JE:** Can you size up a prospective employee pretty fast because you're looking for attitude and smile? Are you able to say within the first five minutes, "This person is going to be good for us," or not?

**SC:** I would like to think so. Now I'll be honest, I don't personally select the employees anymore. But I would sure hope that that's what we're looking for. You know, I can't speak to it exactly but every employee we hire goes through what we call Smiles 101.

And in Smiles 101 they learn some history of the company and they get about forty-five minutes of me going through our vision of greatness and what my expectations are. And I absolutely tell people, "You know, this stuff is not optional. If you cannot do and don't want to do this willingly, please don't clock in again, don't work here. We can agree to disagree agreeably, go do something else. Please still be our customer. It doesn't make you a bad person but it will make you a bad fit." And just stress how important they are, that they will determine the future of the place. And if they don't want to do all of these things they're going to basically tear down what we've worked so hard for all these years to build up.

Most people buy in, some don't. But if they go, in effect, they self-select out we can't have it. We can't tolerate anything short of really enthusiastically trying to help us grow and build and deliver that experience to our customers.

**JE:** We're sitting in a conference room here. Right on the wall behind you is the vision of greatness with team members, with guests, and with suppliers. Can you just summarize what is stated on that?

**SC:** Certainly. Well, the vision of greatness does talk about how we want to relate, how we're going to take the core values that we agreed that we shared back in 1990, when that was

created. That was twenty-two years ago, and how we want that to be manifested and acted out in the way we run our company. So those three core constituents, these are critical.

We put our team members first, because if we don't have a great team we're not going to have any customers. Now without external customers there's no doubt the business is dead, we're done, all the buildings are for sale, nobody has a job, we're just out of business. But we decided to put the team members first because, really, if we don't have a great team we're not going to have customers. So that's why they're arranged the way they are.

But, you know, up there, the very first thing under team members says, "To establish a climate of openness, mutual respect, and teamwork." Well, the idea of openness is, "Hey, we got to be able to talk to you very directly, candidly about what's expected, what we've got to do to be successful."

Mutual respect, we require that everybody treats everybody on the team with dignity and respect. Obviously people are going to like some more than others, but everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. A life lesson my father taught me very, very early in my life.

And last but not least, teamwork. You got to be willing to do whatever needs to be done right now with a sense of urgency. Because in our business we've got to be respectful of our customers' time and sense of urgency is critical. So if you don't have energy and you're not willing to do anything asked, I never want to hear, "That's not my job, that's not my section." No, if you're on the clock you do whatever is required right now. And if you can't agree with that that's okay, but you can't work here.

And I also point out that I will do the same thing. If I go in the restrooms and they're trashy I pick it up. I don't go find somebody else to pick it up, I do it. When we're behind busing tables, I bus tables. You know, whatever it is, right now, it's got to be done.

That's just one line out of that. There's a lot of lines there.

**JE:** But it's interesting too that it's very important that you work with suppliers and you probably harken back to your father on that—

**SC:** I would?

**JE:** ...because you said earlier that they were some of his best friends.

**SC:** Oh absolutely.

**JE:** So they weren't there just to serve you but they were friends of yours.

**SC:** That's correct. And we have similar relationships. I mean, the first thing it says under that is, "We encourage longstanding and mutually profitable relationships." You know, it's not about beating every supplier up to get the absolute last dollar out of every one of them. It's about working together, having a lifelong mutually profitable relationship where you really are on the same team. And we really, whenever we talk about it we talk about our supplier/partners, because they are partners. We cannot be successful without great suppliers.

It just amplified for me even more when we got in the promotional products business. Because so much of what we do in that industry is, someone wants this pen, for example, with their logo on it. Well, we place that order for you and we get you a proof that you can look at, either a virtual sample on paper, or maybe a physical sample if it's that important to you. But at the end of the day, another manufacturer makes this pen, prints that pen, and drop-ships it straight to your location. If they don't do a great job our 100 percent satisfaction guarantee kicks in and, hey, you're not out a dime, we are.

So we've got to have great suppliers to have that kind of trust in them to offer that 100 percent satisfaction guarantee. And I've got examples where when that supplier messes it up I still stand behind it. It's what I say so it's what I do.

I tell our people, "There's no amount of money that's going to compromise my values. You can't buy my values, I don't care how big the order is."

The biggest one that I can give you a hard and fast example on was forty-five thousand fans messed up by our supplier. Didn't get there on time and the sales person calls me and says, "Well, what do I do?"

I said, "We stand behind it, what's our guarantee?"

"100 percent satisfaction guarantee, right?"

