

**Elaine Carter**  
**Middendorf's Restaurant—Manchac, LA**

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Location: Middendorf's Restaurant - Manchac, LA

Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

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Project: Middendorf's and Manchac

**00:00:00**

**Sara Roahen:** This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It’s Monday, May 8, 2014. I’m in Manchac, Louisiana, at Middendorf’s Restaurant, and I’m sitting here with Miss Elaine, who works in the kitchen at Middendorf’s. If you don’t mind telling me your full name and what you do for a living, we’ll get started—?

**00:00:21**

**Elaine Carter:** Well, my name is Elaine Carter. I work in Middendorf’s Restaurant.

**00:00:29**

**SR:** Thank you. And what do you do at Middendorf’s?

**00:00:30**

**EC:** Cook, fry fish.

**00:00:34**

**SR:** Would you mind sharing your birth date with me?

**00:00:37**

**EC:** March 2, 1961.

**00:00:42**

**SR:** Thank you. How long have you been working at Middendorf's?

**00:00:45**

**EC:** Thirty-five years.

**00:00:49**

**SR:** Thirty-five years. You don't even look old enough to have been working thirty-five years.

How old were you when you started?

**00:00:53**

**EC:** Well, maybe fifteen or fourteen [*Laughs*]. It was one of them.

**00:00:59**

**SR:** Did you start in the kitchen, or—?

**00:01:01**

**EC:** Yes, I started in the kitchen.

**00:01:04**

**SR:** What was your task when you were really young, when you first started? What did you do?

**00:01:08**

**EC:** Fried fish. It was hard, but I learned it.

**00:01:14**

**SR:** What was the—what was hard about it?

**00:01:17**

**EC:** Keeping up. You're constantly frying.

**00:01:23**

**SR:** Was it as busy then as it is now?

**00:01:25**

**EC:** It's about the same, but it was more busy during the—when I first came.

**00:01:32**

**SR:** It was busier when you first came?

**00:01:34**

**EC:** Yeah.

**00:01:37**

**SR:** I mean, you can do—I think I heard 2,000 covers or something on a busy Sunday.

**00:01:41**

**EC:** Oh, yes, or more. Yes—so keeping up.

**00:01:45**

**SR:** Did you know how to cook before you started working here?

**00:01:48**

**EC:** No.

**00:01:52**

**SR:** What brought you here?

**00:01:52**

**EC:** My auntie used to work here, and she brought me and my sister here.

**00:02:00**

**SR:** What--what did you think?

**00:02:03**

**EC:** Well, I said, “Wow.” [*Laughs*] I never been to a restaurant that had a lot of people in it.

**00:02:14**

**SR:** Did you--did you like cooking at first, or—what did—was it just a job?

**00:02:21**

**EC:** It just was a job. I was in school, and after I started working I quit school, which I shouldn't have did but I did. And I went back to get my GED, uh-hm.

**00:02:31**

**SR:** Good for you. When did you do that? How old were you then?

**00:02:35**

**EC:** I was about twenty-five.

**00:02:40**

**SR:** And so you've been frying fish for that long. I mean, everybody--everybody I talked to—Horst and Karen, Joey and Suzie, Wanda and Lois—said that you're the best fish-fryer.

**00:02:50**

**EC:** Yes, I guess. [*Laughs*] Well, I like frying. I like frying fish.

**00:02:58**

**SR:** What--what's the secret? What makes the—what makes you the best fish fryer, do you think?

**00:03:03**

**EC:** Just keeping up. I used to keep up real good, but sometimes I slow down, but I used to keep up good. You got to keep constantly frying that fish because everybody be wanting it. And now it's more, because see, we just got one place and you got to be constantly frying.

**00:03:24**

**SR:** What do you mean you just have one place? Versus—?

**00:03:27**

**EC:** Like one building. One building open, and you got to keep frying.

**00:03:33**

**SR:** Right, because you used to have—. There's another separate building where you had a separate kitchen?

**00:03:38**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:03:41**

**SR:** Was it easier to have a separate kitchen, or—?

**00:03:43**

**EC:** Yeah, because on like on weekends, we working like 10:00 [a.m.] to 10:00 [p.m.] on Friday and Saturday and Sunday. And the ones who worked that morning, we'd get to go over there and go home every day.

