

**Deloris Reno and Diane “Dee Dee” Holt
Middendorf’s Restaurant—Manchac, LA**

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Date: June 3, 2014

Location: Deloris Reno’s Residence - Reserve, LA

Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1 hour, 32 minutes

Project: Middendorf’s and Manchac

00:00:00

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Tuesday, June 3, 2014. I'm here with Miss Deloris and Miss Dee Dee, and I'm going to have them introduce themselves. Miss Deloris: Could you tell me your full name and tell me a little bit about where we are right now?

00:00:22

Deloris Reno: We're in Reserve, Louisiana. Well, I guess I got it right. And Deloris Reno:.

00:00:31

SR: Okay, thank you. And Dee Dee?

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Dee Dee Holt: Dee Dee Holt; this is my mom's house.

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SR: And Dee Dee: Could you tell me a little bit about what you do for a living?

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Dee Dee Holt: I'm one of the managers at Middendorf's, front of the house.

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SR: Miss Deloris, you've also worked at Middendorf's. Is that true?

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Deloris Reno: Yes, Ma'am. I worked there for what? Twenty-one years.

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SR: And what--what positions did you hold there? What was your job?

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Deloris Reno: Hostess. Well, really assistant manager as I went, and I loved it. So I still love it, and I'd rather—I'd like to be out instead of sitting in a house all day. But really I don't sit in the house. I work in my flowers and my roses and it's beautiful. And now they're multiplying all over again and they're gorgeous.

00:01:26

SR: They are gorgeous. I noticed that. Let me back up a little bit. Can you tell me where you were born and where you grew up, Miss Deloris?

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Deloris Reno: Well, Holden, Louisiana. That's local. This ain't going to be on—?

00:01:49

SR: This is just an audio recording.

00:01:49

Deloris Reno: Thank God.

00:01:51

SR: Just voices.

00:01:52

Deloris Reno: In Holden. That's all I know. Now, we moved from there and we moved to Manchac. And I had stayed there all my life and worked at Middendorf's for twenty-one years, and then suddenly I just got down. When they had to rush me to the hospital and my legs went dead on the—what you call it, oh shucks—the table, put it that way; I'll just put it table. And that was it: no more Middendorf's, so—

00:02:29

SR: I'm sorry to hear that. So your legs just stopped working?

00:02:33

Deloris Reno: Yeah, my daughter was—it's a stretcher. I'll get it right after a while. I'm nervous. But anyway it was a stretcher, and I was—I don't know what was going on. I had a heart attack, one thing. Three heart attacks, really they said. And what it was, one leg was just going up and down and up and down on the stretcher and my daughter said, "Mama, quit that. Don't do that." And I said, "Helen, I can't help it. It's doing it itself." So that's before the doctor

got there and the other one started the same thing. And that was it. She--she couldn't get over it, and so that's what it was. He said I had had a heart attack three times, so—.

00:03:20

Dee Dee Holt: The tumor in her spine is what gave her the legs, though.

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SR: Oh, a tumor in the spine?

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Dee Dee Holt: Which was inoperable and could not be cured, but—

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SR: She's getting around.

00:03:35

Dee Dee Holt: She's like a miracle. She wasn't supposed to survive, but she did.

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SR: When was that?

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Dee Dee Holt: About ten years ago. Was it about ten years ago?

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Deloris Reno: About ten years ago. It was rough for a while, but I made it. I'm a fighter, put it that way.

00:03:51

Dee Dee Holt: She thought she was going back to Middendorf's, so she was ready to just get in there.

00:03:56

SR: Well that's pretty amazing. I'll say for the recording that—

00:04:00

Deloris Reno: But I spent—. Honey, I go out. I get up in the morning at between 6:00 and 7:00 every morning. I make my coffee, and I'm a person that likes to go out in the yard and look at my flowers while I'm, you know, drinking my coffee. And then I come in and put my gloves on and my broom and I put everything and I go out and I stay out there until 7:00 and 8:00 at night, believe it or not. And my daughter gets all over me. I don't like housework. **[Laughs]** I like to be doing something outside. So, and that's what I got today: a big mess I left out there. Stay in the yard in the back.

00:04:47

Dee Dee Holt: And she's dying to get out there and clean it up. **[Laughs]**

00:04:49

SR: Well that's amazing. When I walked in here, I'll say for the recording, you were making yourself a hamburger.

00:04:53

Deloris Reno: Yeah, I got to put that in the icebox. Is it chilly enough to put—?

00:04:58

Dee Dee Holt: Do you want me to go put them in the frying pan and put them on low?

00:05:06

Deloris Reno: Do you want to divide it with me? I think I got enough meat for three people.

00:05:06

SR: No, thank you. I ate a big breakfast. I always do before these interviews.

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Deloris Reno: I never ate breakfast.

00:05:13

SR: You know, Miss Deloris: I forgot to ask you, if you don't mind, sharing your birth date with us. What is your birth date?

00:05:18

Deloris Reno: January 19, 1932, so I'm—I keep saying forty—

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Dee Dee Holt: The older you make yourself the older you're making me.

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Deloris Reno: I'm eighty-four.

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Dee Dee Holt: No, you're not.

00:05:31

Deloris Reno: No, wait, wait. Come on, Dee Dee, help me. My mind is gone too, Honey.

00:05:35

Dee Dee Holt: She's eighty-two.

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Deloris Reno: Huh?

00:05:38

Dee Dee Holt: Eighty-two—

00:05:38

Deloris Reno: I said eighty-two.

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Dee Dee Holt: You said eighty-four.

00:05:41

Deloris Reno: January 19, 1982—yeah.

00:05:45

Dee Dee Holt: Nineteen thirty-two. That makes her eighty-two.

00:05:48

SR: Eighty-two, yeah.

00:05:50

Deloris Reno: It's eighty-two.

00:05:52

Dee Dee Holt: Right.

00:05:54

SR: Well, you're pretty amazing. Tell me how old were you when you moved to—when your family moved to Manchac?

00:05:58

Deloris Reno: I was just a young girl, about seventeen.

00:06:04

SR: And they moved there from Holden?

00:06:06

Deloris Reno: We moved—yeah, my daddy, he decided to move so he built the house and moved us all over there. So, well, at that time I was—not eighteen. I was young, you know, just a kid. But I grew up there until I was about seventeen, eighteen.

00:06:32

SR: And why did your parents want to live in Manchac?

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Deloris Reno: My daddy was a fisherman, and it was closer because he did his work here. Well, what you call it—make a living with it.

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Dee Dee Holt: Commercial.

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SR: He was a commercial fisherman?

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Deloris Reno: Yeah, commercial fisherman and whatever. So they was doing good, but now they don't do good—poor things. So my daddy, he died—oh it's been so long I done forgot, Baby.

00:07:07

SR: Yeah, tell me a little bit about your father and his fishing. Did he go out every day? What was that life like?

00:07:14

Deloris Reno: You have to go out every day and he fished all day. You know, they—I don't know if you know anything about lines, but they had lines across the river and baited with hooks. And then a little while later, about a half hour later, they would go run them again and that's how they caught the fish. And then they would sell them. And that's how he made his living.

00:07:43

SR: Who would he sell to?

00:07:44

Deloris Reno: Do what?

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SR: Who would he sell his fish to?

00:07:48

Deloris Reno: To the fish market, like Dunk [Reno] and them.

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Dee Dee Holt: Was Rottman's there?

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Deloris Reno: Hmm?

00:07:53

Dee Dee Holt: Did he sell to Rottman's? Or they weren't there?

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Deloris Reno: No, Daddy did that way back—. Yeah, it was—was it Rottman? Yeah, that's before we was married. And he--he sold the fish there, but that was way back there.

00:08:14

SR: I also interviewed Miss Beauty Gueldner. Do you know her? She grew—she was in the Rottman family.

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Dee Dee Holt: Lerline.

00:08:24

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

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Dee Dee Holt: Lerline. They call her Beauty.

00:08:28

Deloris Reno: Yeah. I know, yeah, I didn't know her real—know her real good, but—

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Dee Dee Holt: She's itty bitty. She's a tiny, tiny, tiny little older woman. Remember how big she used to be? She was a big, big, big lady.

00:08:41

Deloris Reno: She's still there?

00:08:43

Dee Dee Holt: Uh-hm. She brought her—*[Unintelligible]* brought her to the restaurant and they talked outside for a long time.

00:08:49

Deloris Reno: Oh really? I didn't know—

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Dee Dee Holt: I wouldn't recognize her. I didn't know who she was.

00:08:53

Deloris Reno: It's a lot of people I don't recognize either. *[Unintelligible]* They seen her at the funeral— Carmen—and I never seen— she didn't know me, so—

00:09:12

SR: So your father would sell to the fish market. Was it mostly Reno's?

00:09:17

Deloris Reno: It was mostly all over, you know. People— like the friends bought fish and different ones that wanted fish. They would fish them. Wanda and them could tell you about that.

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SR: Was it mostly catfish?

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Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, that's what it was, was catfish, So—.

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SR: And did he do crabs or anything like that also?

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Deloris Reno: Yeah, he crabbed. He made soft-shell crabs. That was way back there, uh-hm.

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SR: He had tanks for the soft-shells?

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Deloris Reno: Had what?

00:09:49

SR: Did he have tanks for the soft-shell crabs?

00:09:52

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, we had all of that. That's way back there, Honey.

Dee Dee Holt: Over sixty years ago. That's before me.

00:10:04

SR: And so, then, tell me about when you got a little bit older: You stayed in Manchac?

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Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, that's where I lived all my life—

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Dee Dee Holt: Ponchatoula—remember when you and Daddy—we were living in Ponchatoula for a long time. Daddy built your house in Ponchatoula.

00:10:25

Deloris Reno: Yeah, that's true. We lived in Ponchatoula and then Daddy finally moved—

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Dee Dee Holt: He got sick.

00:10:34

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm. And then he passed away, so that was the end of that.

00:10:39

SR: When you say, “Daddy,” now do you mean your husband or her father?

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Deloris Reno: My husband.

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SR: Did you meet—where did you meet your husband?

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Deloris Reno: In Manchac. He was—he lived in Manchac too.

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SR: Can you tell me his name?

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Deloris Reno: Joe Reno.

00:10:57

SR: Was he also a fisherman?

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Deloris Reno: Yeah. I guess that's why I met him—fishwoman. Oh, Lordy,

00:11:07

SR: So Dee Dee, did you live in Manchac growing up at all? Or were your parents in Ponchatoula already?

00:11:12

Dee Dee Holt: We lived in Ponchatoula until what? We were about ten, because we went a few years of school in Ponchatoula and then Daddy got sick and he was told by the doctor that he had to cut back and could not work like he was supposed—like he was working. So we bought a house, a little camp in Manchac, and we all moved to Manchac and stayed there until we were, what? When we got out of school and got married.

