INTERVIEW AT PARK

Big Hongry: [00:00:00] But I'm getting better and not really giving a fuck. Cause I'm like, dude, if I didn't ask about it, it doesn't need to be talked about.

Alastair Boone: Um, all right, we're back. So

Alastair Boone: you, well, I'm just going to let you start from the beginning. So we're here at Bob's. I'm looking around. I see a warehouse. I see a dirt lot. Um, can you just describe kind of like paint the picture? Like how we ended up here.

Big Hongry: Yeah. And how it got started. Well, me personally, I was in Alabama at a film festival and uh, the homie Mo sent me a text and was like, yo, uh, we got another spot going.

Big Hongry: Like we need to come back. And I was like, all right, we'll be on my way back. So got back and there was just like a tiny, uh, little [00:01:00] like, block of concrete that was You ride it a couple different ways kind of look like a coffin It also just kind of look like a just just a slab of fucking concrete It's kind of like a manual pad.

Big Hongry: Yeah, but eventually that got torn out and Over the years the innovation of what we should do to pick up speed or just make the place more fun Make it more a little high octane that uh that all came along with it and people Donating for the process along the way. It's pretty cool and

Alastair Boone: how to get the

Big Hongry: name Bob When we first moved in over here in the warehouse that you probably looking at is there was a old It's like a warehouse just full of like, just a bunch of mechanic stuff like cars, just old washing machines, just kind of every kind of thing you can think of.

Big Hongry: And the guy who owned it was Bob. And so like, it would just be all kind of shit down here like, [00:02:00] fucking. Speed boats, 18 wheelers. I don't know how it all got down here or what it was down here doing, you know. Sometimes that shit will be on fire when we came down here, but Before we came down here though, this lot was just empty and filled with like old needles and dirt and trash and clutter.

Big Hongry: And there's a video somewhere of us like with a couple of the kids from the neighborhood who eventually kept coming and learned how to skate. They, uh, helped clean up all this stuff and put it in back. I mean, it was like treacherous, treacherous, like this place wasn't nothing down here at all. You know, it's kind of like that, that story of like taking trash and turning it into gold, you know.

Alastair Boone: And then this is all, like everything I see, it's just concrete

Big Hongry: work. We have, like, solid construction and masonry, like, hands on. Um, plans change as, as the day goes by. [00:03:00] Grassroots. Fuck, man. Yeah, you know, it's all, like What should we do? All right, that looks like it works. Oh, that's not working. So then it's turning into this.

Big Hongry: And then, you know, six months, seven months ago, by a year or two, it's like, ah, maybe we should switch this up and do this. You know, just, just keep, it's definitely been a pool of creativity and innovation, just on a mental standpoint. How to switch up the obstacles here and stuff. And

Alastair Boone: like, did everybody who was working on that already know how to do concrete work?

Alastair Boone: Nah,

Big Hongry: me and myself personally, I've had a couple instances with the same crew, the same like homies pretty much. Just more or less, uh, working on backyard bowls or other like DIY spots, but I kind of just knew a little bit, but working here, I learned a lot more because the guys who would spearhead some of the days and put down a lot of the yards that were coming in, they were very experienced and had already been building skate parks [00:04:00] all over.

Big Hongry: Um, so they knew what to do and they taught everybody who was willing to learn, even if it was just learning how to use a shovel, you know, what shovel to get, how to, you know what I mean, or how to move the concrete. It was a shovel. Yeah, that's the, he pointing at the homie monk, which is exactly the, the perfect example of, um, the bravado that went into this place.

Big Hongry: That, that, that's the homie Mark Hubbard. We call him Monk. He was a part of starting a grind line, which is a skate park, a building company. And it all started D. I. Y. Just how Bob started. Um, just a place, a land of property or whatever you say, whatever, you know, like they can't, no one using

it, discarded, just left for nothing, you know, no one's even parking their cars there, you know, some people may be sleeping there.

Big Hongry: And you go there, they went there, it's in Burnside, Portland, and they start building a skate park. And from that, it turned into professionalism, having a [00:05:00] company, and Monk showed us a lot. As you can see, he's got a guitar in one hand, and a shovel in the other. Pioneer. Yeah.