"That's right. So they pay nothing."

"Oh, okay, just want to make sure."

But that's eighteen thousand dollars on the line. You can't buy my values or my principles for eighteen thousand dollars. We do what we say we're going to do.

**JE:** Um-hmm (agreement).

**SC:** Fortunately, she was able to get an unprinted product and was able to ship it in in time and the customer got what they needed, thankfully. But, hey, there was no question over the money, whether or not we were going to stand behind it.

**JE:** Yeah.

## Chapter 20 - 4:45

### Alcohol

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**John Erling:** You and other friends of yours in the bar business see kids come in, and they get in trouble because of alcohol. And maybe even the early stages of alcoholism. You must spot some of that going on. Did you see that as a concern down through the years?

**Stan Clark:** You know, it's a great question. I'm going to answer it probably not exactly directly. I'm certainly not a counselor. I certainly don't know all there is to know about that. But I



do know one thing, we have required, everyone who serves alcohol goes through ACE training, which is Alcohol Compliance Education, ACE. And we require that of everyone that touches alcohol or that serves alcohol, how to spot when someone's had a little too much. Techniques for when to cut them off and how to cut them off without creating any more animosity than it will. And it will, when someone's had too much. We've just been as proactive as we can be.

We have confiscated literally thousands of false IDs, turned them into the Stillwater Police Department. Once we put liquor by the drink in, it is a felony to serve an underage person liquor or wine, anything stronger than 3-2 beer. We got very, very serious about knowing that we were doing it lawfully and that we weren't putting young people who came to Stillwater, Oklahoma, to go to Oklahoma State University and the situation of having a felony on their record. It was as much, frankly, to protect our team members as it was to protect our customers.

We try to be very diligent about not over serving individuals and encouraging them to have a designated driver, cutting them off. We've actually driven people home before, called cabs, we're very conscientious about it to the extent that we can be. Fortunately, we've never had any kind of claims against us for anything that was inappropriate.

Pretty good track record in thirty-seven years of having been in the business. And I'm very, very proud for that. And again, I'm very proud of the diligence of our management team and all the people that are involved in it. They take it very seriously.

We actually had a situation where a training server served some underage kids this year. It was a total fluke. We had ABLE agents in our business, we had two of our hospitality managers verbally engaging the ABLE agents when this went down. This was a trainee following a trainer. The trainer's not supposed to leave the trainee in the presence of the guests, but had left him to do some errand for the table. And at that point in time, two underage kids order a drink.

This young person had been trained, took the IDs and looked at them, handed them back, and then served them. So once he gets popped he confesses that he's dyslexic and that he actually couldn't read the IDs. But we're still going down, you know?

So the legal process goes through. We go down to ABLE, we'd never had anything like this at Mexico Joe's—this occurred at Mexico Joe's. We went down to plead our case in front of their judge. Told him all of the circumstances surrounding it, and mostly showed how hurt we were, how sorry we were, how regretful we were. And I think we really made an impression on him.

They reduced the fine as far as they could just because of our track record. But we went down to say, "Look, we can write the check, but we just want you to know, this isn't who we are, this isn't what we stand for."

Our general manager and our director of restaurant operations who has been here for twenty-eight years and me, all went down there to show how off this was and how this isn't who we are.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** And I think we made an impression on him. We were given an opportunity for six months of, in effect, probation. At which time, if everything was clean that that could actually go away. Which we were very appreciative of. We didn't really expect that when we went. I just wanted to make sure that they knew that, "Hey, we haven't changed our standards any. This was a fluke deal. And there were a lot of extenuating circumstances."

And, you know, as much as I hate it, the young man who was dyslexic was terminated. I mean, he did it. If he had even told us it might have been different. Obviously we wouldn't have allowed him to be the one that checked an ID, but we could have made an accommodation for that. We could have said, "If you have anybody that needs to be ID'd have the manager check the IDs for you."

Hopefully that's an example.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** It's a real example, it's not the most positive example I could give you, but it shows you how we address it when it happens.

**JE:** Um-hmm (agreement).

**SC:** So we're very conscientious.

## Chapter 21 - 2:20

### Public Speaking

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**John Erling:** These days you're called upon to publicly speak, called into classrooms and business classes. Is that true?

**Stan Clark:** That's true.

**JE:** Right.

**SC:** And that's been an absolute joy for me. In fact, just last night I spoke to a Debates and Dilemmas class on campus in the Entrepreneurship College. The Dilemma of Values, was the subject matter. And my co-presenter last night was a dear friend, his name is Marty Grubbs. And Marty is the senior pastor at the Crossings Church in Oklahoma City.

