



Jackie Baity
Busy Bee Cafe - Atlanta, Georgia

December 18, 2019

Location: Interviewer's Car outside of Busy Bee, Atlanta, Georgia

Interviewer: Henri Hollis

Transcription: Diana Dombrowski

Length: Forty-two minutes

Project: Career Servers

[*BEGIN INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:02.12]

Henri H.: Okay. This is Henri Hollis on December 18, 2019. I'm interviewing Jackie Baity. Am I pronouncing that right?

[00:00:11.23]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:00:11.23]

Henri H.: And Jackie, would you mind spelling your name for me?

[00:00:15.07]

Jackie B.: J-a-c-k-i-e B-a-i-t-y.

[00:00:23.12]

Henri H.: All right. And Jackie is a server at the Busy Bee Cafe in Atlanta.

[00:00:29.11]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:00:31.16]

Henri H.: So . . . yeah, I guess let's start with . . . when you started at Busy Bee, how long you've been there.

[00:00:41.26]

Jackie B.: Well, I started at Busy Bee in the late [19]80s. My employer was in college at that time, at Alabama A&M, and I started workin' for her father. Her father passed and I left for about five years, and I came—her father passed, and I came back. She asked me to come back and work for her. And I've been here ever since. So, it's been, like, thirty plus years that I've been with Busy Bee.

[00:01:18.20]

Henri H.: Wow.

[00:01:20.03]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. And I've enjoyed every minute of it. I mean, workin' here. And my employer is such a phenomenal lady. She really takes care of her employees. She's sent us out on vacations, cruises, and Cancun, Mexico, Jamaica. She's just a very good person, good spirit person. I've waited on so many different celebrities and dignitaries, politicians and big-top ministers here in Atlanta. Some out of town, such as I've waited on Jesse Jackson and Jill Scott and even Sean “Puffy” Combs. I was like, oh, I was so shocked when he came in, I could hardly catch my breath. And of course, the regular customers are special, too; I look at them as celebrities, too, because they always come. But Busy Bee is a nice place to work at, you know. They serve authentic food. Everything is made from scratch. Like I tell the people, the food is good, fresh, and delicious. It's like home-cooked,

Grandmama's, Big Mama, Nana's—tasting food. It's really good. The desserts is made from scratch, and my employer, she does most of the cooking—Tracy.

[00:03:03.20]

Henri H.: Wow.

[00:03:04.13]

Jackie B.: It's just really a nice place to work, you know? You make good tips.

[00:03:11.26]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:03:12.29]

Jackie B.: Yeah, you make good tips. So, I used to work, like, six days a week, and now that I'm older—I'm sixty-five—

[00:03:22.24]

Henri H.: Wow, I never would've guessed.

[00:03:23.18]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. I'm sixty-five. And so, I asked her to cut my days to three days a week. I was gonna just retire, and she asked me, "Well, no, Jackie, please stay, 'cause the customers

always askin' for you." You know. I said, "Well, okay. Well, I'll work three days." I work, like, from 10-3.

[00:03:46.16]

Henri H.: Yeah. When did that change?

[00:03:50.11]

Jackie B.: Um . . . let's see. About three years ago, um-hm. Three years ago.

[00:03:55.13]

Henri H.: Had you—before you started at Busy Bee, had you worked as a server elsewhere, or . . . ?

[00:04:05.15]

Jackie B.: No. I was workin' with Atlanta Public Schools as a cashier, and I was workin' in the kitchen as a server, servin' food. And I also worked at this private school, they called it Holy Innocents' Episcopal School as a server in the kitchen. Um-hm, yes.

[00:04:23.04]

Henri H.: How'd you get connected with Tracy, is that her name?

[00:04:30.05]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:04:31.15]

Henri H.: So, you knew her before she went to college, even?

[00:04:33.06]

Jackie B.: No. I mean, I didn't know Tracy before she went to college. I met Tracy and her father through a girlfriend of mine's, her name was Dorcas Griffin. And she got me on with Busy Bee.

[00:04:48.09]

Henri H.: Gotcha, gotcha.

[00:04:50.01]

Jackie B.: Helped me. You know, was workin' here at Busy Bee.

[00:04:52.17]

Henri H.: Okay.