Alastair Boone: Yeah, you were saying before about how, like, Some people kind of got started in their careers here.

Alastair Boone: I'm wondering if you can say more about that, like what, if there are any specific people who come to mind or like specific careers. Well,

Big Hongry: it's all, it's, it's nothing like completely singular with this place. Like the vibe here is the vibe. That's also going down somewhere in Sweden or Copenhagen. And, and Really, it started on this side of the world to be so hands on with it.

Big Hongry: And that translated to somewhere like Sweden or Japan or South America or wherever, you know? Um, but in terms of like some of the homies here, they now have like concrete companies and like would always be here helping and working and stuff like that. So it's just a couple of homies like really took it to the next level and like went off and worked in different like states with grind [00:06:00] line and stuff like that.

Big Hongry: You know, I mean, me myself, actually, I ended up going out to Marshfield. In Boston, or Marshfield, Massachusetts. And I worked on a skate park out there for a couple of weeks. It was pretty cool. I mean, I've also worked on a park over in Copenhagen before. But just based on the knowledge that I know what to do with the tools in front of me, and how fast it takes for concrete to dry.

Big Hongry: And sometimes you're waiting for it to dry. Sometimes it's drying faster than you want it to dry. It's life, you

Alastair Boone: know? It's all life. Do you get paid for those projects, or you just went out to help?

Big Hongry: No, the ones that I went out to definitely got paid for. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Alastair Boone: Um, and I'm just thinking too, like, this might be kind of a dumb question or impossible to answer, but I'm looking in the area with all the tile work and the memorials.

Alastair Boone: to friends. And it just it seems like folks in this community lose people kind of young. Yeah. And I don't know what that's about. If that's like people just living fast or if it's [00:07:00] what? What? I

Big Hongry: don't know. Yeah. Make sense of that. Um, I think it's just growing up in the city, the inner city. There's a lot that you can get your hands on.

Big Hongry: And some of it you shouldn't be having your hands on, you know, I mean, I guess that's like, whatever you can trace it back to whatever evils of the world you want to, but the reality of it is, stuff's hard in the city, stuff's hard in the country, stuff's hard everywhere. People, people just want to get away and do something different than have pain, you know?

Big Hongry: And like, some of the stuff that makes you feel the best is The stuff that can make you die the fastest, so. That's right. Whether it be like alcohols, drugs, or whatever, um. Yeah. I think people are just looking to escape, really, you know. Um, especially during now, during these times.

Alastair Boone: Yeah, I hear that for sure.

Big Hongry: That's why skating is cool though, because you get to tune out of all of that. And you get to just roll around. And you know for sure, [00:08:00] if you're not a kook, Even if you are a kook, you're still going to have some homies that are going to keep repping for you when you go, you know? But if you, if you hold it down for your homies, if you go early, if you go late, the homies are going to hold it down for you no matter what.

Big Hongry: They're going to say your name, they're going to put it on t shirts, they're going to spray paint it. There is, like, justice in your death, you know? It's not just, uh, like a lost cause, you know? We understand, you know what I mean? That's

Alastair Boone: beautiful. That's cool.

Alastair Boone: So, alright, maybe I feel like I was going to ask you something else. You just reminded me of one of the questions I wanted to ask you. I'm going to just pull it up so I don't forget. Um,

Alastair Boone: I mean, I guess one [00:09:00] thing I was curious about is, like, when your homie called you up when you were in Alabama and said, come back, we're building out a spot, what made you feel like it was an exciting thing that you wanted to travel all the way back here

Big Hongry: for? Um, just because of my friends who, like, doing something fun and Ready to teach me how to use my hands and, like, build something, you know, cool for the homies, be a part of a movement that's That's not stagnant, that's like forward motion.

Big Hongry: Getting something, putting something down and seeing the fruits of your labor, like, right away. Real skills. Real skills.

Alastair Boone: I feel like forward motion is a cool way to describe the scene too, because it seems like that's what people, that's like in skating itself, like you're always moving forward. True, true.

Big Hongry: Yeah, that's the, that's the game. Just keep pushing. Yeah. Yeah.