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SR: When he was told he needed to slow down a little bit, what was he doing for work then? Was he fishing?

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Dee Dee Holt: He was doing—he was a builder, construction—

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Deloris Reno: He was.

00:11:55

Dee Dee Holt: —because he built Mama's dream house, but when we had to leave it because he couldn't—the doctor told him to slow down.

00:12:03

SR: And when you moved to Manchac then, did he fish or did he just basically retire?

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Dee Dee Holt: Fished. He was fishing, trapping.

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Deloris Reno: He fished all his life.

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Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, he loved it on the water; loved being out on the water.

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SR: That's interesting to me because, from my perspective, that's really hard work. *[Laughs]*

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Deloris Reno: It is hard. Very hard.

00:12:26

Dee Dee Holt: Forty, fifty, sixty years ago it was a lucrative business, though. You could make good money doing that, and they did. But as the rivers—you know, they get polluted and everything—starts to get—. Not anymore. You can't make a living at it anymore.

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SR: Yeah, so you think pollution has a lot to do with that?

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Dee Dee Holt: I do. I think pollution has a lot to do with it.

00:12:49

SR: Um, yeah. Well, and then he--he fished until he retired? Until retirement, or—?

00:12:58

Dee Dee Holt: Uh-hm.

00:12:58

SR: I'm sorry, I missed that. So how old were you when you moved to Manchac, and how old were you when you left?

00:13:05

Dee Dee Holt: I'm not sure. About ten, we went—I don't remember exactly what year. We were about nine or ten years old, and then I left—was it eighteen? About eighteen?

00:13:19

Deloris Reno: Something like that. Really it's been so long, Honey, and so many—I've had so many hits in my head falling out of the chair, I can't think no more. It did something to my thinking and my hearing.

00:13:33

SR: I don't think so. I think you're doing pretty well. What--what did you—I know you have one sister because I met her, but what did you and your sister and possible other siblings think about moving to Manchac?

00:13:47

Dee Dee Holt: It was fun. We were always on the water and we always had boats and we were always swimming. Always outside. We would come in and put our swimsuits—we'd all drop our swimsuits in the bathroom and Mama got so mad at us one day that she took and threw them all in the back of the house in the woods [*Laughs*] because we didn't pick them up.

00:14:07

Deloris Reno: And I threw them in the yard, which is what I did. They would go swimming. They'd get out of school and they'd have to study, you know. That's the main thing: studying. All right, they would go swimming and I'd have my floor nice and clean and shiny—not like it is now—and they would just throw them—come back and throw them on the floor in the bathroom, my bathroom all messed up. And then I told them before, I said, “Now you go swimming, rinse them out, and hang them up outside somewhere.” So they didn't. They would go swimming and come back and they'd throw their doggone things on the floor. And I--I mean I explained to them before this all happened. I guess you think I'm mean, but I picked the bathing suits up and I took every one of them and I slung them out in the yard. Now y'all want to go swimming? Go get your dirty ones! [*Laughs*]

00:15:11

SR: My mom would have done that.

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Deloris Reno: That is ridiculous after you keep telling them and telling them. They wouldn't do it, so that's what I did.

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SR: How many children did you have?

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Deloris Reno: Six. Four girls and two boys. They're all beautiful.

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SR: I bet they are. I've seen two of them. Wow, six. So that was a lot of bathing suits on the floor.

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Deloris Reno: Yeah, well the boys didn't do that. It was the girls. Them girls, they was something else, I'm telling you. [*Laughs*]

00:15:46

SR: Well you were outnumbered.

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Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, yeah. But that's all right. I fixed it. They got—they did what I told them to do afterwards.

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SR: Where was your house? Like, let's use Middendorf's as a landmark? Where was the home where you grew up in there?

00:16:04

Dee Dee Holt: St. John Parish side.

00:16:07

SR: Okay.

Dee Dee Holt: When you're coming back over the bridge. And it was also on the water, so to get to it, you had to get to it by boat. And she can't swim. So she lived on the water all her life and she cannot swim. She couldn't swim before her legs were paralyzed.

00:16:23

SR: Did it make you nervous to--to live around all that water?

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Deloris Reno: Uh-uh. I wasn't scared. If I fell, I just fell. That's all. I do that all the time.

[Laughs]

00:16:33

Dee Dee Holt: One time you were in the boat and you were washing your boat out. She would scrub her boat. Tell her what you did when you were scrubbing the boat one time.

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Deloris Reno: I was always cleaning, so—

00:16:45

Dee Dee Holt: About the thing that was in the water?

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Deloris Reno: Hmm?

00:16:48

Dee Dee Holt: The thing that was in the water.

00:16:48

Deloris Reno: What, Baby?

00:16:49

Dee Dee Holt: When you were scrubbing the boat and you went to rinse the rag out.

00:16:53

Deloris Reno: Oh yeah. I fell off. I fall all the time.

00:16:58

DDH: No, there was something else.

00:16:58

Deloris Reno: I know, but I mean I fall all the time now just like I did then.

Dee Dee Holt: The alligator. When you put the rag down in the water, you went to pick the rag up and the alligator thought it was food and he grabbed the rag.

00:17:10

Deloris Reno: And he took the rag from me.

00:17:12

Dee Dee Holt: Almost took her hand.

00:17:14

Deloris Reno: He was going to take my hand. *[Laughs]* Oh Lordy, something else. We—I had all kinds of things, Honey. I wouldn't be able to do nothing if I sat here and talked with the things like that. And I used to have a little pet coon and I would give him baths, clean him, and he would sit up on--on the back of the sofa with my two sons and just constantly shaking their hair and doing all kinds of things to their hair. And it would follow me all over the—where I go.

00:17:50

So one day I was getting dressed, and the poor thing, he knew something was going on—to go to Middendorf's to work at 10:30. I had to be there by 10:30. So I put my clothes on and I didn't--I didn't know that I had left her outside because she used the bathroom outside. Poor little darlin', it followed me across. And I was always was scared I was going to be late, late, late, which I wasn't. I was not late, but looking for my little coon for a while. It was such a pretty little thing. And I come home and I called it, but it—it somehow it got out that door. Some way it got out before I went out and it--it disappeared right there. You know it probably had to go use the bathroom or something. And I was so scared. And when I did come home it was gone. Somebody probably picked it up.

00:18:53

Dee Dee Holt: Found a girlfriend or she found a boyfriend.

00:18:57

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

00:18:57

Dee Dee Holt: He found somebody to live with, a spouse.

00:19:01

SR: Do raccoons make good pets?

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Deloris Reno: It was my pet.

00:19:05

Dee Dee Holt: That's dangerous to have—it's dangerous to have a raccoon.

00:19:08

Deloris Reno: It wasn't dangerous, though. I raised it. I raised it with a bottle.

Dee Dee Holt: Wild animal. When my little boy would go over there with his bottle, the coon would take the bottle out of his hand and suck the bottle.

00:19:21

Deloris Reno: I was training her little son. That's the way it was. I was training [him], because she worked at Middendorf's. She had been there a long time. But anyway, he walked—he come—Marsha brings the baby in and a little while later I give him a bottle and he goes and takes the bottle from the baby and runs with it. And that's how I got it trained. [*Laughs*] He cried and cried. The coon got his food. [*Laughs*] I had a time with that, I'll tell you. I cried and he

cried for his bottle. And I was crying that she took his bottle because we couldn't take it away from her.

00:20:04

SR: That is so funny. I haven't heard of somebody having a raccoon as a pet before.

00:20:09

Deloris Reno: Yeah, that's what happened. And it disappeared and it really hurt me. I mean, I like an animal and they die or something, it really gets me.

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SR: I can tell you still miss it.

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Deloris Reno: Yeah, I do. I miss it bad. I still cry once in a while, my little dog. Go get my picture of my dog in there on the dresser. I want to show you why I cry. If it wanted to go out to the bathroom—I mean to go to the bathroom, it would go to the door and bark and hit it, and hit it with its feet. And Honey, when it got finished, it would come back and pack on that door and wanting to come back in. It was such a—

00:20:52

SR: Oh that is—that is a really sweet dog. What kind of dog is that?

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Dee Dee Holt: Pomeranian.

00:20:58

Deloris Reno: Pomer—I don't know, Honey, but it's a little thing. It's--it's my love; that's all that mattered. It was my love.

00:21:07

Dee Dee Holt: She wouldn't let us have dogs when we were little, but when Heidi started bringing this one—she belonged to my niece, and when she would go to work she'd bring the dog and Mama would take care of it.

00:21:17

Deloris Reno: And I'd take care of it.

Dee Dee Holt: Dog-sit during the day.

00:21:19

Deloris Reno: Seven years for that dog, and when it died it hurt me, Honey. Wherever I went, it went. If I went to the bathroom, it went. It would lie down on the floor and wait until whatever I was doing, and she'd go follow me out. And I had her little dog bed and I would give her a pillow, a regular pillow. She was just like a human.

00:21:43

SR: Yeah.

00:21:44

Deloris Reno: When I'm cooking, she knows I'm cooking. She's in there going, "Ah, ah, ah." Like that, you know. I said, "Mama is going to have it ready in a minute." And she'd go lay back down. It--it's sad. It really is sad.

00:21:58

SR: Yeah.

00:22:00

Deloris Reno: Everybody laughs and makes fun of me, but I don't care, Honey.

00:22:04

Dee Dee Holt: We loved the dog, too.

00:22:06

SR: Yeah, what—tell me about when you started working at Middendorf's.

00:22:11

Deloris Reno: Well it was like this. I had—my husband died, and I didn't know how I was going to make a living and—. I don't know what happened, if I had a—oh yeah, I had a car. I got

to think a lot, Baby. But anyway, Miss Grace, little Grace Scott lived in Manchac, too, and she said, “Deloris do you want me to see if [I] can get [you] a job at Middendorf's?” I said, “Yes, Ma'am, that would be nice.” So I said, “Okay.” And well, she's--she's dead now. She's been dead a long time.

00:22:56

Dee Dee Holt: Everybody knew Miss Grace.

00:22:57

Deloris Reno: But everybody knew her. She was such a precious woman. I mean she—nobody could be any better. She was such—so she did; they told her, “Yeah, bring her.” So I--I dressed up. I put my heels on, Honey, and I didn't know how it was. I put my heels on. I miss my heels. I put those on and I went in and Suzie [Lamonte]—we went into the private dining room and we talked and things. Suzie knew me good. And after we went in there we sat and she would talk and we was—you know, things. She knew everything about me, but she didn't ask me nothing but my conditions and all. And I was just a young girl. I mean, not a young girl but a young woman. And let me see now how that went. Yeah, I wore heels and a gown. I mean I fixed myself all up. You know I thought I looked like a million dollars. **[Laughs]**

00:24:10

But anyway, it was—well it was like that—see how she'd call it. But anyway, I started walking around and I didn't know how busy it was, what to do or nothing. Three buses hit me at one time and I had—now can you imagine with heels on? It wasn't like it is now.