[00:04:54.04]

Jackie B.: That's how I met Tracy. She was in college at the time when I started here. Again, I left for a few years, and I saw Tracy at this grocery store called Big Bear. She said, "Jackie, please come back and work for me. Your customers are askin' for you." I said,

"Well, only way I'll come back, if you let me have the weekends off." You know, 'cause I was workin' every day, didn't have the weekend.

[00:05:24.11]

Henri H.: Right.

[00:05:24.13]

Jackie B.: We shook on it, and that's how it started.

[00:05:28.27]

Henri H.: Busy Bee, I feel like I saw on their website that they just started opening on Saturdays or something?

[00:05:36.06]

Jackie B.: Yes. Well, they used to open on Saturday when her father was running it.

[00:05:40.00]

Henri H.: Oh, okay.

[00:05:41.11]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. And they stopped for a while. But they just recently start openin' back on Saturdays. I say maybe about three to four months, um-hm.

[00:05:50.26]

Henri H.: Um-hm. Are they open on Sundays?

[00:05:52.01]

Jackie B.: Yes. Now they're open seven days a week, um-hm.

[00:05:56.01]

Henri H.: Gotcha, gotcha.

[00:05:56.09]

Jackie B.: Yes. Um-hm.

[00:05:58.28]

Henri H.: I feel like Sundays are probably crowded.

[00:06:00.24]

Jackie B.: I don't know; I don't work on Sunday. [Laughter] [Noise in recording] I'm off on the weekends.

[00:06:06.28]

Henri H.: That's nice, that's nice. So, when were you born?

[00:06:14.06]

Jackie B.: 1954.

[00:06:17.27]

Henri H.: And was food important when you were growin' up? Was that somethin' that you were invested in, or was a big part of your upbringing?

[00:06:28.23]

Jackie B.: Well, I come from a big family. I'm the oldest of seven.

[00:06:32.12]

Henri H.: Oh, wow.

[00:06:34.12]

Jackie B.: My mother'n them—my mother and them. [Laughter]

[00:06:35.28]

Henri H.: [Laughter] Mamar'n them.

[00:06:39.09]

Jackie B.: Yeah. They cooked from, like scratch, like Busy Bee. Cooked vegetables, home-cooked vegetables, and it tasted . . . Busy Bee food tastes exactly like the way Mama used to cook for us. Mama and Grandmama and Big Mama used to cook for us, um-hm.

[00:07:05.00]

Henri H.: Do you cook much?

[00:07:05.00]

Jackie B.: I used to. I have two children, a son and a daughter. And I cooked when they were small, and I used to cook for my sisters and brothers. Now that they are all grown, I don't cook—but I cook during holidays, you know. When we have to bring covered dishes to different places like that.

[00:07:26.27]

Henri H.: Um-hm. Where do you fall among the seven?

[00:07:28.10]

Jackie B.: Number one. Number one.

[00:07:30.13]

Henri H.: You're number one? Me too. I'm the first, just of two.

[00:07:33.00]

Jackie B.: Oh.

[00:07:33:15]

Henri H.: Are you from Atlanta originally?

[00:07:38.15]

Jackie B.: Yes. I'm originally from Atlanta. I went to F.L. Stanton Elementary School, and I went to—attended—H.M. Turner High School and Frederick Douglass High School. I didn't go to—well, I went to business college for, like, a year, but I didn't finish. I dropped out of business college.

[00:08:04.13]

Henri H.: Yeah. So . . . tell me about some of your regulars and some of the folks that ask about you. Do you—I mean, it's a pretty small restaurant, so do y'all have specific sections or do you just, if you know somebody, you serve 'em?

[00:08:24.07]

Jackie B.: We do. We do have different sections. Each server has to have different sections. But what Sheila and I do—Sheila and I know our customers, each other customers. And if they want Sheila to wait on them, you know, and they're sitting in my section, I'll let Sheila wait on them. When the next customer come in and set in Sheila's customer section, I'll wait on them. So, we don't block each from not makin' money, you know what I mean? But it's like I tell the people: it's small, but the food is delicious. It's worth the wait. It's worth the wait.

[00:09:05.00]

Henri H.: Do you only work at this location, or do you ever work at the other location?

[00:09:08.21]

Jackie B.: No. This is the only location I ever worked at.

[00:09:12.04]

Henri H.: Gotcha. Who is Sheila?

[00:09:15.12]

Jackie B.: Sheila is the girl behind the counter with—[Laughter] I think she's gonna do another interview with the next interview with you. Has she called you yet?