**00:03:57**

**SR:** So you'd work a double?

**00:03:58**

**EC:** Uh-hm, yes.

**00:04:01**

**SR:** Do you still do that?

**00:04:02**

**EC:** No, no, not right now, uh-uh. I got another job.

**00:04:08**

**SR:** Do you cook at your other job?

**00:04:10**

**EC:** No. Mostly I'm the food server worker.

**00:04:14**



**SR:** A what worker?

**00:04:15**

**EC:** Food server. Just serve food.

**00:04:18**

**SR:** Where is that?

**00:04:18**

**EC:** At the school in Hammond, Westside.

**00:04:23**

**SR:** In Ponchatoula is that? Or where is that?

**00:04:25**

**EC:** In Hammond.

**00:04:26**

**SR:** Oh, in Hammond. Tell me where were you born, and where did you grow up?

**00:04:30**

**EC:** Springfield, Louisiana. And born in Independence, hospital.

**00:04:38**

**SR:** Is that where you still live?

**00:04:40**

**EC:** No, I live in Springfield, Louisiana.

**00:04:45**

**SR:** How far away from the restaurant is that?

**00:04:47**

**EC:** For me, I drive slow, so about a thirty-minute drive. *[Laughs]*

**00:04:53**

**SR:** So it's kind of a commute.

**00:04:55**

**EC:** Yes, it is.

**00:04:58**

**SR:** And when your auntie brought you here, was she a cook also?

**00:05:05**

**EC:** Yeah, she was. Yeah, she don't work no more.

**00:05:09**

**SR:** Did she work here for a long time?

**00:05:11**

**EC:** Yeah, she worked here a long time.

**00:05:15**

**SR:** Have you worked here consistently those thirty-five years?

**00:05:18**

**EC:** Yes.

**00:05:20**

**SR:** So I'm trying to think of the—. So, Joey and Suzie, they owned it when you first started?

**00:05:23**

**EC:** Well, Miss Helen did at first, and then Suzie and Joey took over.

**00:05:32**

**SR:** Yeah, so you've been through three different ownerships?

**00:05:34**

**EC:** Yes.

**00:05:36**

**SR:** How have things changed over the years?

**00:05:39**

**EC:** Well, it changed a lot. I think it's better. But it have changed a lot.

**00:05:48**

**SR:** The style of frying fish? Or, just what has changed?

**00:05:54**

**EC:** A lot of stuff has changed. Of course he got different stuff now. We used to didn't have all the stuff he have. He have more stuff.

**00:06:05**

**SR:** You mean more menu items?

**00:06:05**

**EC:** Uh-hm, yes.

**00:06:07**

**SR:** What's--what's new on the menu?

**00:06:10**

**EC:** Well, they got the stuffed mushrooms. They have them, and they're good. And the salad is different. He changed that. That's different. It's better.

**00:06:30**

**SR:** Do you cook at home?

**00:06:33**

**EC:** On Sundays only. [*Laughs*] I hate cooking, but I cook on Sundays.

**00:06:39**

**SR:** So you're like the—you're the best fish fryer, but you hate cooking?

**00:06:44**

**EC:** Right, right.

**00:06:47**

**SR:** What do you cook when you have to cook at home on Sundays?

**00:06:49**

**EC:** Well, I cook a Sunday dinner and my kids come over and my nieces and nephews.

**00:06:56**

**SR:** So, like, what do you make for Sunday dinner?

**00:06:59**

**EC:** Like sometimes on Sunday I cook dressing and ham and bake a cake and make a pie and some greens, green beans, macaroni and cheese.

**00:07:15**

**SR:** So do you work here on Sundays, or no?

**00:07:16**

**EC:** No, I don't work on Sundays. That's the good part. **[Laughs]**

**00:07:22**

**SR:** Because Sunday is a busy day here.

**00:07:22**

**EC:** Yes, it is.

**00:07:26**

**SR:** What about, when you were growing up, who cooked in your house?

**00:07:30**

**EC:** My mother. She did all the cooking. I did all the cleaning and she did all the cooking.

**00:07:38**

**SR:** Did you learn from her?

**00:07:40**

**EC:** Learn how to cook? No, I didn't learn how to cook from her. I learned from my mother-in-law. She taught me how to cook.