Alastair Boone: Can you just describe Like, look around and describe what you see here. Um,

Alastair Boone: I see [00:10:00] a lot of concrete.

Big Hongry: Ha ha. Ha ha. Uh, I see the cranes. The cranes that bring in all the freight. Those are legendary cranes, man. They're like, uh, I guess George Lucas designed, uh, some shit in Star Wars behind those cranes. Oh, wow. Or something like that, yeah. Makes sense. So we get to look at that shit every time we come down here.

Big Hongry: I always thought that was cool.

Alastair Boone: And what about the art and the spot?

Big Hongry: Um, I see a big old piece stone, uh, throw a piece and it's green and yellow like the ace colors because piece stone loved Oakland and there's a coconut and a line because you got to put the lime in the coconut. Yeah. And next to that, I see a Grasso piece.

Big Hongry: There's a piece to the homie Grasso. Legendary. All around skateboarder. [00:11:00] Killing it. Also one of the best commentators that the sport has to offer. And you go a little further, you see the homegirl ghost. She

was legendary. She was like a mom, a friend, a sister, daughter. Where's hers? If you look a little bit to the left that pink.

Big Hongry: Oh, yeah. Yeah,

Alastair Boone: I remember when she died.

Big Hongry: It was it was a big deal. Yeah. It still is a big deal. Um, she was such a great person. She still, you know, I don't like to really talk to people in past tense, you know what I mean? She's a great person and uh, just all around a great homie. Always had her back. All that, you know?

Big Hongry: Um, yeah, but she got like one of the biggest pieces on the wall. Got to go big for the sis. Yeah. Farida mob.

Alastair Boone: Was there, what was Like, I remember you were talking about some meetings with the city. Were there tensions with neighbors or with [00:12:00] the city early on?

Big Hongry: Nah, the neighbors was always cool, you know? Cause we, we, they always want to come down and help and be a part of the community. It's a community thing. We had like some meetings with some lady who turned out to be like fraudulent, but Other than that, like I think, uh, I think we're pretty married to the spot now, you know, what about

Alastair Boone: the city early days?

Alastair Boone: Were they trying to

Alastair Boone: get lost?

Big Hongry: Aw, yeah, it was like it was some back and forth, but we just kept working, you know, because it's whatever. We're just, we're just trying to skate and have something for the community to roll around. Feel a part of a movement or come down here and do it by yourself, you know? So, hopefully whoever is moving in is down to be friendly neighbors.

Big Hongry: And like, just bring up the area, you know what I mean? Like, keep the, keep the area on the up and up. Skateboarding is an Olympic sport. So this is an Olympic training facility. So we, it's gonna be alright. Laughter

Alastair Boone: Yeah, you got to bring those Olympians. Yeah. Um, [00:13:00] and then I guess I didn't like last time we were chatting, I didn't get to hear that much about how you personally got into skating.

Big Hongry: Uh, I mean, when I was a kid, I was like playing like Tony hawks and shit. But like right around the time I got out of high school, my homeboy Ian and my homeboy Luca, they would always just be skating and Berkeley skate park. And at first I was just like, kind of chill and smoke and not really skate and then once I started getting on the board, and my homies started like chasing me around the park and shit.

Big Hongry: I used to just like be laughing and falling all over the place. Then I learned how to stay on the board, and uh, pretty much after that I was just hooked. Once I like started taking slams and knowing like I could just get up and keep going, might feel it later but. I was able to just stay on it, keep it going.

Alastair Boone: For sure. What about you? How'd you get into it?

Julio Pineda: Uh, just being in the neighborhood, always being outside. And then, uh, one of my homies, he got a skateboard and then we couldn't really [00:14:00] keep up with him. So we stole some skateboards from Walmart. Just pushing those shitty boards around and I went to my first skate park and they were like, Yo, what the hell is that?

Julio Pineda: And then got a real skateboard and just been obsessed ever since. Yeah.

Alastair Boone: Yeah. Being outside. Yeah. Yeah. Do you feel, cause we were talking about how skating like, You can really skate anywhere. Like you could You could see any part of the city. I was interviewing someone else yesterday for a totally different story, and I was like, oh, why do you like San Francisco?