[00:09:24.00]

Henri H.: No, no. I hadn't heard from her.

[00:09:26.12]

Jackie B.: Oh, really. You'll probably have to come back, because she—Tracy wants you, Sheila, and Tamika to do an interview, also.

[00:09:37.10]

Henri H.: Okay. I'll have to see, 'cause I'm supposed to do five, and I have . . . I have all five scheduled already.

[00:09:47.08]

Jackie B.: Oh.

[00:09:48.14]

Henri H.: I've already completed two, and I have . . . but I actually may need another one if the thing at Nuevo Laredo doesn't work out.

[00:09:57.14]

Jackie B.: Right, okay.

[00:09:59.19]

Henri H.: So . . . I could see. I mean, one thing with this project is, a lot of the career servers that we've interviewed have tended to be middle-aged white men who work at steakhouses.

[00:10:13.26]

Jackie B.: Right.

[00:10:15.14]

Henri H.: So, I know that a big and important part of the S.F.A. is highlighting diverse stories, and I know that's been a problem that they've had in Charleston and New Orleans, too, is finding folks who aren't that white guy at a steakhouse.

[00:10:37.16]

Jackie B.: Okay.

[00:10:39.01]

Henri H.: So, they may want to continue interviewing people at Busy Bee. I just have to check with my bosses.

[00:10:45.26]

Jackie B.: Okay, right.

[00:10:50.15]

Henri H.: But yeah, I hope they get in touch.

[00:10:53.01]

Jackie B.: Busy Bee also do a lot of catering, like to different businesses. Durin' the holidays, like Thanksgivin', they have really big orders for catering. Like, over two hundred or more.

[00:11:05.26]

Henri H.: Oh, yeah, I bet.

[00:11:08.23]

Jackie B.: Christmas, different people catering orders.

[00:11:13.29]

Henri H.: Yeah. I felt bad reachin' out to y'all at Christmas time, 'cause I know it's probably so busy.

[00:11:18.03]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:11:19.17]

Henri H.: It was real busy when I got in there, but it's kinda cleared out.

[00:11:22.08]

Jackie B.: It's always busy.

[00:11:22.13]

Henri H.: But I guess it's always busy, yeah.

[00:11:22.16]

Jackie B.: It's always busy, and I thank God for that, because a lot of businesses, you know, it's not as busy as Busy Bee. It's always busy. It's got the right name, I'll tell you that.

[00:11:38.01]

Henri H.: [Laughter] Yeah.

[00:11:40.26]

Jackie B.: Busy Bee Cafe.

[00:11:43.21]

Henri H.: So, what has kept you at Busy Bee for so long?

[00:11:47.06]

Jackie B.: Well . . . I enjoy workin' with people, and I have met a lot of important people who have helped me along the way in life. One time, I was out there strugglin', you know, and a lot of people showed me the way, the right way to go. I can't say enough about my employer. I mean, she is really a blessing to all of her employees, and I'm not just sayin' that because I work at Busy Bee, I'm sayin' that because I know for myself what she has done for me and my family. I just enjoy working with people, and workin' with my coworkers. Sometime I get frustrated because it's not—these younger people that they have brought in now, boy, you can't say anything to 'em and they at you. It's like you get frustrated, but you just have to block them out and stay focused and do what you're supposed to do while you are there. You're there to please the customers, give good service, and . . . make sure, be attentive to them, consistent to them. That's what I do.

[00:13:17.10]

Henri H.: Yeah. Is there anything specific you'd be willing to share about how Tracy or the other folks who run Busy Bee have helped you and your family? You don't have to go into too much detail if you don't want to, but . . .

[00:13:35.23]

Jackie B.: Well, let me say this. I have a problem with my right hearing, and I went to Tracy and let her know that I need a hearing aid. She helped me get my hearing aid. But I can't wear my hearing aid into Busy Bee because it's so much noise and it really irritates me, you know. But so, that's when I wait on the customers and you see how loud the music is.

[00:14:09.11]

Henri H.: Um-hm, yeah.

