

**Temple University Food Truck Oral History Collection**

**Title: Jim Amzovski (Fame's Famous Pizza)**

**Narrator: Jim Amzovski**

**Interviewers: Clare McCabe**

**Location: Philadelphia, PA**

**Date: December 7, 2022**

Clare McCabe: So this is Clare McCabe with the History Department. Today is December 7th. Thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me. Could you introduce yourself?

Jim Amzovski: Sure, Jim Amzovski.

CM: Great. So how long has Fame's been in operation at Temple?

JA: Since 1985.

CM: Wow. And how did it start?

JA: Well, we started off with a food truck. Well, then from there on, we just moved, then they moved us into the food court on 13th Street. And then from there, they built this food court in [19]94. And so we've been here since 1994.

CM: I was doing a little bit of, you know, research in the archives, and I saw that there was originally some concern about the move from the truck to the court, but...

JA: Because at that time, there was nothing on the side. It was totally empty. [Takes order]

CM: Yeah, so just tell me a little bit about the move then.

JA: Well, at that time, the move was, is because when you're on 12th street, there was actually no buildings. The only building was here was Anderson. And then yeah, bell tower, that computer center wasn't even there. And they like pushed us out away from Main Campus. But we've worked it out. Took a few years to build a clientele.

CM: So the original worry was maybe students wouldn't make it this far over?

JA: Yeah, it was really far out.

CM: Yeah. But the clientele was kept up, you said?

JA: In the beginning, it was a little tough. And eventually they learned where we're at and just started coming. Took about a good four years.

CM: Four years, okay. And Temple owns this little space here, right?

JA: Yes.

CM: So what kind of made you want to start a food truck in the first place?

JA: Well, my parents are immigrants, we came here and they started off with food. They had a hotdog cart. They used to go to Center City. From there on... then my father passed away at a young age. So me and my brother took over the family business.

CM: And from there, you went to pizza?

JA: Yeah. Well, my mother actually told us how to make the pizza.

CM: Oh, yeah?

JA: Yeah, so it was her recipe from the beginning.

CM: That's cool. That's great. It's a great story.

JA: We were the first original pizza place here to make actually fresh pizza.

CM: Wow. That's a nice little title to be able to hold on to.

JA: It's a little tough.

CM: Well, I'll mean, I'll say this for the record, which is that Fame's is my favorite pizza on campus. We get it a lot for like classes. We pick it up for like pizza parties, stuff like that.

JA: That's great. I have mad pizza orders in the morning. I have to prepare for all the classes.

CM: Are you from Philadelphia?

JA: Yeah, born and raised.

CM: Born and raised, wonderful. So what drew you to Temple originally? Why not stay in Center City?

JA: Well, my brother, I know there was a truck for sale. So he found it, and we just purchased it. From there on we just stood here. We had other pizza shops all over in Jersey, in Wildwood New Jersey. We had our fish [unintelligible] and we just sold everything. But this, this place is a little better because we are off on weekends. I'm home every night by nine o'clock.

CM: That's really nice. I didn't even think of that.

JA: Yeah, I don't want to sit... other places you're there seven days a week. You make less money. But as you get older...

CM: I worked in a restaurant all through high school and college and that was the thing I hated is I was there till you know, two in the morning or whatever.

JA: Yeah, it's tough.

CM: So, all right. So I'm also curious about the culture of the food community. Is it collaborative, between you and the other kind of food trucks?

JA: Yeah. There's a few of us we've been here for like, Oriental, Chinese food. He's been here not as long as me but he was here, one of the originals here. Actually, him... Well, Ritchie's dad was one of the originals. And us. We're actually the originals that came from that 13th Street. That came here.

CM: Yeah. Cool. Yeah. And then, kind of new people move in as well?

JA: Yeah, a few people sold out. Like Hanks just came. It's been a year. The Mexican guy, he just came.

CM: I was talking to him earlier. He said that he was a Temple student first. So he was like coming here and now he's... Just kind of funny.

JA: Yeah, it's tough. Food business is tough. It's not easy. I kept my children away from it. Made sure they got education. You know.

CM: Yeah, I'm curious also, what's it like to kind of serve for students? Do you find that clientele...

JA: They are pretty easy students. They're not as picky as other people. We actually have a harder time with the employees than anybody else than the students.

CM: Really? I guess college students will eat anything.

JA: Yeah, they're easy. They never complain if we run out of something.

CM: That's nice. Let's see. Yeah, I mean, what's it kind of been like then to watch people come and go from such a long time?

JA: It's been so many years now. It's like now I'm starting to forget cause it's been so many years. Yeah it's funny because we have people come back after 20 years. And they're like, Oh, you're still here and you're still here? It's crazy.

CM: Oh, students and things.

JA: Yeah, students. I should get that. [Takes phone call].

CM: My last couple of questions are really what it's like to work with Temple now as opposed to just looking in, I guess.

JA: The first administration we worked with, they were good. They would actually help us. The second one, they were the worst.

CM: Really?

JA: They weren't care about us for anything. They want to do anything, they want to prepare. Now, we have a new administration here, and now they're actually working with us. They're doing better. They're gonna remodel the food court this summer.

CM: Wow.

JA: You know, they're... they're much better. But the second administration was like, they didn't care anything we said. They didn't care. What if something broke, they didn't care. It was really tough working with the second administration.

CM: Yeah, that's certainly a shame.

JA: It was like the worst thing ever. Even when COVID happened, it was still the second administration. They didn't give us a break on the rent, we had to pay all that back rent.

CM: No way, while the university was closed?

JA: We were closed for almost two years.

CM: My goodness. I'm sure that was really hard.

JA: Yeah, it was tough. To get through, to get paid. There was time when we were working for nothing, just to try to pay the rent. They didn't care. That second administration was the worst.

CM: I'm sorry to hear that. But this new one you said is better?

JA: This one's better. They understand, they listen a little more. They talk. If we have concerns, they will come and address it. The other one, we would call them and we would never get a response.

CM: That's a disgrace.

JA: It was really bad.

CM: Especially you know, the food trucks and the food on campus is such a big part of this campus. You think you'd want to invest in that a little bit?

JA: Yeah, it was a crazy thing.

CM: Well, I think unless there's anything else that you want to add.

JA: Everything's good, everything's fine. We're still here. I don't know, I plan on retiring soon. We'll see.

CM: Well, thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me. I really appreciate it. And it's good to get your perspective as one of the veterans on campus.