**00:07:49**

**SR:** And was she from around here also?

**00:07:50**

**EC:** Yeah, she was from Louisiana. Springfield.

**00:07:55**

**SR:** Have you had other family members who have worked here also?

**00:07:59**

**EC:** My sister used to work here. She worked here until she passed, yes.

**00:08:08**

**SR:** How many kids do you have?

**00:08:10**

**EC:** Six. Five girls and one boy.

**00:08:16**

**SR:** That boy is outnumbered.

**00:08:17**

**EC:** Oh yes, he's spoiled. *[Laughs]* He is very spoiled.

**00:08:23**

**SR:** So you were working here, huh, when they were all coming up?

**00:08:25**

**EC:** Right, all of them.

**00:08:29**

**SR:** Did any of them ever work here?

**00:08:32**

**EC:** No, none of my kids worked here. I just got a twelve and fourteen at home with me now.

The other ones are grown.



**00:08:41**

**SR:** Do any of them cook?

**00:08:42**

**EC:** My oldest girl, she cooks. She likes cooking.

**00:08:48**

**SR:** Tell me: What--what kind of oil do you use to fry the fish here?

**00:08:53**

**EC:** Uh—

**00:08:58**

**SR:** You're not supposed to say? Oh, okay. Sorry. I think I actually did ask Horst that question, so it's probably in his interview, but that's okay. Yeah, I definitely don't want you to say anything that you're not supposed to say. But I'm guessing that not much has changed with the—like the preparation of the catfish over the years, because the customers would notice, I think.

**00:09:22**

**EC:** Yeah, right. They love that fish. **[Laughs]** I think that's all they come for, that fried fish.

**00:09:29**

**SR:** Well, I was saying when I was talking to Miss Wanda and Miss Lois that that's what I come for, and every time I come I think, "Okay I'm going to try something new, I'm going to try something new." And then I get here and I can't not order that thin fish.

**00:09:42**

**EC:** Yes indeed.

**00:09:43**

**SR:** Do you—what do you eat if you're going to eat here?

**00:09:46**

**EC:** I like broiled food. I think I eat the broiled catfish.

**00:09:54**

**SR:** I've never tried that.

**00:09:54**

**EC:** That's good.

**00:09:57**

**SR:** The stuffed crab that I saw y'all making back there, that looked really good. You have stuffed crab, right? Is that what it was?

**00:10:01**

**EC:** Uh-hm, it's good too. But I really fry—I mean, I rather the broiled food. I like the broiled food.

**00:10:09**

**SR:** A little healthier.

**00:10:10**

**EC:** Uh-hm. Everybody needs—

**00:10:15**

**SR:** Yeah, let's see what I had. Did--did anybody in your family—like, what did your parents do for a living? Did anybody in your family fish?

**00:10:25**

**EC:** No, uh-hm. Not that I know of.

**00:10:33**

**SR:** I was just talking to Miss Wanda and Miss Lois, and they had a lot of fishermen in their family, so I was wondering—you know, in this part of the country, in this part of the state—. Let's see. So, Miss Helen was Susie's mom, huh?

**00:10:54**

**EC:** Yeah.

**00:10:54**

**SR:** What was she like?

**00:10:57**

**EC:** Like a sergeant. [*Laughs*]

**00:11:02**

**SR:** She ran a tight ship?

**00:11:03**

**EC:** Yes, yes.

**00:11:06**

**SR:** Did she work mostly in the kitchen or mostly in the front of the house?

**00:11:08**

**EC:** In the kitchen. She liked that broiler.

**00:11:14**

**SR:** And she worked until I don't know how old she was really, but—.

**00:11:22**

**EC:** She worked until she got sickly. She stopped working.

**00:11:29**

**SR:** And they were kind of a military family actually, so—

**00:11:31**

**EC:** Oh, yeah. Oh, Miss Helen was. [*Laughs*] She was very strict.

**00:11:37**

**SR:** And then Suzie and Joey took over. I interviewed them. That was really great. Is it--is it a lot different now working with air conditioning?