[00:14:11.16]

Jackie B.: I constantly asked them to turn the music down so I could hear my customers, but see, they're young folks. They think it's a club, you know? [Laughter] She helped me with my hearing aid. She helped me get my first pair of glasses. These are not the first pair here—eyeglasses, without me even asking. She just gave me money and said, "Jackie, go to the eye doctor." 'Cause she seen that I was strugglin'. I went to Pearl Optical and got my first pair. She's just a good person, good-hearted person. She's just like family, you know. That's why I try to do right by her. If I see somethin' that's not right, I let the people know—my coworkers know—don't do that to her. All you gotta do is ask her for anything, don't try to take nothin' from her. Just ask her. She's gonna either say yes or no. She's just that type of person.

[00:15:17.20]

Henri H.: Yeah? What changes do you notice in the industry or in customers or anything like that from when you first started with Busy Bee to now?

[00:15:35.00]

Jackie B.: Okay. The changes . . . when I first started, people was very patient.

[00:15:43.00]

Henri H.: Um-hm.

[00:15:45.22]

Jackie B.: When I first started. But now, since Tracy, Busy Bee has gotten more business and busier. People are not patient, you know. Like okay, if you go to Red Lobster and the hostess there and they tell you, "Well, you got about thirty minutes or half an hour or hour and a half to wait," people sit there and wait. But in here you tell 'em that? [Laughter] They get very upset and angry and irritable. But they wait. And I let 'em know: "It's worth the wait. Trust me, it is worth the wait." But it has really changed. When I first started workin' at Busy Bee, we used to dress in our natural clothes, our clothing like this. Since Tracy has taken over, she has put us in uniforms and have us lookin' more professional. I love it. It has really grown; it has come a long way.

[00:16:54.24]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:16:56.07]

Jackie B.: It has.

[00:16:58:00]

Henri H.: Has tipping changed at all since the late [19]80s?

[00:17:02.14]

Jackie B.: Yes, yes. Tipping has changed, 'cause people used to tip quarters and . . . [Laughter]

[00:17:09.07]

Henri H.: A quarter on a meal?

[00:17:09.22]

Jackie B.: Fifty cents and . . . yes, tippin' has changed a lot.

[00:17:15.29]

Henri H.: That's good. Changed for the better, I mean?

[00:17:17.24]

Jackie B.: Yes, for the better.

[00:17:23.21]

Henri H.: Let's see. Were there any lessons that you learned over your time serving that you try to impress on younger folks comin' up behind you, or . . . ?

[00:17:41.03]

Jackie B.: Yes. When I train people, when they come in, that those that don't never served before, I let them know: "Just be consistent. Always check on your customers. Try to work as a team." Teamwork make dream work. That's the thing the younger people don't want to do, you know? Like Sheila, Sheila—I trained Sheila. Sheila works like me, and we work together, you know? We can just look at each other, know it has to be done. Even with some of the younger people don't want to roll silverware—we know silverware has to rolled, washed and rolled, because that's what keep the business going. You know, people. But these young people . . .

[00:18:40.07]

Henri H.: [Coughs] Excuse me. What is your typical day like? Like walk me through your routine.

[00:18:50.27]

Jackie B.: Okay. I first go in.

[00:18:54.01]

Henri H.: [Coughs] Gosh.

[00:18:55.20]

Jackie B.: Go in, wash my hands. I first go in and say good morning to everybody, even if nobody speaks. I still say good morning because that's how my mama taught us.

[00:19:07.17]

Henri H.: [Coughs]

[00:19:09.17]

Jackie B.: You okay?

[00:19:11.13]

Henri H.: Yeah, I don't know. I've got a scratch in my throat. [Coughs] I'm sorry. That's gonna be annoying on the recording for the people that have to listen to it.

[00:19:25.26]

Jackie B.: You'll probably have to block it out.

[00:19:27.29]

Henri H.: Yeah. Sorry, continue. Saying good morning to everybody.

[00:19:30.19]

Jackie B.: Okay. I'll go in and say good morning to everyone. And I clock in and I'll go wash my hands, and I come back out, start settin' up what I'm supposed to do. I wipe down the

tables and napkin-holders, get the rest of it ready for opening. I may have to cut vegetables like onions, tomatoes, maybe have to cut lemons for iced tea. Just mostly settin' up the store, helpin' to set up the store.

[00:20:06.01]

Henri H.: What time does Busy Bee open?

[00:20:08.02]

Jackie B.: 11.

[00:20:09.07]

Henri H.: Okay.

[00:20:10.25]

Jackie B.: They're open from 11-7, Monday thru Saturday, and I think 12-7 on Sunday.