So it was interesting, Marty's opening comment to the students last night was, "Well, we're kind of the odd couple up here because I run a church and he sells beer." He says, "He goes to church and I like to drink beer." And that's how he introduced himself to the students.

But it was just a great deal and just kind of ad-juxtapose how I view the values my parents raised me on and what the core values are at the Crossings Church. It was just a great dialogue with Marty and I and the students for more than two hours. And then it went informal. We moved to a restaurant here in town and continued for another about an hour or so. It was really, really exciting. I love doing that kind of thing.

The very first time I had a chance to speak in public I was invited to Woodward, Oklahoma, to address the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet. And this was back in 1993. I just thought to myself, “Holy cow, you know, why do they want this bar guy?” By then I was obviously a restaurateur as well.

But when people ask me what I do I always say, “Well, I got a beer joint in Stillwater.” You know, because that’s how I started. But I just kind of told her story, I mean, that’s why they invited me.

By the end of the night, people came up and they talked about how special their experience at Eskimo Joe’s had been. And what a big part of their experience at Oklahoma State it had been.

My adrenalin never probably ran hotter or higher in my whole career. It was just an aha moment. “Wow! We’ve really affected people that much.” It was one of the great evenings. And I decided at that point in time, “Boy, if I get invited I’m going, because this place means something to people.” And to get to hear that story, I think, would really be important. By then, I’m thinking to myself slightly differently, “What’s my role and how do I add value to this place?” And public speaking is one of the ways I think I’ve really connected with an awful lot of people. It’s been a big part of what I’ve done for the last nearly twenty years now.

## Chapter 22 - 3:05

### Student Business Advice

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**John Erling:** The students in business, they’re asking you questions and so forth. And I suppose some of them want to be a Stan Clark. And they want to know, “How can I start a business?” You may have advice for that.

But you’re aware, no doubt, that you were born at the right time. You were in the right place at the right time and then the energy to go with it. Not everybody who wants to get into business finds that unique place where you were at that time.

**Stan Clark:** Absolutely. I totally agree. I mean, so much of what we did was lucky in timing. But a lot of it is, one, we just stuck our neck out and we did it. You know? That’s what

separates most people. Most people will talk about it, they'll think about it, they'll analyze it to the nth degree and they won't ever do anything.

I'm a student of leadership and management and all the industries I'm involved in constantly and incessantly I like to think of myself as a lifelong learner and that's definitely a core value of our company. And we demand it of everybody who wants to be a leader within our organization, they have to read, they have to go to seminars. They've got to keep growing personally.

But to your point, one of the things I've learned is a C plan that's executed well is a lot better than waiting to make the plan absolutely perfect. And paralysis by analysis and you won't do anything about it. Sometimes you've just go to do.

Tom Peters was famous for the old quote, "Ready, fire, aim." You know, go, go forward, do something. And then tweak, make it a little bit better.

So I think at least we jumped off, we started, we did something. Obviously you've got to do that. Now if someone's actually looking at, "Do I want to be in business?" the question you have to ask, is there a demand for what you want to do? Can you create revenue? And ultimately, can you be profitable? Because if you can't be profitable you can't do any good for yourself or for anybody else.

That's the first thing you learn in the very first business class you take. There's only one reason to go into business and that's to be profitable. You can do it because you're passionate, you can do it because you want to serve a social cause, you can do it for reasons other than that and hopefully there's overarching reasons maybe where your passion is, not just about bottom line.

Because that's the case for me. You know, I love all the good we're able to do. But I'm not so naïve to think if I weren't profitable I can't do those things. You got to have that first before you can give it away or before you can help somebody else. I can't employ people if we're not profitable.

That's probably the greatest legacy I've got is how many lives we've touched. How many young people, while they were in school here in Stillwater, have been employed at Eskimo Joe's? And we have about five hundred people today, but in 2012, we'll send out over a thousand W2s. So over a thousand people will have been a part of this thing, at least for part of this year. That's a lot of folks. Take that times thirty-seven years, it's a lot.

Now I didn't have a thousand in '75. I told you I had thirteen in '83, at any one time. But for the last twenty years or so we've employed an awful lot of people and affected a lot of lives.

**Chapter 23 - 4:00****Philanthropy**

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**John Erling:** You've also then are being asked to contribute to a number of charities and so forth.

**Stan Clark:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Is there an entity of Stan Clark Companies that does that?