**00:11:49**

**EC:** Yes, yes.

**00:11:53**

**SR:** I imagine it's one of those things where you didn't know what you were missing until you had it?

**00:11:55**

**EC:** Oh, yes. You're right about that. [*Laughs*]

**00:12:01**

**SR:** Do you have any idea how much fish you go through a week?

**00:12:06**

**EC:** Oh on a busy day, a pan—about twenty-five or more. We go through some fish here.

**00:12:19**

**SR:** Twenty-five or more what?

**00:12:20**

**EC:** Pans. You know, we got them big tubs we get the fish out of.

**00:12:26**

**SR:** I wonder how much that weighs. Do you have any idea?

**00:12:28**

**EC:** No, I don't know.

**00:12:31**

**SR:** So how do you keep that going? Are there people just constantly prepping?

**00:12:37**

**EC:** No, the fish be already ready for you, so all you got to do is get it out the pans and put it in your bowl.

**00:12:46**

**SR:** Just dredge it and--and fry it?

**00:12:48**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:12:50**

**SR:** It's very physical. How do you look so young?

**00:12:53**

**EC:** [*Laughs*] Oh, I don't know.

**00:12:58**

**SR:** Go home and take a hot bath?

**00:12:59**

**EC:** Yes, and a shower. I take both sometimes. Lay down for a while, a minute or two.

**00:13:09**

**SR:** Yeah. Do you work your other job—do you work doubles?

**00:13:14**

**EC:** No, we just—I work at the school.

**00:13:17**

**SR:** Right.

**00:13:17**

**EC:** No, I work at both of them—6:30 [a.m.], and I get off at 2:15 [p.m.].

**00:13:25**

**SR:** But then you come here.

**00:13:26**

**EC:** Right.

**00:13:26**

**SR:** So it's a double.

**00:13:27**

**EC:** Oh yes, right. You're right. You're right, yeah, it is a double.

**00:13:30**



**SR:** You have to be there at work at 6:30?

**00:13:33**

**EC:** Yes, Ma'am.

**00:13:37**

**SR:** Is that the school that your kids go to?

**00:13:38**

**EC:** No, my kids go to Springfield.

**00:13:43**

**SR:** That is one early day, wow. So, when you first started working here, was catfish a--was catfish the specialty like it is now?

**00:13:51**

**EC:** Oh, yes. I think it is all they were coming for: fish.

**00:13:57**

**SR:** I've heard—I mean, I've seen advertisements from the early days, and there were a lot of advertisements for chicken.

**00:14:06**

**EC:** Chicken?

**00:14:09**

**SR:** Y'all fry chicken, right?

**00:14:09**

**EC:** Oh yeah, we fry chicken. But we don't get too many fried chickens, uh-hm. Every now and then they might, but most of them come for that fish. Fish or broiled food.

**00:14:24**

**SR:** What kind of fish do you broil?

**00:14:25**

**EC:** It's catfish.

**00:14:30**

**SR:** Just the catfish?

**00:14:30**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:14:34**

**SR:** What do you—well, I always ask everybody this, you know: what's the biggest challenge about your job, and what you like most about your job.

**00:14:45**

**EC:** Well, just being here because, to me, after my sister passed, it feels like I'm—. She's here.

**00:14:58**

**SR:** How long ago was that?

**00:14:59**

**EC:** She been passed about eight years now.

**00:15:04**

**SR:** I just can't even imagine.

**00:15:07**

**EC:** Yeah, it's hard.

**00:15:11**

**SR:** So that's the biggest challenge. What is--what do you like about it?

**00:15:19**

**EC:** About the job? Being with these girls and laughing with them.

**00:15:28**

**SR:** Have many of them worked here for a long time? Have you known them for a while?

**00:15:33**

**EC:** No, all the older ladies they left. After the new owners came in, they left. It's just me staying. These here other girls, they been here like eight years. Maybe eight, or five.

**00:15:48**

**SR:** It looks like it's pretty fun back there.

**00:15:50**

**EC:** It is. [*Laughs*]

**00:15:53**

**SR:** About how many people do you have working in the kitchen at a time?

**00:15:56**

**EC:** Right now they got a lot of them in there. They got like about thirteen or fourteen, and that's on Saturday and Sundays.