[00:20:18.29]

Henri H.: Okay.

[00:20:20.14]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. And all type of people come in there. I get so surprised when Asian people come in there, order ham hocks and chitlins and stuff like that. All people come in. It's

like an international; everybody loves Busy Bee, black, white, Asian, Jews, everybody love Busy Bee.

[00:20:44.08]

Henri H.: Um-hm. Do y'all get a lot of college students?

[00:20:47.05]

Jackie B.: Yes, and she give ten percent discounts to the college student.

[00:20:49.28]

Henri H.: Oh, that's nice.

[00:20:52.03]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. She give ten percent discount to the college student.

[00:20:55.26]

Henri H.: Do you know how many tables or people you might serve in a regular day?

[00:21:01.10]

Jackie B.: Mm . . . oh. I'll say . . . an estimate, say about . . . fifteen to twenty tables, you know, people eat and then leave. Um-hm.

[00:21:26.17]

Henri H.: Gotcha. How long, people—it seems like the place that you kind of come and chill for a while.

[00:21:33.05]

Jackie B.: Right.

[00:21:33.10]

Henri H.: Do people spend a long time at tables?

[00:21:38.27]

Jackie B.: Well, some do, like regulars. They know the routine, because we are like—if they sit a long time, I'll go and ask them, I say, "May I get you anything else? Is everything else okay? You'd like some dessert?" You know, somethin' like that, and they'll say, "No." I'll say, "Well, we have people waiting to be seated. I'm not tryin' to rush you or anything. You see the long line outside? They're waiting to be seated." [Laughter] They say, "Okay, Ms. Jackie, we know you rushin' us out." I say, "No, please don't take it that way, but it's the truth." 'Cause people like to just sit, and we don't give out the Wi-Fi, because if we give out the Wi-Fi, they will sit all day.

[00:22:24.21]

Henri H.: I believe that. Do you have any regulars that you've formed relationships with outside of the restaurant?

[00:22:35.26]

Jackie B.: I have, um-hm. I've met my boyfriend, who is deceased now—

[00:22:42.18]

Henri H.: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

[00:22:46.12]

Jackie B.: —at Busy Bee. He died, like, four years ago, four or five years ago.

[00:22:51.03]

Henri H.: Sorry to hear that.

[00:22:51.19]

Jackie B.: Um-hm.

[00:22:51.21]

Henri H.: But it's cool that you met him here.

[00:22:56.23]

Jackie B.: Yeah.

[00:22:58.10]

Henri H.: Did he come in and ask for you regularly, is that how y'all . . .

[00:23:05.09]

Jackie B.: He would come in. I waited on him the first time, and after that first time, he would come in and ask for me.

[00:23:14.03]

Henri H.: That's nice.

[00:23:16.01]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. I'm not givin' his name. [Laughter]

[00:23:18.02]

Henri H.: Okay. [Laughter] Anybody else, anybody that . . .

[00:23:22.23]

Jackie B.: Oh, I have a lot of customers that come in and ask for us; you know, ask for me and Sheila. Mostly, Sheila, Tamika, and I have been there the longest. We have our regular customers that comes in there, and we know. One came in today, and I didn't see him come in because I was so busy on the floor. He set on the counter where Sheila was working. When I went up to the counter to pay, to give the money to pay for the people food, I saw him sittin' there. I'm like, "Mr. Ree! What are you doin' here and didn't ask for me?" He said, "Well, I saw you busy. Sheila told me to come on . . . she'll take care

of me." I got kinda irritated a little bit. [Laughter] I shook it off. I said, "It's all good." He said, "Oh, I'mma take care of you. You know I'm gonna take care of you."

[00:24:22.11]

Henri H.: Yeah. What's your relationship with the kitchen like?

[00:24:31.06]

Jackie B.: Oh, I get along with the kitchen. Sometimes, they give me hell, like . . . 'cause I'm standin' there doin'. When they take a long time, the food comin' out and I'm standin' there doin', wait for my food and it irritates them when I stand in the door. I don't do it intentionally. You know? Bein' meanful or anything like that. I just want my people food to come out, because people are coming here at lunchtime. They have a certain time to eat and leave. I just want the food to come out. Some of 'em give me hell, too. It's all—you know, you have your good and your bad days. I'm not gonna say everything is peachy cream here.