00:24:34

Dee Dee Holt: So she put you to work the very first day you went in looking for a job?

00:24:37

Deloris Reno: Yeah, the first—

00:24:40

Dee Dee Holt: The very first day?

00:24:41

Deloris Reno: The first day.

00:24:41

Dee Dee Holt: You went to work?

00:24:41

Deloris Reno: Right. The first darned day, because she needed a hostess.

00:24:46

Dee Dee Holt: I didn't know that.

00:24:46

Deloris Reno: And Honey, them buses stopped and all come piling and I said, “Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. You’re all going to have to stand in line. You can't butt ahead of nobody.”

00:24:57

Dee Dee Holt: She was real good at controlling the line. We had one hostess back then.

00:25:02

SR: One hostess, huh?

00:25:03

Dee Dee Holt: We had one hostess, yeah.

00:25:05

Deloris Reno: But I did—I told them, I said, “Now what we’ll do is we’ll take the first bus that came, and what I’ll do, you can help me if you all want to eat here. Or either I’m sorry y’all will have to go somewhere else because you’re going to have a long wait.” All right, he did. He said, “Let’s do it like this.” I said, “Okay, how do you want to do it?” He said, “I’ll get my bus and put it right across here and nobody else will come here to do that.” But anyway, I got rid of that bus and so—I’m telling you, I don’t know how I did it but I did it. I took him—. What? I’m too far away? I’m going to get nervous.

00:25:51

SR: No, no, don't get nervous.

00:25:52

Deloris Reno: But anyway, what he did, he said, "When your tables get up, do you clean them?" I said, "I help when we're real busy like this, yeah. I do. I help them." And he said, "Okay." I said, "Well, how about you stand there and I'll take the numbers of the ones that you want me to go ahead and take if I got tables?" He said, "Yes, Ma'am, that would be great." So I did.

00:26:18

I went and got my pencil and paper and here I went. He would come back and say like, "Three," or, "Four." I said, "Please don't make it—I still have extra tables. They can't sit together if I have extra?" He said, "Well, I guess so." I said, "Well, if they want to eat they're going to have to do it."

00:26:38

SR: So you're talking about the—you're talking about the bus driver this whole time?

00:26:41

Deloris Reno: The bus driver, uh-huh. He was going to tell me how many he had ready. And I said, "Okay, let me go in the room now and start checking," because it never was an empty table. It was always full. And that—I think that was on a Friday or something. I don't remember, but on the weekends it's real busy.

00:27:01

SR: What year was that?

00:27:01

Deloris Reno: Oh, Darlin', that's way back when I was in my forties.

00:27:06

Dee Dee Holt: Twenty years ago.

00:27:09

Deloris Reno: Yeah, something like that.

00:27:11

Dee Dee Holt: About twenty years ago.

00:27:11

Deloris Reno: But anyway, I took them as--as I'd get a table. I'd help the girls get the tables clean and I said, "Everybody has got to work together here and we got to get these people seated." Well, they did. And I see one little girl was Stephanie. Remember Stephanie? She was sitting down cleaning a table. And oh, I got so irritated and I said, "You get up from there and you get them tables cleaned or you have to go home." Because, I said, "We need tables." So she got up and started—I don't think she liked it too much, but she got up that little stinker, little

bitty thing. And she got up and she started cleaning tables. And a man come to me and he said, "Okay, I got four." I said, "I got a table. Come on."

00:27:59

And about the time I got back out with that one, he said, "I got four more." I said, "Bring them all in." *[Laughs]* And we got it. I think in a half hour we got them.

00:28:13

SR: Wow.

00:28:13

Deloris Reno: So it was about thirty on each bus.

00:28:15

SR: Do you know where those buses came from?

00:28:17

Deloris Reno: No, uh-uh. No, they just come and go and I don't have time to talk to nobody.

00:28:22

SR: So that's common, huh, that a bus will just show up?

00:28:27

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

Dee Dee Holt: Not anymore. They usually call. Back then they didn't call but they usually call now if there's going to be a large group.

00:28:34

Deloris Reno: No, I don't remember anymore. I mean now I don't know what goes on. How many years—ten years?

00:28:42

Dee Dee Holt: You've been gone about ten, yeah.

00:28:42

SR: What kinds of groups would just show up in buses? Tour groups?

00:28:47

Dee Dee Holt: People for the Saints games coming out of Mississippi. The Saints games were big back then.

00:28:54

Deloris Reno: Saints games and going to New Orleans and all of those. Like you know, different things like that.

00:29:01

Dee Dee Holt: Anything that happens in New Orleans affects us—affects the restaurant.

00:29:05

SR: Hmm, did you still have children at home when you started working?

00:29:11

Deloris Reno: Yeah, I had—how old was Marsha?

00:29:17

Dee Dee Holt: Marsha had just finished high school, or she was getting ready to graduate.

00:29:21

Deloris Reno: And well, her brothers were still there. They weren't married and he would slap her or something at home and she'd get on the phone and I'm working and he would get—she'd get on the phone: "Joey hit me in the stomach." I said, "Wait until I get home." [*Laughs*] There ain't nothing I can do when I'm not there. But you know, kids—sisters and brothers fuss and fight all the time. It was something else. But I worry about them. Of course she had them up there with her. I mean they were practically grown.

00:29:53

Dee Dee Holt: She was eighteen—seventeen, eighteen; they were a couple years younger.

00:30:00

Deloris Reno: Yeah, and Dee Dee and the boys were outside. What happened to y'all out there with the—when y'all were wrestling and they threw you down in the mud? Remember that?

00:30:10

Dee Dee Holt: Threw me in the water and threw me in the canal, yeah. Both of them. It took two of them to throw me in the canal.

00:30:13

Deloris Reno: Two of them did it.

00:30:15

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, they used to do that all the time.

00:30:17

Deloris Reno: But them girls caught heck, Honey. Four girls and them two boys, they really had problems. I mean they weren't fighting, real fighting, or nothing.

00:30:27

Dee Dee Holt: We used to real fight. No, we used to real fight.

00:30:31

Deloris Reno: Fight?

00:30:31

Dee Dee Holt: We used to real fight.

00:30:33

SR: That sounds dangerous: real fighting around a canal.

00:30:36

Dee Dee Holt: Well, when you went down it didn't hurt you. Because you were in the water, so it didn't hurt.

00:30:40

SR: Did you ever—like, swimming all around there, did you ever encounter alligators?

Dee Dee Holt: The alligators weren't aggressive like they are now. They would stay—you could see them and you could see their eyes in the canal, but they didn't really bother you like they do now.

00:30:54

SR: What--what happened, do you think?

00:30:56

Dee Dee Holt: I think people are feeding them. Maybe their--their habitat is going away. They don't really have—there's not really that much out there I guess anymore. I don't know. I know that people feed them now, and that's not good to do that.

00:31:11

SR: Had you ever worked in a restaurant before you got your job there?

00:31:15

Deloris Reno: Uh-um, I never worked before. I had the kids, and I had six kids just—I worked, Honey. [*Laughs*]

00:31:24

Dee Dee Holt: You did work a little while. After Daddy died you worked a little while at—when Dunk had his little restaurant. Yeah, in Dunk's restaurant, and you used to cook. You used to make sauce piquante. You used to make the best sauce piquante in the world.

00:31:40

Deloris Reno: It wasn't nothing like Middendorf's.

00:31:40

Dee Dee Holt: It was a very short time. Where Rottman's Seafood Restaurant was, Dunk had—I don't even remember what happened to the building; it was a little restaurant there. I don't

remember what it looked like. Tiny little place, kind of where [Middendorf's] deck is now. Sort of right--right there. But it wasn't there for very long.

00:31:59

Deloris Reno: No.

Dee Dee Holt: Dunk had it, though. You interviewed—

00:32:00

SR: Yeah, he told me about that.

00:32:04

Deloris Reno: Trying to take Middendorf's off its—he'd never do that. [*Laughs*]

00:32:09

SR: Did you cook there?

00:32:11

Deloris Reno: Yeah, I cooked there. Uh-huh, I did the cooking.

00:32:15

SR: Tell me about your sauce piquante.

00:32:19

Deloris Reno: Oh Lord, that again?

00:32:21

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

00:32:21

Deloris Reno: No. He--he said I took his recipe away, but he's the one that give me the recipe where I could fix it. So there was no way I took it away.

00:32:34

Dee Dee Holt: Now he didn't tell *you* that, did he? He didn't tell you that, because she said, "Not again."

00:32:39

SR: No, he didn't tell me that. No, she told me that you made a really good sauce piquante.

00:32:44

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, he never said anything about it. What? He thought you stole his recipe?

00:32:47

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm.

00:32:50

Dee Dee Holt: Well, Middendorf's doesn't cook that so it doesn't matter. [*Laughs*]

00:32:52

Deloris Reno: If I'm making--making it all day long, what do I need a recipe for?

00:33:01

SR: What was it? What kind of meat was in it?

00:33:02

Deloris Reno: Fish. That's why it was called—

Dee Dee Holt: Fish and red gravy and lots of onions. It was delicious, over rice, over steamed rice.

00:33:10

Deloris Reno: Just—whatever you wanted, the plain gravy or the—you know, or just the fish and the gravy not no other stuff in it.

00:33:21

SR: Can you tell me about the steps to making that, for the recording, because a lot of people who hear this won't know what sauce piquante is?

00:33:30

Deloris Reno: What, tell them what's in it?

00:33:31

Dee Dee Holt: How you make it.

00:33:31

SR: Yeah, how you make it.

00:33:34

Deloris Reno: Well you got—you got to have onions, you got to have lemons, you got to have olives, and you got to—everything just put in there.

Dee Dee Holt: What do you do with it?

00:33:45

Deloris Reno: Plenty of onions I put. And I put the onions—here I—. [*Laughs*] I'm getting nervous. But anyway, you brown flour and just--just a regular like a regular stew, Honey.

00:34:05

SR: You make a roux? You start with a roux?

00:34:07

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm.

00:34:08

Dee Dee Holt: Yours was red. Didn't you put tomato--tomato?

00:34:09

Deloris Reno: Yeah, but I always added a little bit—. Yeah, and then you add the tomatoes and the sauce in it, so it's not hard. That's all.

00:34:21

Dee Dee Holt: Did you cook the fish before you—?