**00:16:06**

**SR:** What are the different--what are their different jobs? Like, you're frying fish. Are you the only person frying fish, or is there someone else?

**00:16:13**

**EC:** No, I have a girl named Francis and she fries fish—fries good. And, some new ladies—

**00:16:23**

**SR:** At the same time that you're frying?

**00:16:24**

**EC:** Right. We're twins.

**00:16:28**

**SR:** Two. So you'll have a couple people frying fish, and then what--what are the rest of the people doing?

**00:16:32**

**EC:** They fry shrimp and oysters and soft-shell crabs.

**00:16:38**

**SR:** And if I remember correctly, you fry those things all separately.

**00:16:44**

**EC:** Right, right.

**00:16:45**

**SR:** Why is that?

**00:16:47**

**EC:** Because of the oil. Because you can't fry oysters up in the fish because it will start making the grease dark.

**00:16:57**

**SR:** Was it always like that? Did you always fry separately?

**00:17:01**

**EC:** Yeah, we always did.

**00:17:04**

**SR:** I think that makes a lot of sense. Horst was telling me that he'd never done that, or really heard of that, until he came here. That it makes a big difference—

**00:17:13**

**EC:** It do. It really do, because once they start frying oysters up in that fish, it'll start making the fish dark.

**00:17:22**

**SR:** Yeah, the fish is very light-colored here.

**00:17:24**

**EC:** Uh-hm, yes.

**00:17:25**

**SR:** How often do you have to change your oil?

**00:17:27**

**EC:** Well, I think they change it like every three days or a week; something like that.

**00:17:36**

**SR:** You go through a lot, I think.

**00:17:37**

**EC:** Oh yes. [*Laughs*] They really do.

**00:17:41**

**SR:** So you have people on the fryers, and then you must have people just like bringing you supplies during service, huh?

**00:17:47**

**EC:** Yeah, but you wouldn't believe it. Everything is right there by you so you can really get it yourself.

**00:17:55**

**SR:** And then there's an expediter, someone who is like calling out the orders, or—?

**00:17:59**

**EC:** Oh yes, oh yes. Yeah we have three book runners.

**00:18:05**

**SR:** What's it called?

**00:18:06**

**EC:** Book runners.

**00:18:07**

**SR:** Book runners?

**00:18:07**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:18:09**

**SR:** And that's the person who is, like, organizing all the plates and everything.



**00:18:13**

**EC:** Right.

**00:18:14**

**SR:** Three at a time?

**00:18:14**

**EC:** Oh, yes. They need them.

**00:18:22**

**SR:** Boy, you can't like really take a break in the middle of service, huh?

**00:18:25**

**EC:** Oh no, sure can't, unless somebody is going to take your spot.

**00:18:30**

**SR:** Oh, really? Somebody will take over your fry station or something?

**00:18:33**

**EC:** Right, if somebody comes and you got to go to the bathroom or go outside, somebody will come take over.

**00:18:41**

**SR:** I was going to say that the kitchen—I've only seen women working in the kitchen. Has it always been like that, or do you sometimes get men in there?

**00:18:51**

**EC:** We used to have one guy that used to work in the kitchen, Paul, but he's not here no more. He's deceased, too. But we did have one—another guy who used to fry fish, but he quit.

**00:19:10**

**SR:** Mostly women, huh?

**00:19:11**

**EC:** Uh-hm, yes.

**00:19:12**

**SR:** Why do you think that is?

**00:19:12**

**EC:** Ain't nobody want to work with them women. *[Laughs]* Women are hard to work with. I know I am.

**00:19:22**

**SR:** You're hard to work with?

**00:19:23**

**EC:** Sometimes.

**00:19:26**

**SR:** Do you—. You must have to do the training and--and stuff?

**00:19:28**

**EC:** No, I don't do the training. I just—I'm just here. You know, we got two girls that do that.

**00:19:35**

**SR:** That do the training?

**00:19:36**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:19:40**

**SR:** Well, can you tell me how—like, how has your job changed or stayed the same over the years?

**00:19:49**

**EC:** Really it's changed because I used to run the book. And then the girl who used to fry fish, she quit, so I started frying it.