[00:25:17.25]

Henri H.: Right, of course.

[00:25:18.14]

Jackie B.: We have our ups and our downs, but we all get along together, like a family. We do.

[00:25:26.28]

Henri H.: Does the kitchen staff have folks that have been around for a long time, as well?

[00:25:32.24]

Jackie B.: Yes, yes. Sandra, she's been there a while. Ms. Anne, Keisha, it's a lot of 'em.

[00:25:40.02]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:25:40.02]

Jackie B.: Um-hm.

[00:25:40.24]

Henri H.: I was interested, 'cause that's, I mean, just the restaurant industry in general you see typically people move around a lot.

[00:25:48.28]

Jackie B.: Um-hm.

[00:25:50.27]

Henri H.: Let's see. Has the menu changed much over the years?

[00:25:56.28]

Jackie B.: Oh, yes, 'cause we used to sell—well, we still sell neck bones. She has tried different, she make her own carrot soufflé. She make everything from scratch. The carrot soufflé is one of our best-sellers; the broccoli cheese casserole, that's broccoli, cheese, and rice. She try to cook more healthier now and not with a whole lot of salt. Like gluten-free and things of that nature, and let the people know, she cook with smoked meat. Everything is written on the menu, everything that you know what it's cooked in.

[00:26:43.16]

Henri H.: Do you remember what the price of the fried chicken when you first started?

[00:26:48.20]

Jackie B.: When I first started? [Laughter] That's a good question. I think it was, like, \$3.99 a dinner, and now it's \$20 a dinner.

[00:26:59.09]

Henri H.: And what all did that include?

[00:27:00.04]

Jackie B.: And that includes white or dark meat chicken, two pieces of chicken, two side vegetables, and cornbread.

[00:27:08.22]

Henri H.: Wow. \$3.99, that's nice.

[00:27:13.18]

Jackie B.: \$3.99 or \$4.99, when I first started.

[00:27:18.02]

Henri H.: Do they put sugar in the cornbread?

[00:27:19.28]

Jackie B.: I don't know. I wouldn't know anything about the cornbread. As far as cookin', the food, I don't know anything about that. [Laughter] I'm just a server. I don't know the ingredients.

[00:27:31.08]

Henri H.: Right. Some people get real bent out of shape about sugar in cornbread issue.

[00:27:36.12]

Jackie B.: But I'll tell you, I'll tell you, that iced tea is real good and sweet.

[00:27:40.00]

Henri H.: Um-hm. Do you have a favorite thing on the menu?

[00:27:42.15]

Jackie B.: I love . . . I love the chicken and the fish. I love the green vegetables, collard greens and turnip greens. I love vegetables. It's just certain things the employees can't eat, like barbecue ribs and . . . pork chops . . . oxtails and stuff like that, we can't eat that. But we can eat fried chicken, fish, any of the vegetables except for the broccoli cheese casserole or the carrot soufflé. You know.

[00:28:22.16]

Henri H.: Stuff they're afraid they're gonna run out of, potentially?

[00:28:24.29]

Jackie B.: Yeah, um-hm.

[00:28:27.08]

Henri H.: Gotcha. If you had to sum up, like, a personal philosophy of service—like if you were tellin' somebody, like if I was takin' over for you and you were tellin' me, "This is how I treat people that come in." What would that be?

[00:28:48.19]

Jackie B.: I would say . . . now, you have to keep Busy Bee tradition of goin' the same way, far as bein' kind and courteous to people. Give them great service. If you give great service, you're gonna get a great tip. If you give lousy service, you're not gonna get a tip at all, or you may get, like, a lesser tip. You know? Just be consistent. Tell the people about the food, you know. Like if they ask you, "Is this cooked with a lot of salt?" I'll go back there

and ask one of the cooks, like, 'cause people are allergic to peanut oil and they have allergies and stuff. I'll ask before I serve it, to ask them, "Is this cooked in peanut oil? Because these people say they have allergies." And stuff like that. Just be consistent; give good service. Make sure the food is fresh all the time when it comes outta that kitchen. Don't serve no sloppy plates. I don't know if you noticed me when I went back in the kitchen with a plate—did you see me?

[00:30:13.24]

Henri H.: I did. Well, I wasn't sure—I was followin' you back in there with my camera, so I wasn't sure if you were pickin' that plate up for the first time when I saw you in the kitchen.