Alastair Boone: And he was like, San Francisco's my skate ramp. Yeah. Um, and we weren't even talking about skating. Yeah. But, so it's like, you can skate anywhere, so why is it important to have places like this one that we're in? Mm. This

Julio Pineda: place has a lot of energy packed into it. Like, we chose to, you know, I feel like in the end or the beginning of a day of skating, [00:15:00] it's a good place to end up or start just to chill, you know.

Julio Pineda: Usually when you come here, there's not a lot of people, but when there is an event, it gets crazy. And, you know, you want to see what you can throw down in this place, what you can add to the energy of it, and it's a good place to congregate as a skater. But yeah, skating anywhere. It's like transportation, it's like, uh, I don't know, you can walk or you can just skate across things.

Alastair Boone: Yeah. For sure. How, how do you describe the culture here at Bob's? I

Julio Pineda: guess it's, uh, It's, it's rugged, but just super elegant with, uh, the design and then the things that go down, like the tricks here. You gotta be real tough, but like super graceful. Yeah. Totally. Yeah. The skill level out here is like, the bar is really high, [00:16:00] you know.

Julio Pineda: But even so, so much respect for people who even just like getting down, you could tell they just started, but you know they're doing something that's like outside of their immediate comfort zone. Everybody gets super stoked on it.

Alastair Boone: One thing I'm wondering as I look around here, like As someone who doesn't do concrete work is like, what's underneath all this?

Alastair Boone: Like, I see, I don't know what, what's that called? That like bump right there. Oh,

Julio Pineda: titties. I'm not

Alastair Boone: sure.

Julio Pineda: I'm not

Alastair Boone: sure the right term. Well, what's

Big Hongry: that thing? In the middle? Yeah. Uh, it was a turtle. What was the turtle shell? We had to paint it as a turtle shell. It's a speed bump. It's a, uh, Well, a speed bump is like, it's a fucking, uh, pump bump.

Big Hongry: That's what it is. Pump [00:17:00] bump. Yeah. Not a titty. No, it is a titty. It is a titty. Yeah, nah, nah, nah. If you really want to get technical, it's a big old tit, but pump bump.

Alastair Boone: And so, like, what's underneath? Like when you're building that, is that concrete all the way down?

Big Hongry: Yeah, it's concrete. It's a lot of dirt. And then, and rocks.

Big Hongry: And love, and sweat, and blood. Maybe a couple cigarettes. That's good. And then concrete on top of that.

Alastair Boone: And then like, yeah, maybe something helpful for me would be like, how do you describe when you're building a skate park what are like What are the crucial components, or what are the things people want to see?

Alastair Boone: And what are their names? Like, I'm seeing different stuff here, different things that you were skating on, different features over here.

Big Hongry: It's all innovation. It's just like, we want a bowl here, we want a pump bump here, we want a spine here, and we want to be able to flow through it all and get there.

Big Hongry: Sometimes you might put some shit down and it's just stupid. Don't make no sense. But you learn how to skate it, and it's the funniest thing you've ever skated in your [00:18:00] life. And then you go skate at a different park, and you're like, Damn, I've been skating my little shitty whatever I got back home. This is, like, amazing, you know?

Big Hongry: It's kind of like, you build a training ground for yourself, and you get good at whatever it is. You learn to deal with it, and then you just keep it going. There's no, like, set formula. Yeah. Yeah. Pick a plane, stick with it, switch it up. And

Alastair Boone: so like, you just, like that's a bowl, right? Yeah,

Big Hongry: that's a bowl.

Big Hongry: That's a spine. That's a spine. And those are just big walls, like quarter pipes. Speed bump. Big quarter pipe, little quarter pipe. Hip. Yeah, the hip is like where the quarter pipe is like, a short side meets with the long side, and then it's like rounded off. It's not all sharp, so you could like, roll through it, or Ollie up and over.

Alastair Boone: Cool. I wanna know. Do[00:19:00]

Alastair Boone: you wanna answer a couple questions? Yeah? Sure, I'll come down to you.