00:34:22

Deloris Reno: No, you put the fish—you see, the way I did it, I took the big catfish, a fillet, and I'd put it on the meat board and I would cut it in squares like lunchmeat. Or not lunchmeat but regular meat. And I'd put it on there and cut it in little squares. And then the last thing: you don't leave that fish in there long because it breaks into pieces and you can't eat the fish. Only you could eat it, but you don't have—. But anyway, I take—then I put my gravy and my sauce, after I put the little bit of—I don't know if Dunk does that or not, but I did it—the gravy with the flour, you know. But I put a little bit in there and then I put the sauce and the fish. You let it cook for a long time and then you put the fish in there afterwards maybe five or ten minutes, because when you got it cut like that it cooks fast. And that's how I did it.

00:35:34

SR: When you say, “the sauce,” do you mean tomato sauce or—?

00:35:38

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, tomato sauce. Uh-huh.

00:35:40

SR: And where do the lemons and the olives go in? When they do go in?

00:35:44

Deloris Reno: They go in there with the cooking before you put the fish in there. You put everything together like that. And then you put the fish last. It was good.

00:35:58

SR: Is it like a dark red?

00:35:59

Deloris Reno: Huh?

00:36:02

Dee Dee Holt: Was it dark red?

00:36:02

SR: Does it get dark from the roux?

00:36:04

Deloris Reno: What, Honey?

00:36:06

SR: The sauce?

00:36:09

Deloris Reno: It--it would cook. What do you mean now? I got to get it right.

00:36:12

SR: I'm just wondering, like, if it cooks down a long time with a roux and gets kind of dark.

00:36:20

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm.

00:36:22

SR: Do you make that, Dee Dee?

00:36:23

Dee Dee Holt: I've never made that, and I don't think she's made it since she left there.

00:36:28

SR: Did you cook a lot at home? I mean I know you had six children, so you had to cook, but—

00:36:33

Deloris Reno: Don't mention it. I cooked. I'd have their food for breakfast. I'd have their food for supper when they came in. And well, they weren't there for lunch, so—

00:36:46

Dee Dee Holt: She always cooked us breakfast. We never had cereal. We had hot biscuits and gravy, and she used to bring that to the restaurant. She'd make big pans of homemade biscuits from scratch and homemade brown gravy and red-eye gravy, and she'd bring all that to the restaurant.

00:37:00

Deloris Reno: It was like that. Eggs and bacon; you know, different things. I got up early and did all that and have them ready when they got out of bed. It was—but I never had an easy life now, Honey.

00:37:16

Dee Dee Holt: We got coffee in bed every morning. Daddy fixed us each a cup of coffee every morning and brought it to our bed before we went to school.

00:37:23

SR: Starting at what age?

00:37:25

Dee Dee Holt: Ever since I could remember. I guess as soon as we were old enough to drink coffee. It was more coffee milk. It wasn't like Mama drinks coffee now, which is kind of like tar. It was mostly milk, but we called it coffee.

00:37:39

SR: You got coffee in bed. That's quite a life.

00:37:40

Dee Dee Holt: Every morning, yeah. I guess that was to wake us up to get us out the door.

[Laughs]

00:37:44

SR: When you have six kids, you need to motivate them to get out the door.

00:37:46

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, we had to go, go, go.

00:37:49

SR: Wow, and you cooked breakfast. I'm feeling kind of bad now. I have one son and he eats cereal.

00:37:55

Dee Dee Holt: We never had—if we had cereal it would be grits or oatmeal or something. That's about the limit to cereal that we had.

00:38:00

Deloris Reno: I didn't buy cereal. I bought real stuff so the kids—you know, I think it's how they get their vitamins and everything.

00:38:09

SR: I think you're right. And so you would—you would sometimes bring the biscuits and gravy over to Middendorf's? Is that what you're saying?

00:38:15

Dee Dee Holt: Well, after we were moved—after we were all gone, there was nobody at home, when she went to work at Middendorf's, she would cook for everybody at the restaurant. Just pans—big pans of biscuits. Thirty, forty, however many biscuits you could get into a big pan, she'd bring that.

00:38:30

Deloris Reno: A huge pan. Lots of times I brought hamburger steaks. I'd fix it with brown gravy with lots of—. I'm a fanatic with the seasoning, especially garlic.

00:38:43

SR: Did they ask you to do that, or you just—?

00:38:44

Deloris Reno: No, I just did it. I just did it because you get tired of just sitting there every day eating fish for lunch, so—.

00:38:52

Dee Dee Holt: We were limited then. We couldn't eat. [With] Horst and Karen, you're allowed to have whatever you want that's on the menu. If you wanted a soft-shell crab or whatever, you could have it if you had the time to eat it, but years ago you were limited to—what? Shrimp, fish, or oysters. That's all you could order. So it kind of got boring.

00:39:13

Deloris Reno: It was hard.

00:39:15

SR: What is your favorite thing to eat at Middendorf's?

00:39:20

Deloris Reno: I have—the favorite thing with the drinking is the coffee. I love their coffee. And yeah, it is. The coffee is very good. Of course I'm a fanatic with coffee period. I drink three or four pots of coffee every day, uh-hm. When I get tired out there working, Lord, I have to have

my hot coffee. Everybody is drinking cold stuff and I'm drinking hot coffee. But it's just that. I mean it's just whatever you want to do.

00:39:58

Dee Dee Holt: What was your favorite food?

00:40:00

Deloris Reno: My favorite food? I don't know. Every—spaghetti and meatballs—.

00:40:05

Dee Dee Holt: No. At the restaurant, what did you like the most?

00:40:08

Deloris Reno: The what now?

00:40:08

SR: At Middendorf's, what did you like to eat?

00:40:11

Deloris Reno: I ate every—fish every day.

00:40:16

Dee Dee Holt: She loved the pan-fried catfish, and then flounder. She loves the broiled flounder.

00:40:20

Deloris Reno: Yeah, and the flounder, you know broiled or—because when you cook the flounder fried, to me it makes it dry, dry. But when you're broiling them, they are just delicious. I mean delicious. And that's what I like. I mean with their gumbo—I love their gumbo, too. But just you know—

00:40:43

SR: The crab gumbo?

00:40:45

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm. I love it.

00:40:49

SR: What about you, Dee Dee? What do you get when you eat there?

00:40:52

Dee Dee Holt: I try to eat something broiled. I love the catfish. I might get one piece, but the salmon is delicious. The salmon is very good. Or a salad. I'll treat myself sometimes and have a piece of fish or maybe an oyster, but—

00:41:07

SR: A little dangerous.

00:41:08

Dee Dee Holt: I try. I've been eating it for so long, the fried foods, so now I've got to start watching cholesterol. So I try to eat the broiled food or salad.

00:41:15

SR: Now, tell me when you started working there.

00:41:18

Dee Dee Holt: Nineteen seventy-one.

00:41:22

Deloris Reno: Dee Dee has been there a long time.

00:41:26

SR: How old were you then?

00:41:27

Dee Dee Holt: Eighteen, nineteen.

00:41:31

Deloris Reno: Married and was working.

00:41:33

Dee Dee Holt: Had just gotten married, yeah.

00:41:35

SR: Where did you meet your husband?

00:41:36

Dee Dee Holt: Um, okay. Well, my Uncle Dunk had the little store in the—on St. John Parish side. It was called Sportsman's Paradise, and his daddy had all the amusement. The video—not the video poker—the jukeboxes and all that in there, and his daddy used to come in and service those, and so Clyde came with him one time.

00:42:02

SR: And where did they live?

00:42:04

Dee Dee Holt: In LaPlace.

00:42:06

SR: So you were like eighteen when you started at Middendorf's. And your mom was working there then, I guess.

00:42:12

Dee Dee Holt: No, she wasn't, no. That's when Miss Helen and Mr. Dick had it. Suzie's mom and dad had it when I started.

00:42:22

SR: Okay, so you worked there before your mom?

00:42:24

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

00:42:26

SR: Okay, yeah. And what--what did you start out doing?

00:42:31

Dee Dee Holt: I was waiting tables to pay--to pay for school, and let's see. I stayed there in— and then when, I think when I had my first—. Oh, when I was pregnant for the first one, Miss Helen took me off the floor and told me that she thought it was too dangerous. She wanted me— she said, “Would you please hostess? We need somebody to hostess.” So I would hostess. And then [before] the kids got old enough to be in school I would just work on the weekends because I was home with them during the week.

00:43:07

SR: Where did you go to school? You said you were working there to make money to go to school?

00:43:11

Dee Dee Holt: I had started at Southeastern [University], but then I stopped and just recently went back and finished. [*Laughs*]

00:43:16

SR: You did? Congratulations.

00:43:18

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, it took a long time. It took a long time.

00:43:21

SR: Did your credits—were your credits still good?

00:43:25

Dee Dee Holt: Well you start out making—you make such a good salary there, you figure that you don't need the education. And then the age starts to come along and, you know, you start thinking about what you're going to do as you get older. And it's just something I wanted to complete. I just wanted to finish.

00:43:44

SR: That's great. What did you get your degree in?

00:43:47

Dee Dee Holt: Paralegal studies.

00:43:50

SR: But you're still working at Middendorf's?

00:43:52

Dee Dee Holt: Yes, I have my degree but I'm still working there. *[Laughs]* It's a good—it's a nice place to work. Karen and Horst are great. Yeah, Karen is about the sweetest person you'd ever want to work for. She's so mild-mannered, yeah, and it's just—and you know everybody. I mean you know everybody that comes through the door pretty much. It's like your neighbor is coming to visit a couple times a week.

00:44:19

Deloris Reno: What it really is like is friends coming in the door.

00:44:23

Dee Dee Holt: Friends coming to visit. They're coming to have dinner with you.

00:44:28

Deloris Reno: Some of them are rude and some—. You know, most of them are great. The customers, I'm talking about. And you—I mean, if you like fish, you're going to like everybody.

[Laughs]

00:44:44

Dee Dee Holt: True.

00:44:44

Deloris Reno: To get that fish, I'm telling you. The fish is great, but what I was talking about—the flounder. I love the flounder but I love the fish, too. I can't get my fish fried like that.

00:44:57

Dee Dee Holt: Nobody can.

00:44:58

SR: Uh-hm.

00:44:59

Deloris Reno: Cannot do it.

00:44:59

SR: And was it always—. Do you feel like it's been pretty consistently—I mean, ever since I've been eating there—. So, I ate there when Joey and Suzie owned it, and now. The fish has seemed the same.

00:45:14

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm.

00:45:14

SR: Is that true? Like, have you seen the fish change over time since you started eating there, or has it always been the same?

00:45:20

Deloris Reno: I don't like to say that.

00:45:24

Dee Dee Holt: What? You don't think it's the same?

00:45:25

Deloris Reno: But it was—the fish was good all—I mean, all the time. To me it was great. Joey and Suzie had it hard there. I mean, them poor things. I don't see how they had nerves. **[Laughs]** They just—you know, in there you got to watch everything. That's what it is; you got to be right there. Of course Suzie and Joey was right there and they watched everything. But it's hard to be

a manager in a place like that when you've got to check—you know, about your customers and this and that. It's really hard. I think it is.

