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The Secret Behind the Cinnamon

Last October, I experienced a breakfast sensation unlike any other. I gave *Will's Cinnamon Shop* a try. As I had heard exceptional feedback from some friends about this newly opened little restaurant, I was anxious to try it, even though I have never been a huge fan of cinnamon rolls. When I arrived, I waited for almost an hour to receive my warm, sweet, and humongous roll; but, the hour-long wait was more than worth it. *Will's Cinnamon Shop*, which is located in downtown Hot Springs, Arkansas opened in September of 2017 with more than one hundred people waiting outside the locked doors at 7:00 a.m. on opening day. As it came time for me to begin contemplating the topic for my documentary film this year in my broadcasting class, *Will's* struck me as an interesting subject. Where has their widespread, immediate success come from? Who is Will? What makes these cinnamon rolls so irresistible?

I began my work on this project by contacting Will Byrd, the owner and founder of *Will's Cinnamon Shop*. He and I scheduled a meeting to get to know each other and to talk about my aspirations for the documentary. Using my notes from our meeting, I planned my questions for Will, who would be my first interviewee for the project. Shortly after our meeting, we scheduled a Friday night to conduct his interview at the shop and a Saturday morning in which I would arrive at *Will's* around 4:30 a.m. to capture the baking process of the cinnamon rolls which typically begins at 3:00 a.m. Arriving at the cinnamon shop before sunrise was a very special

experience. Capturing the process of baking the cinnamon rolls was extremely interesting and satisfying. I truly enjoyed that long morning that lasted until around 10:00 a.m. I particularly enjoyed the shots of their head baker rolling the cinnamon roll dough and dusting the rolls with cinnamon. That morning allowed me a lot of time to play with various shots and good lighting, as the shop is full of windows, that played well off of the uniquely exposed brick walls, the eccentric paintings, and the pastries.

My next priority was to meet with *Red Light Roastery*, a coffee shop that partners with *Will's Cinnamon Shop* to provide a coffee bean only available at *Will's*. *Red Light Roastery* is owned by Adam and Briana Moore and is also located in downtown Hot Springs. This house-turned-coffee-shop was full of quirky details that were interesting to catch on camera. Additionally, I interviewed the Moore couple while I was there. This interview gave me more insight on the relationship between the two shops, as well as the Moore's close relationship with Will.

As I continued brainstorming possible interviews, I decided that Will's wife, Katie Byrd, would be an important perspective, as she has sacrificed a lot to make this dream happen. Katie, with her lively personality, added new details to some subjects that Will had discussed previously, like their challenging hunt for a location. I feel that Katie's storyteller voice added a necessary flow to the documentary.

I also chose to conduct an interview with Brandon Darden, Will's close friend and one of the cinnamon shop's first employees. Brandon was eager to share his enthusiasm for Will's product and for the significant progress he and Katie have made over the last year. Lastly, after I had edited most of the documentary, I decided that I was missing customer feedback and

excitement. To finish out my interviews, I ventured to *Will's Cinnamon Shop* one more time to ask random customers for their opinions on the cinnamon rolls and the shop in general. I came across Debi Lau and her husband, an older couple who are faithful *Will's* customers. Debi was more than happy to share her love for the roll and her joy for the whole shop. Additionally, I grabbed my last portion of b-roll: a 10-year-old redhead little girl who was entirely absorbed by taste of her roll.

This entire experience has been a drastic contrast from the last documentary I produced and edited which was on my lifelong friend and high school varsity tennis player who has autism. With this film, I learned how to focus on a product and business through human perspectives. I grew in my camera operating skills and gained a new respect for b-roll in its ability to tell a story, specifically with the baking process of the film. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed producing and editing this documentary, and I feel that this experience has made me a better producer and editor.