Alastair Boone: I can just

Alastair Boone: put my headphones back on. I'm doing this story for KLW. It's a public radio station in San Francisco. But I also edit Street Spirit newspaper out here in the East Bay. I don't know if you know it. It's one that's sold by folks on the street in Berkeley and Oakland. Anyway, so we might do a version in the paper too.

Alastair Boone: Um, but yeah, do you want to introduce yourself however you want to be identified? Your name or name people call you? Uh,

Russ: I have a lot of names. I don't know. Uh, Russ, Shitbag, Gold Teeth. [00:20:00] Uh, I don't know. My teeth are missing right now. But, I don't know. A bunch of things. Gold Mouth. Gold Mouth. There's Shitbag.

Russ: Yeah. There's a lot. And then there's some I don't know.

Alastair Boone: Yeah. And what do you, like, what do you like about Bob's? Why do you skate here?

Russ: Uh, I've been coming here from the beginning. Just it's been local and something to do, you know what I mean? And to help out with, I was also let, you know, we had some other places too before here.

Russ: So it goes from one spot to another, to another, to another. Yeah. So on and so forth, city to city, state to state, country to country, as you say. What do you like about skating? The freedom, you know, He kind of answered everything, you know what

Alastair Boone: I mean? It's nice to have it in other people's words, too, though.

Russ: Yeah. Yeah, you definitely get to [00:21:00] leave whatever, or take the mood with you, skating, and you can take your anger out in a more positive, you know, helpful way, instead of something that isn't helpful.

Alastair Boone: How would you describe, like, the culture here?

Russ: Helping one another and just, you know, just always being there, kind of, you know, some kind of way. Yeah. Do you feel

Alastair Boone: like you've learned any, any lessons out here at this park?

Russ: Yeah. I've learned how to, like, learn how to build and, you know, what everything meant.

Russ: At first, I didn't know anything about anything, so.

Alastair Boone: What was it like in the early days when people were still kind of building it out?

Russ: Everyone was just here helping each other out, basically. It wasn't a big deal, kind of. You know, it was just like, Oh, I'm going, you know, to go help out at Bob's on Saturday, or whatever day it was, [00:22:00] or after work, or whatever it was.

Alastair Boone: Yep. That's cool. And what does the spot mean to you now? Like, has it changed?

Russ: I mean, it's always changing, but, you know, right now it's home, unfortunately, but, you know. Um, so there's always how to go at the moment.

Alastair Boone: Yeah, and you don't, like, are you, what do you say? Uh, I'm talking to him. Oh, sorry. I can't hear you unless you're through my mic right now.

Alastair Boone: Um, I won't say that you live in this spot if you don't want me to. But if you don't care, I'm curious to, you don't care? Yeah. Yeah, so, what's it like to, to live here?

Russ: I mean, every day is different, you know. But, it's just all about skating, so. You know, I wake up and then start my day.

Alastair Boone: You skate here every day?

Russ: Just about, yeah. [00:23:00] Yeah. Yeah.

Alastair Boone: And obviously, it's not ideal. To live outside in any circumstance, but how is living here different from living like, you know There are folks who live out on the street outside the fence

Russ: or I mean, all, I do know because I was I mean Yeah, it's just more. I don't know to me like a home feeling You know, like doesn't really, I don't know, it just feels like I'm camping, kind of.

Russ: I don't know. Just at the skate park.

Alastair Boone: Yeah. 'cause it sounds like you've been part of this community for a long time, so it's not like you're living at a spot that you're not comfortable in. I mean, maybe it's physically uncomfortable, but it's different than just living on the curb in a new

Russ: Yeah, I mean, it is what it is. You know? I definitely choose this, you know, 'cause they have a bed for me in the city, but you know. I'm choosing to stay here

Alastair Boone: instead. Why's that?

Russ: For the, uh, [00:24:00] home feeling, you know? And like, this is, I don't know what, I mean, yeah. Maybe tomorrow I'll try it out. Who knows.

Alastair Boone: What's that say?

Russ: I have, um, bed number 154, on 5th street.

Alastair Boone: Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say? I appreciate your time. No, no. Have a great day. Yeah, thank you. Appreciate it.