[00:30:24.12]

Jackie B.: Okay. Well, that's what I was doin'. I was takin' the plate back. Because I knew you was gonna be takin' pictures and stuff, and this is the way it should be all the time, not just because you're comin' to take pictures. I was makin' sure that the plate was right, you know. You can't go wrong workin' at Busy Bee. It's a good place to work. You meet a lotta incredible people. The regular customers, celebrities, dignitaries, everybody come through Busy Bee Cafe.

[00:31:05.05]

Henri H.: I'm sure you've seen a lot of other servers come and go during your time.

[00:31:09.02]

Jackie B.: Oh, yes. Yes.

[00:31:10.29]

Henri H.: What do you think makes you different that you've either wanted to stay or been allowed to stay for as long as you have?

[00:31:24.08]

Jackie B.: I think the reason what makes me different, 'cause I am very trustworthy. I don't like thieves and I don't like liars. You know? And I try to tell my co-workers: "Just be honest. If you do right by yourself . . . blessin's gonna come to you." You know? That's the way I am. I pray for our job every day. I'm very . . . my faith, I am really heavy into my faith, which I am a Baptist. My pastor, he comes and get his hair cut next door, and every time he comes into Busy Bee, I tell him—I ask him, "Pastor, are you hungry? You never have to pay for your lunch; I'll take care of you." He orders whiting fish, turnip greens, and candied yams. That's what he likes. Just work as a team, like teamwork makes dream work. Work ethic.

[00:32:37.04]

Henri H.: What do you think is the hardest part of the job for you?

[00:32:41.22]

Jackie B.: Ah . . . I've been there so long. Hardest part when they don't work as a team, like today I got frustrated. They seen that I needed help. I'm always, like, "Okay, if they're not around and their plates come out to take to their tables, I'll take 'em to their tables." I'll go pick up their dirty dishes off their table, clean their tables, so people can sit down. They don't work like I do. They don't.

[00:33:21.21]

Henri H.: So, you don't always get that reciprocation?

[00:33:23.17]

Jackie B.: No, not always. Now, with Sheila, when Sheila and I are on the floor, Sheila and I work just like partners.

[00:33:32.15]

Henri H.: Yeah?

[00:33:34.04]

Jackie B.: We work as a team.

[00:33:33.10]

Henri H.: Um-hm.

[00:33:35.26]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. But those, like I said, those younger people. Oh, my God. [Laughter] They're somethin' else. But I just try to stay focused and block them out, you know, because I know everybody need a job and everybody needs to make money. So, I'm like, "Tracy'll tell 'em."

[00:34:01.02]

Henri H.: Um-hm.

[00:34:01.02]

Jackie B.: "Once she see it, she'll get 'em. She'll get 'em."

[00:34:05.15]

Henri H.: What is your favorite part of the job, if we hadn't already covered it?

[00:34:09.08]

Jackie B.: Um . . . seein' people enjoyin' the food. That's my favorite part, just seein' the people enjoyin' the food and enjoyin' the atmosphere and the fellowship with each other. I like for a place to be cleaned and just . . . I can't just sit. I have to keep movin'; doin' something to make the time go by. Even though we supposed to take turns rolling, washing and rolling silver, sometimes they'll let—they'll just sit for a minute, but I'll just go on it. Ask the dishwasher to wash and sanitize it, everything, and I dry it and roll it up. I just have to keep busy. I know what I need to have to make money, to make it roll. Uh-huh.

[00:35:16.18]

Henri H.: How have you enjoyed things since you dialed back your work week?

[00:35:21.25]

Jackie B.: Oh, I love it. I love these four days off. I have a chance where, when I was workin' six days a week, because I sing in a choir and we would have different functions, programs at the church, and I would have to, like, race home, race from the job to home, take a shower and get ready for that program at 7 o'clock. We close at 7, you know what I mean? Now, I don't have to do that, because I get off at 3 and I can go home and take a shower, rest a minute, and be on time for whatever we have at our church. I enjoy it. And I have time to spend with my grands; I have seven grands and three great-grands.

[00:36:09.12]

Henri H.: Oh, wow. That's exciting.

[00:36:10.24]

Jackie B.: Yes. I have time to spend with them. I just enjoy it. I mean, it's a blessing. I've been waitin' for this for years.

