

Temple University Food Truck Oral History Collection

Title: Henry Lam (Hank's)

Narrator: Henry Lam

Interviewers: Clare Mccabe

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Date: December 7, 2022

Clare Mccabe: Hi, this is Clare Mccabe. Today is December 7th. I am interviewing Henry with Hank's. Not a problem. If you don't mind at all, I can kind of step in as well. That's all right. So thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me. My first question is, how did Hank's begin?

Henry Lam: Hank's was a small project after leaving my former company just to do something small on my own and give myself more free time. As well as a more balanced life.

CM: Yeah, absolutely. So how long has Hank's been at Temple?

HL: This is our first year.

CM: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. This is also my first year at Temple. So, Hank's is my favorite place on the wall. Did you ever think about starting a food truck before heading here? Or were you always kind of looking for a non-mobile storefront space?

HL: I looked at a few food trucks prior to working corporate. But Temple is definitely a space I want to come back to. I was a former student at Temple. So this is one area I wanted to come back to when opportunity came, I took it.

CM: Absolutely. Go owls. So are you from Philadelphia then?

HL: Yep. Born and raised.

CM: Wonderful. And do you like working with Temple University?

HL: Oh yeah, I do. The university is wonderful. The faculty, everybody. Everybody's great here.

CM: Yeah. It's wonderful. So I also have a couple of questions about what it's like to kind of work in this community of food service organizations, what's the relationship like with the other people kind of on the wall?

HL: Oh, everybody's definitely supportive of each other to make sure that we all grow together and build a stronger foundation around the university.

CM: Yeah. So collaborative, you would say?

HL: Yep, definitely.

CM: Yeah, that's wonderful. Okay, what's your favorite thing on the menu?

HL: My favorite, I would have to say the dumplings.

CM: My favorite is the Dandan noodles, I think, But I think anytime I see...

HL: That is our most popular.

CM: Really? Most popular? So do you see kind of a future for Hanks at Temple University, then?

HL: Yeah, we'll definitely be here growing over the years. We plan to keep expanding the menu and changing it seasonally, keeping the students you know, interested in the menu every semester.

CM: Wonderful. Okay, let's see how long... Great, I think unless there's anything else kind of you want to tell us about working in food service at Temple. I think that might be it.

HL: I think that Temple is a wonderful space. I think the campus university, everybody that we've met and worked with to get this space has been wonderful to us. And everybody's been welcoming. So it's definitely a space that everybody should help keep growing. Especially all the food trucks here. It's good. That's so diverse compared to other campuses.

CM: Oh, yeah. I mean, my previous school, we didn't have anything like this. So it's so cool to be able to come to Temple and not just have to eat at the dining hall.

HL: For sure, I think that's the best part. And I remember when I was here too, there's just always that opportunity to have something else every single day. And everyone's been here for like 20 something years. So it's nice being the new guy. But everybody, I'm glad everybody's welcoming at the same time.

CM: Oh, good. Yeah. So how has the food scene changed since you were a student? I guess is another good question.

HL: It actually hasn't changed too much. So it's very familiar, a lot of the brands that have already been here. Yeah, just kind of, it's nice to have that still. And you know, I've always been returning to all these places. And I'm glad the staples have been here for so long. They also fought COVID too, so that's good.

CM: Yeah, I'm sure that was a really difficult time period to be a food truck on a university

HL: Yeah, especially with the university closed for that whole period.

CM: Yeah. So this space, did you guys rent the space from Temple?

HL: Yeah.

CM: Are they a good kind of landlord, you'd say?

HL: Oh, they're wonderful. They work with us, and make sure that everything is taken care of.

CM: Oh, good. Alright. Well, thank you very much. I really appreciate you taking the time to do this really short interview.

HL: You're welcome.

CM: I will see you probably sometime again for lunch.

HL: Thank you for stopping in.

CM: Thank you.