00:46:06

SR: Well, you said that when you started working there, there was just one hostess, but I know that there are several hosts or hostesses now, huh?

00:46:15

Deloris Reno: What it was, they didn't have all the room like they got now. They got that place built out by the water. They got that other building—I mean, the what-you-call-it that's added to the big restaurant. Everything is not the same no more, Baby. It's different.

Dee Dee Holt: But you still did good. You had three dining rooms by yourself.

00:46:37

Deloris Reno: Yeah, three whole dining rooms by myself. I handled it. I'd get them down fast.

00:46:44

Dee Dee Holt: And cleaning tables. She would help clean tables. We all helped clean the tables.

00:46:46

Deloris Reno: I helped tables, and I'd see something on the floor and I'd get the broom and I'd start sweeping around the tables. I don't like to sweep around people's tables, but if they step on

it and slip, then Suzie and them has got a suit on their hands. I used to try to keep it clean as I could and do the best I could.

00:47:08

SR: Do you remember how many customers you would have, like on a busy Sunday?

00:47:13

Deloris Reno: On a Sunday? Don't even try, Honey. Especially on a Mother's Day or a Father's Day or something like that. Oh God, you couldn't keep count of them, Honey.

00:47:28

SR: Actually, now I'm remembering. I think Suzie and Joey told me they didn't keep count. But now you do?

00:47:36

Dee Dee Holt: There was no—nothing was computerized then. Everything was done manually. You wrote down everything by hand. If you got two or three buses and it was one ticket, I usually had to add that with a calculator, which I would do it several times. Yeah, it wasn't like you just hit "send: and everything is calculated for you—the tip, the tax, everything. All that was done manually, but we did it. I mean it wasn't—we had nothing else to compare it to, so it didn't seem like a big deal. But now that things have been streamlined a little bit and brought up to date, you wonder how did you do that.

00:48:14

Deloris Reno: Those poor cooks. When the girls coming in line to write their order down, and they got so many orders and they'd probably go cuckoo too sometimes. [*Laughs*]

00:48:31

SR: Karen told me about—to ask you about a customer who would bring you a magnolia. Was it a magnolia?

00:48:40

Deloris Reno: Do what now?

Dee Dee Holt: A magnolia. Was it a magnolia? Maybe it was camellias.

00:48:44

SR: Camellias.

00:48:46

Dee Dee Holt: There was some people in the restaurant that told Suzie about they would always bring you camellias. They were from Mississippi.

00:48:56

Deloris Reno: Now who told you to ask that?

00:48:59

SR: Karen.

00:49:01

Deloris Reno: Which--which one?

00:49:02

SR: The current owner. The woman who—Horst and Karen own it now, and she thought she remembered—

00:49:08

Deloris Reno: Her name is Karen?

00:49:09

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

00:49:11

Deloris Reno: About doing what now, flowers?

00:49:13

SR: Yeah. I wanted to ask you if you had any favorite customers or customer memories, and Karen said that—

00:49:19

Deloris Reno: They would bring me everything all the time, but one brought me—I got that up there, in the middle up there. No, I'm talking about the top of the cabinet over the stove. They brought that for me.

00:49:34

SR: The biscotti jar?

00:49:36

Deloris Reno: Yeah. And over—they'd bring me stuff all the time, and I'd try to keep my weight down a lot of time, but now I forget my weight. *[Laughs]*

00:49:48

Dee Dee Holt: There was some people in the restaurant that talked to Karen a couple weeks ago from Mississippi and they said that they used to bring you camellias all the time.

00:49:58

Deloris Reno: I remember now but I can't get it too much.

00:50:00

SR: That's okay.

00:50:01

Deloris Reno: They brought me everything, Honey. Put it that way. They brought me potted plants and different things.

Dee Dee Holt: A man brought her a carving. What happened to that carving? Did it stay in the restaurant?

00:50:15

Deloris Reno: They left it in there. Yeah, they—this man made me, the whole—

00:50:22

Dee Dee Holt: A carving, which was—

00:50:23

Deloris Reno: Yeah, of the old Middendorf's. Well that was way before this was thought of, what they got now. Built it, fixed it, cut it just like the old building. Like that old building right there.

00:50:38

SR: Oh, there's a drawing of a building. Oh, huh. So that was hanging in the restaurant for a while?

00:50:46

Dee Dee Holt: It was hanging in the restaurant in the private dining room.

00:50:49

Deloris Reno: They sent that for me for my birthday.

00:50:52

SR: That's pretty, that drawing.

00:50:54

Deloris Reno: So I can remember the old building. But I have—Dee Dee, I forget. I mean—

00:51:02

Dee Dee Holt: I know. That's okay.

00:51:04

Deloris Reno: I'll remember it. I guess I get different plants and flowers sometimes.

00:51:11

Dee Dee Holt: And the boy that looks like your--your brother, they told me to tell you hello.

Lorraine and Philip. He said, "Tell her that I'm the one that she always said looks like her brother."

00:51:26

Deloris Reno: Do what now?

00:51:28

Dee Dee Holt: One of the customers that said you look like—he looked like your brother, said to tell you hello.

00:51:33

Deloris Reno: I don't know what in the world it is. Tell them I love them.

00:51:38

SR: Do you have any—

00:51:40

Deloris Reno: I used to get letters from a lot of people, too. Customers missing me and wish I would come back. I said, “Do I look like coming back?”

00:51:50

SR: Do you ever get to go eat there? Do you ever eat there?

00:51:53

Deloris Reno: Yeah, my daughters take me once in a while. They're all so busy and they got their own business and things.

00:52:00

SR: What do you get?

00:52:02

Deloris Reno: Fish.

00:52:04

SR: I have a problem getting anything else.

00:52:06

Deloris Reno: I love the soft-shells, too, so I mean I could eat two of them, I believe, at one time.

00:52:11

Dee Dee Holt: Soft-shells have been this big.

00:52:14

Deloris Reno: I bet you they're expensive too.

Dee Dee Holt: They are huge. They are huge.

00:52:18

Deloris Reno: Are they expensive?

00:52:21

Dee Dee Holt: I mean, I don't know what they charge anyplace else. But they're worth it; they're huge. They're not, you know—we used to have—

00:52:27

Deloris Reno: Hard shell is very, very expensive. You buy them by the hamper. Lord, they're eighty dollars—

00:52:38

Dee Dee Holt: They're more than that.

00:52:39

SR: What were they when—earlier?

00:52:41

Deloris Reno: Well, the boiled crabs, uh-hm. The soft-shells, I believe, is higher. I don't--I don't know. You know, I couldn't quote what they are. But the hard shells—. But I can't use my hands like I used to, to break them, so I beat them to death with a knife. *[Laughs]*

00:53:04

SR: It's soft-shell season now, huh?

00:53:07

Dee Dee Holt: Summertime. I think the seasons are later because they farm them now. It used to be when the water started—

00:53:13

Deloris Reno: In the wintertime we don't have them.

00:53:15

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, when the water would start to get cold you can't, but now they farm them and in vats or something. I'm not sure how the process goes. But they have a longer season.

00:53:24

SR: Do you have any favorite customer memories?

00:53:27

Dee Dee Holt: Uh, favorite customer memories? Not—no—.

00:53:38

SR: There's so many?

00:53:38

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, yeah, there's a lot. We see a lot of people. I see a lot of people that I went to school with. Those are nice memories. People that you don't see all the time; people that you

spent, you know, eight, nine years of school with and they come in and spend a lot of time with you. They'd go to the sunset room.

00:53:54

SR: Now which one is the sunset room?

00:53:56

Dee Dee Holt: It's the one that's upstairs with all the windows.

00:53:58

SR: The new one?

00:54:00

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

00:54:00

SR: Yeah, so there are people who prefer that?

00:54:02

Dee Dee Holt: Prefer to sit there, yeah. It used to be nobody wanted to sit in the new place because it wasn't the same. But now they all want to sit upstairs, which is the new place, rather than downstairs in the original. That's kind of funny. Karen and I talked about that the other day. It's kind of funny.

00:54:22

Deloris Reno: It's nice though. I like it. I like the--like the south side to eat. The new building; is it south side, the new building?

00:54:31

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

00:54:31

Deloris Reno: The new outfit?

00:54:33

Dee Dee Holt: Well, we have the south and the north now.

00:54:36

SR: It's nice to be able to see the water.

00:54:39

Dee Dee Holt: It is.

00:54:40

SR: But are there people who won't—. Are there people who would wait to sit in the older dining room?

00:54:44

Dee Dee Holt: Wait? No, I don't think anybody waits to sit downstairs. They will wait to sit upstairs. They will sit downstairs—we'll fill up. I mean downstairs is always full, but most—I don't know. People seem to—they want upstairs. Yeah, they'll wait for upstairs, but they don't wait for downstairs.

00:55:05

Deloris Reno: Well you can look out at the water and stuff. One day I'm going to try it out by the water, but it's too hot right now to enjoy your food.

00:55:14

SR: Yeah, it's getting hot. How many hosts or hostesses do you have on now, on a—you know, busy day?

00:55:23

Dee Dee Holt: Three. Usually three; sometimes four. If Karen is there it might be three and then her. Outside doesn't have a hostess except for maybe Mother's Day, Father's Day. And they *need* one because the customers start—yeah, the customers start to get, you know—

00:55:41

Deloris Reno: The parking lot is full, and you know where Dunk's place is? It's past that on the road on both sides. Past Dunk Reno's on both sides. You couldn't find a place in--in the yard, Middendorf's yard. I keep saying Middendorf's, but—so used to it.

00:55:59

SR: You keep saying what?

00:56:00

Deloris Reno: Middendorf's. I can't say it right.

00:56:03

SR: I think you say it right. I think I probably don't say it right.

00:56:07

Deloris Reno: It was—it's always—and across the main highway they got parking all out there by that bridge, and when I'd pass there I'd say, "Poor Dee Dee. She's got it." [*Laughs*]

00:56:19

SR: How many people can sit at one time?

00:56:22

Dee Dee Holt: I don't even know what the capacity is in that restaurant. I don't.

00:56:31

SR: It doesn't matter.

00:56:33

Dee Dee Holt: No, no, it doesn't. Yeah, it doesn't matter. Horst has invented—I don't know if he invented it, but he's brought into the restaurant those--those stretchers, those metal—instead of us having to pull three to four tables together to accommodate twenty people, [*Phone Rings*] he has these stretchers that he builds that he made out of metal. And you put that on the table, which will extend the table maybe one more table or—. So it's a pretty little neat invention that he's done.

00:57:05

SR: I haven't seen that. I'll just pause while your mom answers the phone.

00:57:13

Okay, you were just telling about the table stretcher. Yeah, that's pretty ingenious.