**SC:** Well, I don't have an independent foundation or anything established, but what I did realize a long time ago was, one, we needed to organize our giving so that it could be significant enough to actually make a difference. And also that I did need to centralize the asks, if you will, because we realize that people are asking Eskimo Joe's and then they were asking Mexico Joe's and then they were asking Giuseppe's and they were asking Joe's Clothes. So, you know, we were actually getting quadruple-dipped a lot of times. I'm not faulting anybody for that, that's just the nature of it. We did centralize, at least, how people ask us for things.

And then, back in 1998, we, for the first time, actually took on a partnership with Special Olympics of Oklahoma. We went to them and said, "Listen, you all are a windfall to us. You bring the summer games in May of every year. It's the week after school let's out and our business doesn't go down, it actually goes up. Because there's so many athletes and so many families and coaches here, we just want to do something. We want to give something back."

And as we brainstormed with their leadership they said, "Well, why don't honor our athletes by creating a tee shirt? Your tee shirts are so popular they're all over there buying them anyway."

So we did. And it's the first time that we co-branded with a cause to create something special. Since then we've probably given Special Olympics of Oklahoma north of seventy-five thousand dollars off of the sales of those tee shirts every year. The athletes are honored to have a special tee shirt made just for them.

But it's the first of many, many examples that I can cite where we took this great big grin, Eskimo Joe's smile, and we've done something for the greater good. And it is so rewarding to this day.

Just this week we had a general managers' meeting and we recapped what we've done from cause-marketing shirts so far this year, in 2012, and so far we've given over seventeen thousand dollars to various causes with which we've co-branded.

One of them is teachers. We've given over six thousand dollars to the Stillwater Public Education Foundation and the College of Education over at Oklahoma State. This year

alone we've donated to the Girl Scouts. We've donated to Special Olympics of Oklahoma. I can't remember what the other causes are so far this year. Project Woman, all those different causes, we've got a little shirt in there that is helping their cause. It's good business for us, it creates a little different demand set for us, but it's win-win. And again, I can only help if I'm profitable enough to help.

So that's just some fun examples of some things that have happened. The most significant one, just completely off the charts, back when Coach Eddie Sutton was still coaching at Oklahoma State, Eddie had that infamous scowl. When he was unhappy with a call or with the play of his players, you know, he had just that mean scowl on his face. And when Eddie would jump up off the bench to get after the referees the crowd would just go into this unbelievable chant of, "Eddie! Eddie! Eddie!" And of course, the place was always packed when he was coach.

So we kind of took those ideas and we created a shirt to benefit the American Cancer Society through the Coaches versus Cancer plan. And in one basketball season we cut a check to the American Cancer Society for sixty-seven thousand dollars off the sales of that one tee shirt. It was just off the charts popular.

So again, the best and the most significant example I've got of how we've been able to leverage the popularity of the Eskimo Joe's brand for a cause, and create demand for our product, and through our profitability we are able to make those kinds of contributions.

## Chapter 24 - 3:30

### Hall of Fame

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**John Erling:** Had you been asked to franchise—

**Stan Clark:** Countless times.

**JE:** ...Eskimo Joe's?

**SC:** Countless times. People want to license it, people want to franchise it, and we just always turned it down. Just having grown it from next to nothing, less than nine hundred square feet originally, today there's over twenty-eight thousand square feet under a roof over there. You know, it's just kind of hard to think about really putting that name on something that I'm not at least hands-on running. And really, I'm just kind of reluctant to even do it again.

You know, there's a lot of people that have made countless units, and there's obviously all kinds of change out there that have been wildly successful. My deal has never been about making the most money or cashing out with the most money. It's really been about being unique and being special to our customers and to our team members. You know,

we've just had so much fun doing it I'm pretty happy. So the goal isn't really to just blow it out and make it as big as it might could be.

**JE:** So then the day that Steve says, "Let's go start a bar," to the day that this fall you'll be inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

**SC:** Wow. I have to say that's the most humbling thing that has come down the pike yet. I was really surprised when I got that call. And obviously, excited and proud and appreciative, mostly humbled. Wow, when I look at the people who have gone before me into that it's great company. And it's just very humbling. And I'm very excited about it and look forward to it.

I'm very pleased my mother will be there and get to see that because I know that's going to be meaningful to her. But it's very exciting. It's to the credit of all these people that have been a part of this team for all these years. It's Eskimo Joe's and the reach and the awareness, the popularity, obviously, that's even got me in consideration for that.

And again, I have to credit the people that make that happen every single day. That have created enough good feeling in enough hearts and minds that we would even be under consideration for such an honor.