**00:20:00**

**SR:** Do you prefer that?

**00:20:01**

**EC:** Yes, I like it more better. You're to yourself.

**00:20:07**

**SR:** You don't have to deal with other people?

**00:20:09**

**EC:** Right.

**00:20:12**

**SR:** You must kind of get in a zone when you're frying that much fish.

**00:20:13**

**EC:** No, not really, uh-hm. Because somebody is always hollering for fish. [*Laughs*]

**00:20:21**

**SR:** When it's really busy, do you just keep it going, like even when orders don't come in?

**00:20:26**

**EC:** Yeah, you got to keep it going because somebody might come in and say they want twenty heavies, and you got to always have it up there—frying heavies up there—.

**00:20:36**

**SR:** Twenty what?

**00:20:37**

**EC:** Heavies.

**00:20:38**

**SR:** What is that?

**00:20:39**

**EC:** That's the heavy fish. That's where they get like six or seven pieces. Small, they get about four or five. It's depending on how they look.

**00:20:51**

**SR:** I see. So it's like the large order.

**00:20:54**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:20:56**

**SR:** Do you ever make the gumbo?

**00:20:56**

**EC:** No, uh-hm. I don't make it. Gail do all that.

**00:21:05**

**SR:** I don't know her. Has she been here for a while, too?

**00:21:06**

**EC:** Yeah, she's been here about seven years, maybe. Yeah, about seven.

**00:21:14**

**SR:** How many fryer machines do you have back there?

**00:21:18**

**EC:** [*Gestures*]

**00:21:21**

**SR:** Okay, [*Laughs*] okay. What is the—. Are there any menu items that stay on the menu because a few people order them but they're--they're not super-popular, but you keep them on there because—?

**00:21:41**

**EC:** I think everything they have on there somebody buys.

**00:21:46**

**SR:** Yeah, right. You know, I was talking to Miss Wanda and Miss Lois about fishing in this area. And it seems like there are less people making a living that way. Have you noticed that?

**00:22:02**

**EC:** Oh, yes. Ain't people fish like they used to. Well, I know I don't fish.

**00:22:11**

**SR:** No?

**00:22:11**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:22:12**

**SR:** What do you like to do in your spare time, if you have any?

**00:22:15**

**EC:** Play in the yard. I like to do that. I like planting flowers.

**00:22:23**

**SR:** Garden?

**00:22:24**

**EC:** Uh-hm, I like doing that.

**00:22:28**

**SR:** Do you have a green thumb?

**00:22:29**

**EC:** Oh yes. [*Laughs*]

**00:22:31**

**SR:** Do you have grandkids?

**00:22:33**

**EC:** I have five.

**00:22:36**

**SR:** So, on Sundays when you make Sunday dinner, you must have a houseful?

**00:22:40**

**EC:** Well, not my grandkids because they don't live here.

**00:22:44**



**SR:** Where do you they live?

**00:22:45**

**EC:** They live in North Carolina.

**00:22:47**

**SR:** Oh, okay.

**00:22:48**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:22:49**

**SR:** So do you just fry, or do you ever boil seafood and do—?

**00:22:57**

**EC:** I used to, but now I—no. I don't go over there.

**00:23:03**

**SR:** That's a different part of the kitchen?

**00:23:03**

**EC:** Oh, yes.

**00:23:06**

**SR:** Is that—I've never ordered the boiled seafood here. Is there always boiled seafood?

**00:23:09**

**EC:** Yes.

**00:23:11**

**SR:** It's always on the menu?

**00:23:12**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:23:15**

**SR:** What about, have you ever had a bad injury on the job?

**00:23:18**

**EC:** No.

**00:23:22**

**SR:** All that hot oil, you would—

**00:23:25**

**EC:** No, I ain't never had that, thank God. *[Laughs]* But it can get dangerous back there when that grease pops. It'll pop you, though.