00:57:17

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, it is. We use them a lot.

00:57:21

Deloris Reno: Use what?

00:57:22

Dee Dee Holt: The stretchers. We don't pull—you remember if we had to seat ten people we would have to pull three little tables together?

00:57:28

Deloris Reno: Oh yeah. You don't have to do that no more?

00:57:28

Dee Dee Holt: Now Horst has to get—now he has these long pieces of metal that you lay down on top of the table that's real, real sturdy, and they throw a tablecloth on the top of them. So we don't have to pull all those tables together anymore.

00:57:41

Deloris Reno: Oh, that's great. That was a hard job. When you'd get thirty or forty people at one time and you're trying to get them tables so you can put them together. I'm talking about the--the regular tables and chairs. You'd have to pull from everywhere. You got to take from the other—the north dining room or private dining room or all kinds of things to do it. But we--we used to get it done. I don't know what Dee Dee and them does now. It should be more room, though, huh?

00:58:11

Dee Dee Holt: There's a lot more room.

00:58:13

SR: Shew, there's a lot of walking. I mean there was even before the new--the new spaces, but—

00:58:19

Deloris Reno: Can you imagine when I went there the first day with the heels on, Honey? Suzie said, “Go home and put some shoes on that can fit you.” **[Laughs]** Lord, you do that now, Honey, you would slip and slide and everything with them steps.

00:58:37

SR: Miss Wanda and Miss Lois, we had a big conversation about like what kinds of shoes they wear. You know, you think a lot about your shoes when you're spending that much time on your feet.

00:58:46

Deloris Reno: You have to wear the black shoes.

00:58:48

Dee Dee Holt: You wore SAS.

00:58:50

Deloris Reno: Yeah.

00:58:51

Dee Dee Holt: And I think that's what they wear.

00:58:52

SR: What do you wear?

00:58:54

Dee Dee Holt: Reebok or--or whatever the most comfortable walking shoe I can wear.

00:59:00

Deloris Reno: If you want them now they got them in New Orleans. That's what they told me, and I said, "Well, I don't need them." I gave mine away. [*Laughs*]

00:59:08

SR: And then after a shift you'd take a long hot bath?

00:59:12

Dee Dee Holt: Absolutely. Soaking it off, yeah.

00:59:14

Deloris Reno: They're comfortable, though. The shoes that we had to wear, they were very comfortable. Oh Lord, try heels. Shew, that was rough.

00:59:25

SR: So you worked there through three different ownerships, or three different managements? I know Suzie and—it was in the same family with Suzie and Joey, but—.

Dee Dee Holt: Miss Helen and Mr. Dick, they were--they were very—Miss Helen was a very hard worker. Mr. Dick was kind of the social butterfly sort of, so to speak. He liked to sit with the customers and he liked to entertain the customers. He liked to talk. Miss Helen was in the kitchen all the time and she didn't expect us to do anything that she wouldn't do herself. She was extremely—she was a nurse in the Navy, I believe. So yeah, she was an extremely hard worker.

01:00:03

Deloris Reno: There's a lot of doctors from—what is it? *[Unintelligible]* Hospital? It was a lot of his friends and her friends, they'd come all over and they'd sit and talk and have lunch. It was a—they enjoyed themselves sometimes, but they had it hard, especially that poor little old woman. You never did meet her, huh? She's such a little thing.

01:00:33

Dee Dee Holt: She was like a drill sergeant. You did not talk back to Miss Helen.

01:00:35

Deloris Reno: She was in the Service.

01:00:36

Dee Dee Holt: Tiny little woman, but you did not—. When she told those boys to do something, they did it. No questions asked.

01:00:41

SR: But she was mostly in the kitchen?

01:00:43

Dee Dee Holt: She was always in the kitchen, and she never came out on the floor.

01:00:48

Deloris Reno: She lived in there. She was something. **[Laughs]** I'll never forget this: two of the black girls got in a fight in the kitchen about a dag-gone boy, a boyfriend, that one took away from the other guy—I mean the other woman. Lord, they went—at first it was a fight, and Miss Helen was in there and she's trying to separate them and one of them went underneath the cooker, and then there were the tables—the table where they'd put the stuff on—and *she* was underneath that table, too. **[Laughs]** “Deloris, Deloris, hold the door and don't let nobody come in and out!” Okay, it was--it was—I had to laugh, but it wasn't funny. And one of them had a knife, and she took that knife away from that black girl. I never forget that.

01:01:35

SR: Miss Helen did?

01:01:35

Deloris Reno: Yeah, she was a mess. I just—

01:01:41

Dee Dee Holt: Didn't y'all used to go walking? Didn't y'all used to go walking?

01:01:45

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

Dee Dee Holt: Miss Helen. Didn't y'all used to go walking?

01:01:49

SR: For exercise?

01:01:49

Deloris Reno: Yeah, she--she's always on watching her weight, and she stayed good too. She was a mess.

Dee Dee Holt: I don't know how old she was in the restaurant, but she was pretty old still in the restaurant and she could walk faster than anybody that you know.

01:02:04

Deloris Reno: She was in the Service, too. And that made her rough, too. I think she was higher up in the Service. And I'm pretty--pretty sure that I'm right because—. Now one of the girls said, "Well, she's been in the Service. She can take care of herself." [*Laughs*] Poor—

01:02:28

SR: Sounds like it.

01:02:29

Deloris Reno: —precious thing.

01:02:30

SR: And then—

01:02:31

Deloris Reno: I miss them all.

01:02:31

SR: Yeah. Dee Dee, when did you become a manager?

Dee Dee Holt: Joey's sister Abby and I were best friends. She got married. She was going back to Mississippi where her husband was from and they asked me if I would take over for her. But we weren't really managers then. We were more like--like head waitress or something. But we'd do the same thing. We took care of the front of the house, the customers. I waited tables, took care of the customers, took care of problems, took care of messed-up orders. And I don't know how I did all that either. I mean all of the things that just a manager does now, I was doing that plus waiting tables.

01:03:22

SR: Yeah. So now what are your duties as manager?

01:03:24

Dee Dee Holt: It's still front of the house. We take care of any complaints or any problems that the customers have. We take care of the good stuff, too: if somebody wants to tell you something good about the servers. We fix, you know, mistakes on the tickets. We coordinate some of the— with the customers if there's—if there is a mistake on the ticket that the waitresses have done or the customers change their minds, we take care of that and make sure it's relayed to the kitchen. If the--if the waitresses make—if they order something that's got to be changed, we do a lot of voids.

01:04:02

SR: Troubleshooting.

01:04:02

Dee Dee Holt: Troubleshooting, yeah. A lot of computer stuff, a lot of personal stuff with the customers, too. We spend a lot of time with the customers.

01:04:11

SR: Yet it does feel like a really personal experience, eating there. I guess that's part of the draw for people, like—

01:04:20

Dee Dee Holt: People like to see the same faces. I've been told that over and over and over. They like to go where they see the same people working. I've--I've been told that they think that that's a good place to work and a good place to eat, when you see the same people over and over that have been there for years and years and years. And when people come that often, you do develop a personal relationship with them because you get--you get to know them. When you're talking to them, this time you might find out that they just got married and the next time they're going to have a baby. And the next time they come, you know, the kids are starting school. And we've gone through a lot of—kind of grown up with people that have gotten married and have—

01:05:00

Deloris Reno: And you'd get like they're related to you.

01:05:02

Dee Dee Holt: Through the restaurant.

01:05:04

Deloris Reno: And they'll bring them to show you how they grew and, you know, how they look when they get older. It's really nice. I mean you--you meet a lot of people, too; that's what I liked. And every—you know a lot of—well, they got some bad people. Not what you call bad, but not friendly, and--and the only thing maybe—this ain't on TV, is it?

01:05:32

Dee Dee Holt: No.

01:05:33

Deloris Reno: Okay. It's a lot of people—white people—that I seated next to a table, the only table I had: black people. And right in front of them he'll say, "We don't want to sit there by the black people." And oh, I'd get—oh. I'd get--I'd get embarrassed, really. It really would hurt me. And I said, "Well, you'll have to go back to the door and wait." And he went back to the door and waited. Well, he wasn't by his self but maybe he was showing off. The black guy looked at me and I come back and I talked to him. I said, "Look. I'm very sorry. But some people are like that." And he said, "Don't—."

01:06:18

SR: You don't see that anymore?

01:06:19

Dee Dee Holt: No, we don't see that anymore.

01:06:20

Deloris Reno: But I think that—

01:06:22

Dee Dee Holt: They don't want to sit by the children now.

01:06:23

SR: That I can understand.

01:06:25

Dee Dee Holt: They don't care whose kids. A lot of people don't want to sit by children.

01:06:27

SR: But I guess I—. Miss Beauty told me about a time when the restaurant—during segregation, when it was kind of a private club. But that was before—clearly before you worked there—before either of you worked there, I guess.

01:06:42

Dee Dee Holt: Well it was something that went on back then. I don't—

01:06:46

SR: In restaurants in general.

01:06:48

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, in general. It was over twenty years ago, but they would—if we had black customers that would come in they would get them fed first so they would leave. I hate to say that, but that's—. And I don't know if that was Joey and Suzie that did that, because that was one of the kitchen managers, one of the kitchen managers that did that. So I can't really say that was Joey and Suzie because they never told me that, but that's what would happen in the kitchen.

01:07:19

SR: Not anymore though. It seems like a very mixed crowd.

01:07:22

Dee Dee Holt: Oh no. It's not—no. First come, first served. I don't care how much money you have or whatever. You're going to wait for your table like every—. We do have some people that come every week and we try to accommodate them. If you're a really good customer, we do try to get them into a table as quickly as possible. But for the most part it's first come, first served.

01:07:43

SR: I don't see a lot of men working on the floor. Do you get many applications?

01:07:47

Dee Dee Holt: Not really, no. No, the guys usually will go to the bar or to the kitchen. I don't recall having any guy, any male, come in and ask to work the floor. One of our little--one of our little bussers, I think, at one point may have wanted to do that. But I think he went to the bar to work at the bar.

01:08:13

SR: Hmm, so it must have been fun to work together, as mother/daughter.

01:08:18

Dee Dee Holt: She drove me crazy.

SR: I said it must have been fun to work together.

01:08:24

Deloris Reno: It was all right.

01:08:26

Dee Dee Holt: I said you drove me crazy.

01:08:28

Deloris Reno: Huh?

Dee Dee Holt: I said you drove me crazy.

01:08:33

Deloris Reno: Well, I took all of it from my daughters, the waitresses and all. Even the black people. All of them—I was—they all liked me, too. They'd holler—if they see me in the town and I'm way away from them in the store or something, "Hey, Miss D!" I'm waving at them, "Hey!" [*Laughs*]

01:08:54

Dee Dee Holt: She was harder on me than she was on anybody else in that restaurant.