**JE:** Not everybody comes along with the skill set to match their vision and to be a success. A lot of people wake up, they go to school, they go to OSU, they don't know what they want to be. They graduate from OSU, they still don't know what they want to be. And eventually they find a job that maybe they're good at and that's life.

How blessed you are to find what you wanted to do and you had the passion and the skill to go with it.

**SC:** Well, it is a blessing. Again, I always look back to my parents. Gosh, had my dad not taken the time and the interest and been so passionate, is the right word, in explaining to me why he was doing what he was doing, and why it was so important to him, and why he spent so much time doing it. He was just a phenomenal mentor.

So at age twenty-two, having been around his friends, his peers, and his share with me what all that really meant. While it looked like just a whole lot of fun, and was, but how important it all was. I actually probably was pretty mature when it came to how important people were. So I think I just had a great opportunity there.

I didn't know I wanted to do the bar business but in hindsight it made perfect sense. I actually had entertained a lot even in high school. You know, once we had that pool table, man, I wanted everybody to come to our place and I wanted to play pool and just engage friends that way. So it was pretty natural. But it absolutely is a blessing.

It was a fluke. It was a wild hair, whatever you want to call it. I wasn't pursuing that on that Sunday afternoon. I was relaxing on the couch. So it did kind of fall into my lap in that respect. So that absolutely was just pure luck, pure luck.

**Chapter 25 - 3:30****Passion and Hard Work**

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**John Erling:** Is that the way you'd sum it up right now?

**Stan Clark:** Well, I can't make up something that it wasn't. I mean, you know, I'm sure glad I happened to be over there that day.

**JE:** But I hear this and students will listen to this, when you were over there swinging a hammer and all it took a lot of hard work.

**SC:** Oh absolutely.

**JE:** Let anybody think otherwise.

**SC:** No, no, no. Long, long hours. For all those years when it was just such a small business, now I wasn't making a lot of money but I was successful, I was paying my note. I was happy, I was employing people. I was having an absolute ball. And that's the cool thing.

If you can find something that you really enjoy doing, gosh, hard work, hey, we all work most of our adult lives. I mean, that's what you spend all your time doing. If you can find something you love to do that's a whole lot better than not loving what you're doing.

Actually, when I talk to young people, high school age, even college age, candidly, even business audiences, I say, "Gosh, you know, if you don't love what you're doing take a look around. Don't go through this entire life doing something you don't love to do." To me that would just be a shame.

A lot of times we're penned into a corner, we've got to do it, we've got to have the paycheck. And I get that, that's okay.

Another thing I would comment is, every work experience is valuable. We learn so much. I was reflecting last night talking to students, 1969, I'm sixteen years old. I was working at Top Dog, a little hotdog stand at 51st and Yale and Tulsa, the night we landed a man on the moon. I remember I was watching that on what was probably a seven-inch black and white television screen inside a Top Dog in Tulsa.

So I was learning how to treat a customer, how to interact in a retail transaction with a customer, at age sixteen.

Later, I sacked groceries at Sipes at 61st and Yale. When I came to Stillwater I took a job at Ken's Pizza. I was a delivery guy when they first opened the first Ken's here. I made a buck and a quarter an hour. Two semesters later I was assistant manager of that unit and I was making two bucks an hour, which seemed like a lot of money at the time. Especially when you were working forty hours a week.



I figured out real quick you can't spend much money when you're at work. So you know, you work that much, you make eighty bucks, back then that was quite a bit of money, you know. So I was living high on the hog.

I actually almost derailed my educational process to stay on with that company. I liked it so much.

So again, the realization that I was good at that, that people liked me, that I could treat a guest well, and get something positive back. That's what I tell our people all the time. We're blessed. When we do a good job we know it immediately, the customer is having a blast. And they reward our people, we're tipped. We have basically commissioned sales people out on the floor. The better time they show somebody, the more they sell them, the more money they're likely to make.

Anyway, the underlying principle is just if you like what you're doing it's not even like working, really. It's just so much fun. It's always been rewarding to me just because I liked what I was doing.

And I like what I'm doing this morning. I mean, sitting here getting to reflect on this and feeding that back to you, John, I mean, you can tell the passion in my voice. I couldn't make this stuff up. It's who I am.

So, yes, it's a blessing.

**JE:** And maybe one day you'll write a book.

**SC:** Maybe.

**JE:** Well, I want to thank you for this time. I know you're a busy man. But you've given us a couple of hours of your time. And students from all walks of life will want to listen to this and around the world too, to [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com). and the Stan Clark story. Thank you.

**SC:** Thank you, John.

**JE:** You bet.

## Chapter 26 - 0:33

### Conclusion

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).