

Transcript of interview with Ray France ("Chicken Man")

Interviewer: Jess Lamar Reece Holler

Date: September 20, 2018

Location: Delaware Fairgrounds racetrack

Jess: (inaudible)

Ray: ... since 1981. 1982 is when the chicken hat. A buddy (inaudible) was in a Chinese restaurant after we got back from the Meadows watching the Adios. The chicken was on a fireplace. He stole the chicken from the Chinese joint and we've been adding pins, things that mean something to us. He passed away. Just stuff like that and we got a picture, a pin, from every year since, like, 1981.

Jess: Are you the only one you've seen with a Jug hat or...

Ray: I'm the only one you'll see with a chicken on his head. They call me the "Chicken Man." I've seen other hats but not like mine or as many buttons and so forth. This comerates the history of the Jug every year. Like Big Bad John's up there. Everyone knows that horse. And there's a lot of different horses all the way around it. And we love Ohio State, so we have Eddie George's jersey on the chicken itself with George's name on the back. So it's amazing.

Jess: What do you make the culture of the Little Brown Jug special? What's it all about?

Ray: It's about... I say it's about fellowship. You come down here, you break bread with whoever you want to break bread with and you can watch amazing horses and amazing people. That makes this place the way it is now. You know, there's no violence or you gotta worry about anything. You can leave your purse laying out. Fellowship...

Jess: I've seen people...

Ray: The way people treat each other. They treat each other with love and it means a lot instead of being mean. If people don't... You can drink whatever you want down here. Drink whiskey or beer or soda. People don't get mean and drunk and demean each other. That's what I love about it. Everybody is here to have a good time and we all share the same common ground: good horses and fellowship, I think. This is why I (inaudible)

Jess: One last question: Have you seen the Jug change at all from the time you've been attending?

Ray: Yeah. It's got a little bit more commercialized, you know. Us fans set on the backstretch with our chairs and you get this great big tent. They charge 90 bucks a head which kinda pushed us fans down which we don't mind. You can see the (inaudible) around the track which used to be wide open. A little bit changed then, but I gotta give them credit because they got the new Log Cabin ten years ago. So they're spending the money wisely. I just hope they don't push us fans all the way out, for money.

Jess: Anything else you want us to know?

Ray: No ma'am.

Jess: Thank you so much.