01:08:57

SR: That's why she drove you crazy?

01:08:58

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

01:09:01

Deloris Reno: It was nice. It was nice. It was family, is what it was.

01:09:05

Dee Dee Holt: It still is. We have our ups and downs in there, but everybody—as long as everybody has been working together, everybody pretty much gets along well for the most part.

01:09:12

SR: Did any of your other family members ever work there with y'all?

01:09:17

Dee Dee Holt: I think my brother Daryl worked there. Daryl worked there. He worked in the kitchen when he was little.

01:09:24

Deloris Reno: Daryl and Joe, both of them, uh-hm. Both of them worked there and washed dishes and things. Well, they would do everything for each other. They were just like their people. I mean us, too. I mean, they treated us real good like family.

01:09:43

SR: Were there other mother—have there been other mother/daughter—?

01:09:48

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, Alice worked with Angela for a short while. Not for very long. Alice moved to Mississippi. She was fine, yeah. Her little grandson Christopher works there now as a bartender.

01:10:04

Deloris Reno: There's none that I know of. It seems like they're all young, huh? Miss Wanda and Lois are the only ones that—

Dee Dee Holt: Lois' niece worked there for a little while with her. There's been quite a few. I don't remember all their names. Miss Adine's daughter-in-law worked with her, and another Alice's daughter worked with her. Miss Audrey's daughter, she was a head waitress before me; worked with *her* daughter. Her daughter hostessed. They were a lot.

01:10:31

SR: A lot, huh?

01:10:32

Deloris Reno: I think I started when she—

01:10:35

Dee Dee Holt: Miss Audrey or Miss Joanne?

01:10:39

Deloris Reno: I think Miss Audrey.

01:10:44

Dee Dee Holt: Miss Audrey was a redhead. She came—she would come to work and Mama used to wear her hair like that, too, swept up like this in love locks, the big curls on top of her head. [*Gestures*]

01:10:53

Deloris Reno: Blonde, blonde.

01:10:55

Dee Dee Holt: And she had—oh, she was always made up. Always had her makeup on.

01:10:59

Deloris Reno: Who, your mother or Miss Audrey?

01:11:01

Dee Dee Holt: Well both of them, but Miss Audrey had with the red hair and she was tall and she had that pinkish colored skin with her big red lips and her eyes with lots and lots of makeup. She was always—you could see her coming.

01:11:15

Deloris Reno: My hair—I went to the beauty shop Monday and Friday.

01:11:20

Dee Dee Holt: At 3:30 in the morning. Kidding, but almost—

01:11:26

Deloris Reno: And I don't dress like they all dress over there, the hostesses. I wear my long pretty dresses and my hair is made up with the bun. It's a French twist is what it was.

01:11:40

Dee Dee Holt: With love locks on top.

01:11:42

SR: Wow, is there a picture of this?

01:11:44

Dee Dee Holt: Twist in the back with love locks on top. Miss--Miss Betty used to make those little curls all over the top of your head, and this was pulled back in a French twist.

01:11:53

Deloris Reno: But that was her idea. That wasn't mine. She--she liked it the way she fixed it.

01:11:59

SR: Do you have a photo of yourself like that? Any pictures?

01:12:04

Deloris Reno: Hmm, no. The water--the water ruined everything I had.

01:12:09

Dee Dee Holt: After one of the floods she gave all the kids—pictures to the kids so they—in case anything happened to them.

01:12:15

Deloris Reno: Some of them got—the ones that I wanted I kept and they got messed up bad.

01:12:21

SR: What flood?

01:12:24

Deloris Reno: Took pictures of me, you know. They'd come in there to have lunch or something like that—.

01:12:29

Dee Dee Holt: Was that Betsy? Betsy was the hurricane, maybe—

01:12:33

Deloris Reno: Just last—

Dee Dee Holt: —what, forty years ago?

01:12:37

Deloris Reno: This last one I had a whole box. I put them all—because I wasn't going to put pictures all over the house.

01:12:43

Dee Dee Holt: Which one? Not—no, Mama, it's been a while. It was before [Hurricane] Katrina.

01:12:47

Deloris Reno: Oh yeah. That was, oh, I don't know way back then.

01:12:49

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, it's been a long time ago.

01:12:52

SR: Well, when did you move away from Manchac?

01:12:54

Deloris Reno: When I got hurt. Well, I didn't get hurt. I just had a heart attack.

01:13:01

Dee Dee Holt: About ten years. It was about ten years.

01:13:03

Deloris Reno: And I don't look—I mean I'm fat now, but I wasn't fat then, Baby. I was, you know, slim trim. Because when you're over there walking every day, it's--it's—heck, you don't get nowhere fatness on you. [*Laughs*]

01:13:19

SR: Right.

01:13:20

Deloris Reno: But I see some of them over there that needs weight—I mean lost weight.

01:13:24

SR: Well, you do have the fish tempting you. [*Laughs*]

01:13:28

Deloris Reno: But—beg your pardon?

01:13:31

SR: There is the fish tempting—you're tempted to eat all that fried fish probably.

01:13:35

Deloris Reno: But I eat—I eat about three pieces of it. It all depends on how my appetite is. That's the main thing. So it don't—me [being] old, it doesn't bother my appetite. I still eat, Honey. What the heck? You can't do nothing. So I just eat. When I want candy I just go ahead and eat it. It seems like everybody brings me candy and cookies and cakes and—. One lady used to bring me two pies every time she come to eat. Honey, I would like to take one home but they'd all eat it.

01:14:19

SR: What kind of pie?

01:14:20

Deloris Reno: Oh they got—she had one—one brought a pecan pie and the other brought an apple pie. I said, “Where's the ice-cream?” [*Laughs*] And they laughed at me about that. “Well, you want some ice-cream I'll buy you some.” I said, “No, I'm just teasing y'all.” They're a mess.

01:14:37

SR: That's sweet.

01:14:39

Deloris Reno: I used to get stuff all the time. And everybody would send me letters. That's when I was in the hospital. And when I came here, my daughter took me in. This used to be a double car garage.

01:15:01

SR: This--this home here?

01:15:02

Deloris Reno: Yeah, and she wanted me—she told my—I mean her husband, she says, “Mama has got to have somewhere to go. She's not going to stay in the house by herself like that.” And she was just a crying and everything, so she told Paul. Well, Paul said, “We'll do what we can do.” He said, “The only thing we can do is to take the garage.” And this is what they did to me.

01:15:28

SR: It's great.

01:15:29

Deloris Reno: But it's--it's not like it's—you know, a person can get around. I can't get on the stool. I can't get on the chair to clean lights and things. You heard that?

01:15:43

Dee Dee Holt: Uh-hm.

01:15:43

SR: You're a cleaner, I think.

01:15:45

Deloris Reno: Yeah, I am. But I can't keep it like I used to. Well you can't get around, Baby. I can't even stand up unless I'm holding on.

01:15:57

SR: You're doing pretty well though here, I think.

01:15:59

Deloris Reno: That's all—we have a time. It needs mopping now. And I—

01:16:04

SR: She can't come to my house.

01:16:05

Deloris Reno: And I had a bucket with my—I will mop with Pine Oil. I love Pine Oil. And I got my bucket and I got my mop. Okay, I'll stick my mop down in the water and come back up and I didn't—all I had was a handle. It--it had rotted into the outfit there, it was so old and it didn't even look it. And I started fussing and fussing. So I told Helen this morning, I said, "Helen, you better get me a mop." I said, "If you ain't got the money, I'll give it to you." *[Laughs]*

01:16:47

SR: It looks pretty clean in here to me.

01:16:48

Deloris Reno: No, it isn't clean, Baby. I'll sweep it, but it's not clean. I got my stuff out to clean my tables and I ain't done it yet. I have—I was out there when I should have been doing it with my coffee when I was drinking out there. And then the dog comes up--up out there by the gate wanting to come in, so I had to put the coffee down and go get the bird—I mean the dog in. It's all—it's always something.

01:17:18

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

01:17:19

SR: I wanted to ask you: What kind of coffee do you drink?

01:17:22

Deloris Reno: Community.

01:17:25

Dee Dee Holt: Dark roast?

01:17:27

Deloris Reno: Hmm, yeah, dark roast Community.

01:17:28

Dee Dee Holt: Tar.

01:17:29

SR: Uh-hm, and you do like a drip—you do just a drip pot?

01:17:32

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm. Well, put the water in the pot and let it drip.

01:17:37

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, she's got a coffee maker, but this—

01:17:40

Deloris Reno: You want some coffee?

01:17:41

SR: No, no, thank you. I'm just—I like coffee, too, but I'm always curious what people drink. Do you still drink coffee after you grew up on it?

01:17:49

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah, I drink coffee, but I can't drink—if I make coffee here for her I've got to—she has a cup of coffee and then I'll take maybe a fourth of a cup and put hot water in it and put it in the microwave, because I can't drink her coffee.

01:18:01

Deloris Reno: I make four--four pots a day. Not full pots. I'm talking about like two cups in a pot like that. Like this morning I had coffee, and now it's my time for coffee.

01:18:16

SR: You can make some. We'll wrap this up really soon. I just want to ask a couple more questions.

01:18:22

Deloris Reno: Okay.

01:18:22

SR: Well, one because I'm interested in coffee. What kind of coffee maker did your parents use when you were growing up and making coffee?

01:18:28

Dee Dee Holt: We had a drip coffee maker, same thing.

01:18:32

Deloris Reno: Right there in the cabinet.

01:18:32

SR: I can imagine.

01:18:34

Deloris Reno: Just an electric pot.

01:18:35

SR: What were some of your favorite things to eat when you were growing up that your mom would cook?

01:18:39

Dee Dee Holt: We always had—we always had fish; loved duck. Mama can cook duck.

01:18:46

Deloris Reno: Beans and rice, different things, stews and fried chicken and potatoes—smothered potatoes or whatever you want like that.

01:18:59

Dee Dee Holt: Smothered potatoes. Smothered potatoes are delicious.

01:19:02

SR: Can you—?

01:19:02

Dee Dee Holt: Potato stew.

01:19:02

SR: Can you tell me what that is, smothered potatoes?

01:19:04

Deloris Reno: Stews.

01:19:05

Dee Dee Holt: I actually never cooked them until maybe about a year ago. She told me how to make them because we'd always come and she would cook them for us. You smother the onions and maybe some bacon or some kind of meat or something, and then you cut the potatoes up and you put all the seasoning in and you kind of—you smother it with a lid on a very low fire.

01:19:25

Deloris Reno: Smothered potatoes.

01:19:25

Dee Dee Holt: They're delicious. And you wouldn't think the potatoes and onions could taste that good.

01:19:31

SR: Right, it's just potatoes and onions.

