

Hayward Cooper Carl Livingston Interview

Carl: Where are you from, Hayward?

Cooper: From Pinder's Point, Grand Bahama, and was born in March 1931. I lived approximately 18 months in the U.S.

Carl: Did you go over there on some kind of project?

Cooper: Yes – we went as farm workers.

Carl: And then you worked at Pine Ridge for some time? What did you do at Pine Ridge?

Cooper: I worked in the lumber mills as a trimmer

Carl: Did you work there before Mr. Groves had it? And then after Mr. Groves had it?

Cooper: Yes, that's right.

Carl: How did you like working in the lumber industry?

Cooper: It was beautiful because there was nothing else to do. It was the only industry on Grand Bahama.

Carl: What kind of family do you have?

Cooper: I have 5 children. One is living in Kentucky, one is married and she is teaching in Hawksbill, and one is in Jamaica. The one in Jamaica is going to medicine school. Yes, I live in Pinder's Point.

Carl: When did you leave the Abaco Limber Company?

Cooper: I believe it was in '54 – somewhere around there

Carl: What did you do after you left the Abaco Lumber Co.?

Cooper: I let them to go with the Freeport Authority. The Abaco Lumber Co. turned over gradually, I think – Mrs. Groves would know more about it than I do. It became The Port Authority from the Abaco Lumber Company.

Carl: The Abaco Lumber Co. was really responsible for the starting of Freeport, wasn't it?

Cooper: 100%. Yes

Carl: And now we have a great thing here, I think. How did you get to be a business man in Freeport?

Cooper: I got started on chickens, so I ordered 100 head of chicken – my son ordered that for me, and another guy ordered a 100 head of chicken for me, and I had 200 head of chicken, and I worked and I worked with the Freeport Port Authority under the Abaco Lumber Co. until I could get about 2,700 – and then I decided to work for myself.

Carl: What did you call your chicken operation?

Cooper: It was called the Allen Poultry at that time. The farm is in Hunters

Carl: And now that you are in the fried chicken business – do you own the Kentucky Fried Chicken business in the center of Freeport – this must be worth a lot of money.

Cooper: I'd say yes. The volume is very high.

Carl: How about the other Kentucky Friend Chicken. Do you own an interest in that as well as this one?

Cooper: No, no interest. This is the biggest and best one in Freeport.

Carl: What do you think about Freeport now? Do you think it is going to continue to prosper.

Cooper: I can see a lot of prosperity ahead. It seems to be more grounded (?).

Carl: Yes, there seems to be a good base of industry on Freeport here now, wouldn't you say?

Cooper: Yes

Carl: Do you own an interest in the Burger King operation in Freeport, as well as the Kentucky Friend Chicken?

Cooper: Yes I do.

Carl: It seems to me there is a new class of Bahamian business man coming up. Go ahead. We're still talking with Mr. Hayward Cooper. This place was empty a long time, wasn't it, Mr. Cooper; it took them a long time to issue them a license. Was there any particular reason for that?

Cooper: Yes, Government said it was a policy that small businesses should be owned by Bahamians; that does not mean just black Bahamians – it means white or black Bahamians and the first Fried Chicken was owned by foreigners and this was the objection.

Carl: Well, of course, small businesses are a problem in any country, but that's always been the problem in the Bahamas – retail businesses have been quite restrictive. Tell us a little bit about how you live in your spare time here in Freeport. Do you have any spare time – do you play golf?

Cooper; It may sound stupid, but in my spare time I lay down and rest, or go to church.

Carl: What church do you belong to?

Cooper: The Baptist.

Carl: I bet you are an officer of the church, are you not.

Cooper: Yes, I am, and go every Sunday.

Carl: You have a fine business here, and your volume should go very high in a year's time. At one time someone told me that Burger King was the fourth or fifth largest in the world in volume. Is that true?

Cooper: It is the second.

Mrs. Groves: Remember Ferrera? Do you remember when you used to drive a truck, and come by ...

(the rest is not audible) (something about Colin Malone) (Mrs. Groves was too far away from the recording machine)

Cooper: I remember the first truck that come on this island. There was no one to drive it – no truck drivers on the island, but somehow we found one guy.

Carl: You had plenty of stone masons but no truck driver. Right? Tell me, Mr. Cooper, how do you teach your people to process your fried chicken? Do you have a school that you send them to, or do you teach them yourself.

Cooper: Well, I'se teach them myself, and we have a projector that shows them just what to do, how to act, and how to react with the customer, be friendly. See that ??????? It cost \$900; teach people how to work, and give good service.

Carl: Well, that's wonderful for you seem to be adopting modern methods, and I know that your product is good because I have eaten it, and it is better than any product I can find in Miami.

Cooper: We want to do our best, particularly because of the trouble we had before; right now we can cook 116 chickens an hour, and we have a man here who can cut up a chicken in 11seconds into 9 pieces.

Carl: Well, things to be very much on the up and up for the Bahamas, and Freeport in particular, and as long as we don't have a worldwide war and recession. We want to thank you for this interview, Mr.Cooper. You've been very nice and very kind.