[00:36:23.02]

Henri H.: Yeah. I know from my parents, my brother has kids, and grandchildren will keep you busy.

[00:36:31.20]

Jackie B.: Yes, they will. [Laughter] Yes, they will. I've enjoyed this; havin' these days off. The three days. And God is still makin' a way as if I was still workin' six days. You know?

[00:36:46.24]

Henri H.: Nice.

[00:36:48.09]

Jackie B.: As far as the finance?

[00:36:50.05]

Henri H.: Right, right.

[00:36:50.08]

Jackie B.: I'm like, "Thank you, Lord."

[00:36:54.09]

Henri H.: That's wonderful. One thing that I feel like a lot of people mention about serving is that there's kind of a performative aspect to it, where you feel almost like you're on a stage, like everybody's lookin' at you at the table and you've . . . you gotta keep their meal movin' along, you kinda keep 'em entertained. Do you get that kind of feeling, of . . . being an actor or doing a performance?

[00:37:25.27]

Jackie B.: Well, sometime I do, but what I do is, I try to be consistent with my customers. Make sure they're okay; check in on them. I might check on them, like, every three minutes. I know they'll probably say, "Well, Ms. Jackie, you just came, you checked on it." I say, "Well, you know, I gotta make sure you're okay." Know their drinks are filled, do they like more bread or . . . but you do, you do feel like you're performin' sometime. But I just keep it real with them. We joke. Sometimes, me and the customers might joke. Some of 'em tell me, ask me to pray for them sometime. Say, "Ms. Jackie, could you come and pray for us?" I'll take 'em in—it's like a little lobby part in the back, before you go to the restroom, and we'll hold hands and pray. And cry, they'll cry.

[00:38:25.20]

Henri H.: Oh, that's nice.

[00:38:26.05]

Jackie B.: And I'll hug 'em. You know, I like hugs, to hug the customer, 'cause you never know what people are goin' through. You know, these days and times, people are so—the people in the world are wicked. It's not the world, a mean world, it's the people in the world.

[00:38:46.04]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:38:47.24]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:38:49.23]

Henri H.: So, you have customers that come see you just for that emotional reinforcement sometimes?

[00:38:56.09]

Jackie B.: Sometimes they do. My pastor told me one day, he said, "You know what? It's like you could be ministerin' some of your customers, God may have put you in that place to minister to some of your customers." I'm like, "Really, Pastor?" I'm like . . . minister to some customers? Me? Jackie? He said, "Yes. 'Cause you have that gift."

[00:39:29.04]

Henri H.: Well, and as a server, you're probably one of the few people that talks to as many people in a given week as a pastor does, you know?

[00:39:35.21]

Jackie B.: Yes, yes.

[00:39:37.12]

Henri H.: Not that many people see that many strangers' faces in a week.

[00:39:41.28]

Jackie B.: Exactly. Yeah, but overall, I love my job. I do.

[00:39:48.08]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:39:49.20]

Jackie B.: I love my job, and I would tell anybody, "If you work at Busy Bee, you got a great job." And she treat her customers right. She give us good benefits and everything. That's what's so good. Now, when we first started, we didn't have benefits. Now . . .for years, she's treated us really right and good.

[00:40:16.08]

Henri H.: That's been kinda one of the themes that we've seen in a lot of these restaurants that have been around for more than twenty years, you know.

[00:40:25.03]

Jackie B.: Um-hm. 'Cause Busy Bee been in business since 1947.

[00:40:27.14]

Henri H.: Yeah. It's because they take care of their people and they have people who work there for forever.

[00:40:36.27]

Jackie B.: Yes.

[00:40:38.09]

Henri H.: Those people get regulars, and those regulars always come in, whether it's a good economy, bad economy, you know.

[00:40:41.14]

Jackie B.: Yes. That's so true.

[00:40:48.27]

Henri H.: Let's see, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you want to share or anything that you feel like we haven't touched on?

[00:41:05.14]

Jackie B.: I think we touched every base. [Laughter]

[00:41:08.21]

Henri H.: Yeah, we've been talking for a while, so. [Laughter]

[00:41:11.14]

Jackie B.: I've enjoyed it.

[00:41:12.22]

Henri H.: Yeah, me too. I really appreciate it.

[00:41:16.01]

Jackie B.: Yes, sir.

[00:41:17.00]

Henri H.: All right, well, we can go ahead and—

[End of interview]