01:19:32

Dee Dee Holt: Potatoes and onions.

01:19:34

SR: What about the duck? Was it wild duck? Like was it—?

01:19:36

Dee Dee Holt: Wild duck, yeah.

01:19:38

SR: That your father would hunt?

01:19:41

Dee Dee Holt: I guess that's where we got them. Daddy would shoot the duck.

01:19:43

Deloris Reno: What?

01:19:44

Dee Dee Holt: Duck.

01:19:44

Deloris Reno: Ducks?

01:19:45

Dee Dee Holt: Yeah.

01:19:46

Deloris Reno: Oh yeah.

01:19:49

Dee Dee Holt: I don't know, I can't cook it. Anything wild I can't cook it because I taste it. Deer or whatever. But she would—I don't know what she—she'd soak it in something. Vinegar or something, I don't know—

01:20:02

Deloris Reno: Duck.

Dee Dee Holt: What did you soak it in to get that taste out?

01:20:04

Deloris Reno: I don't soak it in nothing.

01:20:07

Dee Dee Holt: Well, I never tasted wild/ I don't know. I cooked it and it tasted wild.

01:20:12

SR: Was it like a whole duck, roast duck, that she would—is that how she would cook it?

01:20:16

Dee Dee Holt: She used to make gravy. You used to make gravy with duck.

Deloris Reno: Yeah, that's what I did, make gravy. Because if you fry it, it's tough. I mean it's not what you call tough tough. It's all the way you do it, I guess. I don't know, Honey. I really don't know. All I know I cook it good and it's delicious with the right—the main thing, like I tell you, with garlic. That garlic will make anything taste good.

01:20:43

SR: Who taught you how to cook?

01:20:46

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

01:20:46

SR: Who did you learn to cook from? Your mom, your dad?

01:20:50

Deloris Reno: Baby, I don't know. I just cooked. I just—. My mama died when I was ten years old, and my mama showed me a lot of things how to cook and do this and that and she didn't know—she knew she was dying, but she didn't tell us kids that. And I had a little two-year-old brother. I didn't get no schooling hardly because I had to take care of five kids. That's what Daddy had. And let me see. I had three—five. There's five of them. And then I had to take care of the little baby. I had to do every—I mean, I did everything. I knew how to do it like a grown person.

01:21:31

And I'm still stuck with it. Cleaning and doing this and that.

01:21:37

SR: That's incredible.

01:21:40

Deloris Reno: But it was sad. She died with cancer of her throat. And it's funny. Just things happen like that all of a sudden, so—

01:21:51

SR: That must have been very sad for her, too.

01:21:54

Deloris Reno: It was. It was hard. And I knew everything in the line of cooking, washing, and everything, because she had shown me everything. And I remember I used to have to kneel in the chair. She was teaching me how—she was there at that time and teaching me to get in the chair and kneel down and wash the dishes. So I--I knew all of that, just like a married person. I did—

01:22:28

SR: When you were ten?

01:22:28

Deloris Reno: Huh?

01:22:30

SR: When you were ten years old?

01:22:31

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, ten years old, Honey. I had a rough life with the kids and my little two-year-old brother. He died in my arms because he had diphtheria and I thought he had a cold and that makes me still—I still think about that. So it's just you can have good and bad, I guess.

01:22:53

Dee Dee Holt: That was seventy years ago.

01:22:55

Deloris Reno: Hmm?

01:22:57

Dee Dee Holt: That was seventy years ago. If you were ten, that was seventy years ago.

01:23:03

Deloris Reno: So—

01:23:04

Dee Dee Holt: That's a lot for a ten-year-old to be worrying about.

01:23:07

Deloris Reno: Well, I didn't get no schooling, put it that way. And that's not everything. It's just they come before anything. And my daddy would leave and he wouldn't come in until late that night. He wasn't such a good daddy his self. That's why I don't like to think about them times. I get mad.

01:23:34

Dee Dee Holt: You had a good husband.

01:23:36

Deloris Reno: Yeah, my husband was great.

01:23:37

Dee Dee Holt: She had a good husband.

01:23:39

SR: What was his name?

01:23:40

Deloris Reno: Joe Reno, uh-hm.

01:23:44

SR: So you made a good choice.

01:23:45

Dee Dee Holt: You—

01:23:47

Deloris Reno: Yeah, I thought he was precious. You wouldn't go in there and get the picture off the mantle and show her, huh?

01:23:57

Dee Dee Holt: Okay.

01:23:57

Deloris Reno: Dunk told me—why am I saying Dunk? No, not—it's in Helen's house. Paul is—over the fireplace. I was going to show you how he looks. I think he's handsome.

01:24:13

SR: I would love to see him.

01:24:15

Deloris Reno: We had fun. After I got married everything changed, and of course as old as I am, Honey, I still think about it. I mean and all—I don't think of good things; I think of things like that, and I ask the Lord to help me think of good things. Don't you know. But it ain't the Lord's fault. It's just I have to ask for help sometimes, Honey. So it's--it's getting better.

01:24:47

SR: How old were you when you got married?

01:24:51

Deloris Reno: Seventeen. But my husband was forty.

01:24:56

SR: Oh, really?

01:24:57

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm. We had a wonderful time with the kids and everything. We used to go out camping like on a river and things and we'd take the frying pan and everything like in jars so you won't spill it—and seasoning. And of course I seasoned everything. It's a lot of times that they would fish and catch the fish. We already had the fish, but we'd catch the fish and cut them and fix them up like that.

01:25:33

Dee Dee Holt: It's not up—

01:25:33

Deloris Reno: It's not up there? Now where—? If she put that picture up I'm going to take it back.

01:25:38

Dee Dee Holt: She probably just moved it.

01:25:43

SR: Where would you go camping? What river?

01:25:45

Deloris Reno: On the—just anywhere that's got a beautiful bank and old trees and it's shady and it's clean. It was nice, and we put bricks down on the--the ground and make it around the frying pan to sit on the top of it and put the oil in there. It was nice. Really nice. I loved it.

01:26:10

SR: What—is Dee Dee your first child? Or where is she?

01:26:14

Deloris Reno: My first, uh-huh. She's--she's up in her sixties, uh-hm. Yeah, sixty—sixty-one or sixty-two.

01:26:25

SR: I can't believe that.

01:26:28

Deloris Reno: Uh-hm, she is. Well I'm forty-eight, do you hear me? Well I've got forty on the mind. *[Laughs]*

01:26:38

SR: Eighty-two. Well, let—I'm going to wrap this up pretty soon, but I'd love to know what was—what were the best parts about your job at Middendorf's, and then what are the biggest challenges? Like, what did you like the most, and then what was the most challenging?

01:26:57

Deloris Reno: The most of what now?

01:26:58

SR: Working at Middendorf's.

01:27:01

Deloris Reno: Well I—one thing, I loved it, and I still say I wish I could do it again. And I can't see people or nothing like that, but all I could do is talk now. I couldn't sit up there and just talk. So I wouldn't want that either.

01:27:19

SR: What did you like about it?

01:27:22

Deloris Reno: You meet a lot of people, that's the main thing. A lot of people. I miss--miss all of the customers, that we got real close together and talked, you know, like humans. Not crazy people like that man with that black guy. That part I didn't like. I like friendliness and talk and anything like that. So that's the thing I enjoy. They—sometimes they get gripe-y but it's just they had so much responsibility. You got to watch everything. And you got to make sure the food goes okay and all, and you know it's—being friendly like that. And everybody being good.

01:28:14

SR: How about you, Dee Dee? What is—what do you like the most, and what is the most challenging about your job?

01:28:20

Dee Dee Holt: The most challenging, I think, is to try to—. The food makes everybody happy, but it's when you have customers—sometimes you'll have somebody that you just can't please. And you just do the best that you can to make sure that they leave happy. Sometimes they don't, but you really try to fix it. Whatever it is, you really try to fix it, and I think that's challenging. And what's the easiest part?

01:28:48

SR: The part that you enjoy the most?

01:28:51

Dee Dee Holt: I think the interaction with the customers. Trying to make sure—not trying to make sure, but to see people happy. To see people come in and that, you know, you see over and over and over again and you kind of—. It's like we said: it's like family. It's like a progression of their lives intermingled with yours. It's fun.

01:29:14

SR: You get that feeling even—I mean just when I'm a customer there, I—you can see that happening around the dining room, that people feel very connected to the place.

Dee Dee Holt: People like to talk. Most people like to talk. They like to talk about what's going on.

01:29:30

Deloris Reno: Especially when you get busy.

01:29:31

Dee Dee Holt: Oh yeah, they really like to talk. The busier you are, it seems like they like to talk.

01:29:35

Deloris Reno: "Honey, come here." [*Laughs*]

01:29:38

SR: Well, you know, one thing—

01:29:41

Deloris Reno: "Oh, I'm sorry." The other table, they'll say the same thing: "Come over here and tell us about it." I'm sorry. I didn't mean to butt in. I didn't understand what you're doing.

01:29:52

SR: *I was butting in. I was just going to say it's interesting because I know there are a lot of people—a lot of customers—who come from all over the place. New Orleans, Mississippi; you know, different states. But a lot of even those people are returning customers. Is that right?*

01:30:10

Deloris Reno: Yeah.

01:30:10

SR: Yeah, it's not—yeah.

01:30:12

Dee Dee Holt: It's not just local—

01:30:12

SR: People travel to go there.

01:30:17

Dee Dee Holt: We're a good tourist attraction, and now that they put the deck out there people love it.

01:30:21

SR: It's not very common to have a deck on the water.

Dee Dee Holt: They want people to come from the boat—out with their boats.

01:30:29

SR: And where do they go? Up the canal and put their boat in the canal? Or, where do they put their boats?

01:30:34

Dee Dee Holt: Horst has the launch there. I've heard a lot of people—I mean, you can only accommodate a certain amount of people, but they'll come from Lake Pontchartrain. They'll come through that way, and then they come from across the lake on both sides.

01:30:49

SR: I didn't realize there was a launch there. Well, I want—

01:30:52

Dee Dee Holt: I don't want to say launch; where they dock—

01:30:55

SR: Where they can dock.

01:30:56

Dee Dee Holt: Right, right.

01:30:56

SR: That's great.

01:30:57

Dee Dee Holt: There's a difference.

01:30:59

SR: You all have given me a lot of time, and I really appreciate it. Thank you for sharing your stories. It's great.

01:31:06

Deloris Reno: I enjoyed talking to you.

01:31:07

SR: Well, good. You must be hungry. You started your hamburger a long time ago.

01:31:12

Deloris Reno: I'm going to get me some coffee.

01:31:13

Dee Dee Holt: Would you like some coffee?

01:31:14

SR: Well, thank you.

01:31:17

[End Deloris Reno: & Dee Dee Holt Interview]