**00:23:40**

**SR:** How long are your shifts?

**00:23:43**

**EC:** Well, I work 4:00 [p.m.] to 9:00 [p.m.]. And on Saturday I work from 10:00 [a.m.] to 4:00 [p.m.].

**00:23:52**

**SR:** Okay. What is the busiest time of year?

**00:23:54**

**EC:** Summer. I think that's the busiest. And Mother's Day and Father's Day, always you're going to work.

**00:24:07**

**SR:** Is it ever slow?

**00:24:07**

**EC:** Yeah, some days it's slow, but lately it's been busy.

**00:24:17**

**SR:** I wonder why that is. Maybe just the season—

**00:24:22**

**EC:** Maybe, and it's a lot of people that like to eat. They don't like to cook, like me. *[Laughs]*

**00:24:29**

**SR:** Yeah. What do you eat when you're not working here? What do you—what do you like to eat?

**00:24:35**

**EC:** Well, I like a lot of salads. And baked chicken, I like that. I don't care for fried food too much.

**00:24:49**

**SR:** Do you—that's kind of ironic, right.

**00:24:52**

**EC:** Right, right. But every now and then I might sneak a piece, but—. *[Laughs]*

**00:24:59**

**SR:** Do you grow vegetables in your garden?

**00:25:01**

**EC:** Oh, yes.

**00:25:03**

**SR:** So you make salads from your own vegetables?

**00:25:05**

**EC:** Sometimes I do, and most time I just give it to like the older ladies. I give it to them.

**00:25:12**

**SR:** Because they cook it.

**00:25:14**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:25:16**

**SR:** What do you think it is about this restaurant that people love so much, and why it's so busy?

**00:25:24**

**EC:** I think because it's old and it's been here for so many years and people just like coming here.

**00:25:31**

**SR:** Had you ever eaten here before you got a job here?

**00:25:33**

**EC:** No. No way.

**00:25:39**

**SR:** Have you ever eaten here just as a customer?

**00:25:40**

**EC:** No.

**00:25:50**

**SR:** Oh shoot, I just lost my train of thought. What kind of restaurants do you go to if you go out?

**00:26:01**

**EC:** I usually—Don's Seafood. It's all right but—. You don't get no food like Middendorf's.

**[Laughs]**

**00:26:16**

**SR:** There's always enough food on your plate here.

**00:26:17**

**EC:** Oh, it is.

**00:26:20**

**SR:** I'm sorry I lost my train of thought. Is there anything that I'm not asking you that you'd want to say about your time here?

**00:26:34**

**EC:** *[Unintelligible]*

**00:26:40**

**SR:** Oh. *[Laughs]*

**00:26:43**

**EC:** No, because see a lot of people going—one of my ladies at work asked me, “You from Louisiana?” Because of the way I talk. Yes, I'm from Louisiana. *[Laughs]* I don't know what she's talking about. I'm from Louisiana. Do I talk that bad?

**00:27:03**

**SR:** You don't talk bad.

**00:27:06**

**EC:** Yeah. She said, “You're not from no Louisiana.” I said, “Yes, Ma'am.” *[Laughs]*

**00:27:10**

**SR:** You were born and raised in Springfield?

**00:27:11**

**EC:** Oh yes. But my mother and them, they're from White Castle.

**00:27:15**

**SR:** Where is that?

**00:27:18**

**EC:** That's on the other side of Baton Rouge.

**00:27:24**

**SR:** I don't think I've ever been there. What did your parents do for a living when you were growing up?

**00:27:27**

**EC:** My father was a construction worker, and my mother worked at, the Jefferson High in Kenner. Kenner, Louisiana.

**00:27:39**

**SR:** Yeah? Jefferson what?



**00:27:39**

**EC:** Jefferson High.

**00:27:42**

**SR:** Oh, okay.

**00:27:42**

**EC:** Yeah, she worked in there.

**00:27:44**

**SR:** So she had a drive, huh?

**00:27:45**

**EC:** No, she lived—stayed over there for about thirty years.

**00:27:49**

**SR:** Okay.

**00:27:50**

**EC:** Uh-hm.

**00:27:53**

**SR:** What did she do there?

**00:27:54**

**EC:** She was cleaning up.

**00:27:59**

**SR:** Okay. Well, thank you for giving me your time.

**00:28:03**

**EC:** Oh, you're welcome.

**00:28:04**

**SR:** I appreciate it, Miss Elaine.

**00:28:06**

**EC:** I hope I did good. [*Laughs*]

**00:28:07**

**SR:** Yeah, you did. Thank you.

**00:28:09**

**EC:** You're welcome.

**00:28:11**

**[End Elaine Carter Interview]**