

*The * Satan's Breath® - Elmo's Blends* Story*

My working life began at the age of 16 years old in bridge construction. That is when I felt as if I had enough education to last me a life time, so I quit school. Prior to that I worked at nights and week ends as a short order cook while attending school. I lied about my age at 14 and got a night job as a short order cook at Honeycutt's Truck Stop, in Lucama, NC as a line cook. That in its self was an education; because you learned in a hurry never mess up a truck driver's meal. They were long late hours, which caused me to end up quitting school. I could not stay awake in class. I'm not using it as an excuse, for I was doing only what I wanted to do; work and have a little change in my pocket.

After leaving school, I found a job the first day. My working life really began at a hard full time pace at the age of 16 years old working in bridge construction. That is probably one of the hardest, most dangerous jobs a kid can have, especially in 1949. Only youth and excitement can keep you surviving. It was fun on the bridge crew too, for we had to do our own grub each meal over an open fire. We had no grills. Even back in that early year, it was fun to take a little snort while cooking over that camp fire. When you are not at home and working with a crew of 27 men you learn in a hurry. It makes you feel just like a man on your own and no one to boss you around as long as you did your job and listen to the man paying you.

I was employed all my working life in the engineering field whether it was in construction, engineering or both, but I still had a passion for cooking. This probably stems from the passion of eating and accounts for my variety in tastes. I guess I do not have a specialty. I just like food. Even when in the navy and working as an engineer during the day, I worked in the kitchen at night. While in the Navy for 13 years, and traveling to 50+ countries, a lot of flavors rubbed off. The most memorable was from a little old lady down in the Louisiana Bayou that I met while I was in my 20's. This wonderful little old lady at 90

years old had more knowledge in her head about cooking than most. Her grocery store was the swamp and it always had the delicacies she needed for her meals. She, along with my grandmothers, sparked my intrigue with food. Just to smell the spices and the dishes she developed was enough to spark any interest in Cajun cooking and her way of life. That smell is still in my house today because the spices are still mixed by hand in my kitchen the same way I was taught. Just mixing the spices make you want to start cooking. Every time I make another new spice, Martha has to have something cooked with it to give me her opinion. When customers come in I use them for my test kitchen, and listen to their likes and dislikes. Yes, I have made changes sometimes because of these comments.

For almost 20 years I held down 2 jobs. The first, or Job No 1, was for the money of course; and the second was cooking which was what I loved and which also brought in a second income. It made the budget look a lot better.

Upon retiring at the age of 60, I started with 4 spices which I have been making since 1953. I am selling them in our small Mom & Pop shop, Martha's Collection (of Spices & Gifts). They were the Cajun Spice, Creole Seasoning, Hushpuppy & Breader Mix and the Seafood Seasoning. (These are a carry over from Louisiana) The idea of packing the spices under the Registered Trade Mark of "Satan's Breath®" came to mind, not because of the devil, but because of the use of peppers, to eliminate the need for salt. Over the last 13 years it has grown to 100 Spices, all Custom blends with little or no salt, no MSG or fillers of any type. They are about the purest spices you can get. One thing that made the numbers grow as they did was going out to eat and being disappointed with a meal. It meant going home and re-cooking the dish and correcting the taste to please my palate. I am pleased to say that my recipes and seasonings have become well known for the delightful

flavor. We are glad to blend them especially for you to make sure they do not upset your system and bring on an allergy. The dry spices can be turned into a liquid Marinade to help tenderize and flavor meat. See my recipe section for instructions.

At the age of 73, I still love cooking, When I retired at 60, I took over the kitchen at home, which is also a Bed & Breakfast kitchen and started cooking for the guests, holding cooking classes, developing spices and writing cook books. It's amazing that every day brings something new to your attention and the learning cycle continues. I am amazed at while preparing a meal; I will discover something so simple and feel foolish that I have not figured it out before.

The shop is named after my first love, "Martha Totty Barnes", who married me on January 5th, 1957. Martha gave me three wonderful children and that (49 years ago) is when Martha's Collection really first started, with myself and the kids and has grown constantly. I also designed a spice for her which I lovingly call "Hot Totty", which is her maiden name.

I can only thank Martha and God for looking after me all these years and making my life so grand.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all my customers for without them the spices would be just dust on the shelf. Your support and comments make me try even harder.