

**Interviewer: Mary Beth Lasseter
Interviewee: Patricia Brown
June 23, 2005**

[Begin Patricia Brown Interview-KA Cook]

0:00:00.0

Mary Beth Lasseter: Excellent. Okay; now I'm going to put this recorder right here so it will catch your voice and then this one on the table. Today is Thursday, June 23, 2005 and this is Mary Beth Lasseter of the Southern Foodways Alliance in the home of Patricia Brown here in Oxford, Mississippi. Patricia is a cook at the Kappa Alpha Fraternity House and we are here today to interview her about her job. Patricia, could you please state your name for me and tell me where you were born and a little bit about yourself?

0:00:38.9

Patricia Brown: Well my name is Patricia Brown. I was born here in Lafayette County and on September 29, 1956. I work as a cook at the KA Fraternity House on the University. I really got started cooking oh god, years and years ago I guess when I was just a little girl. My grandmother--I used to watch her cook. I think I started out going with her to the camp, the old camp out there on--camp meetings; they used to have camp meetings, a religious you know thing and she used to cook and I used to go out with her and cook. They didn't have any running water; they had a woodstove and they--so you had to tote your water and you know cook on the woodstove, and I really--it was exciting to me. I loved it. And after my mother--grandmother got old, she couldn't do it much so my mother started--started going, you know working at the camp. And I--when I got I guess about 15--16 years old I started working out there. But they had-- somehow just had gotten indoor plumbing, but a lot of them didn't have it, so we still would work it, you know with--without the running water and without the plumbing and without the stove, you know the electrical stoves, so.... And from that point on I just--I don't know; I just like cooking. I've always you know--and today I still, you know I--my mother is deceased. She's been deceased for two years and about three years now, and my sisters and brothers; they still expect that southern home-cooked meal every Sunday. And thank god I'm able to do that; so I feed my siblings every Sunday.

0:02:23.4

ML: Do you do that here at your house?

0:02:24.7

PB: I do it here at my house. They all come for--if I don't--if a Sunday come and I say well I'm not gonna cook today, they like they ready to kill me. "You didn't cook? You didn't cook," you know like I done broke the tradition, so I usually end up, you know if it's nothing but Beef Stroganoff or Spaghettis and Salad or something, you know; so.... But I really enjoy it--I do.

0:02:45.3

ML: Now how many people do you have at your house on Sundays when you cook?

0:02:48.0

PB: I have usually if it's a good turnout I may have 12-14 people; that's siblings, nieces, cousins, friends, associates, you know just--every--everybody know I cook on Sunday so they gonna come back and see, "Did you cook?" Yeah; so....

0:03:04.9

ML: Tell me a little bit about your camp cooking. Was that weekends or summer-time?

0:03:08.4

PB: It was in like in the summer-time but it was a week-long thing, you know. They did it from Sunday to a Sunday. It was in the summer and it usually lasted one week out of the year.

0:03:18.5

ML: How many people helped you do that?

0:03:20.7

PB: Well usually most houses just had a--maybe two people--maybe two people. It's like my grandmother, she did it and I helped her, but some have two and some have three depending on what size household you're cooking for.

0:03:33.9

ML: Now is that a volunteer job?

0:03:35.8

PB: It was for me but my grandmother you know it wasn't--you know; that was a job for her, you know. That's what they did in the summer. But for me it was more a volunteer basis.

0:03:46.8

ML: Now what kinds of foods did you cook?

0:03:49.4

PB: Well we had--oh beans, fresh beans, 'cause a lot of them, you know grew their own vegetables. We had fresh beans, squash, corn--boiled or fried, cornbread, apple pie, peach pie, cobblers, you know--just southern cooking.

0:04:11.1

ML: Now in your cooking today, do you use a lot of fresh vegetables still?

0:04:15.8

PB: I try to. I--I--for my home, I goes to a--of course, you know the technologies and you know done took over now so you know everything is bagged and packaged, frozen or you know canned on the job. But at home I still go to the Farmer's Market. I like the fresh beans and the corn and you know the peas; so I still buy fresh vegetables from the Farmer's Market.

0:04:39.0

ML: The Farmer's Market here in Oxford?

0:04:39.7

PB: Here in Oxford, uh-hm.

0:04:41.2

ML: Okay.

0:04:41.9

PB: I still shop there.

0:04:43.6

ML: Okay.

0:04:43.7

PB: Uh-hm.

0:04:44.0

ML: Tell me a little bit about cooking at the Fraternity Houses. How did you begin doing that?

0:04:48.7

PB: Well I started out--this lady that I knew that you know was working in a--and I started on--in a Sorority at the Zeta House and she would--you know I would go in the evenings you know help her, you know wash dishes, mainly set the table; sometimes she would let me prep the salad, you know or make the--the bread. And I have to tell you I--my bread--I make homemade rolls... Ancient Chinese secret... and they love them.

0:05:24.6

ML: Good stuff huh?

0:05:26.0

PB: They love them. So--but and I started out there at the--at the Sorority House and so I started watching you know them prepare... I--you know I guess 'cause I come from a large family, it was easy for me to fix a lot 'cause she, you know like when I cook at home I still--I still have leftovers believe it or not; I still have something--and something I have left over, 'cause see I'm used to cooking a lot and I can't cook just like for my--my three kids--it's--I cook so much.
"Momma, why you cookin' all the food?" I just--it's just a habit, just cooking a lot; so I enjoy it.

0:06:04.1

ML: So you moved from the Zeta House and where did you cook next?

0:06:06.9

PB: I went from the Zeta House; I worked out there part-time. They hired me part-time, and I worked there I guess about two years. I left there; I went to the--to Kellwood and I worked there I guess about three months 'cause I--you know sewing.

0:06:24.6

ML: Now what is that?

0:06:25.4

PB: Factory--it's a--it--it was a factory here in Oxford and I worked there for a very short time, 'cause see I liked cooking and I wanted to be in the cooking field. So I went back on campus and I started--I worked at the ATO House--no; AO-Pi House--the AO-Pi--but I worked at ATO until it got burned down, but I worked at the A--AO Pi House on the girls' side. I cooked there oh, I guess about four or five years and went back to the Zeta House. They had--the old house had burned and they rebuilt it, so I went back over there. I stayed over there--so I've kind of been back and forth from you know houses to houses, you know 'cause for some reason or another, you know I don't know; well--well okay... I was--I just--you know I kind of like got bored and went to this house and went to that house, you know kind of switched up a lot, but I'm still at houses. I was still at girls' side or the boys' side and I really enjoyed it.

0:07:34.2

ML: Okay; when did you start cooking in the fraternities?

0:07:37.7

PB: I started cooking in the fraternity I think it was like in--I'm thinking like '98--'98--'97--'98 I started cooking in the fraternities. And I was at the AO Pi--ATO House but I had been there about five years--about four or five years before it burned down, so when I left there--after the house burned down then that's when I started with the KA House.

0:08:08.9

ML: Do you notice any difference in cooking for Sororities and cooking for Fraternities? Do you have to do things differently?

0:08:15.0

PB: Yes, ma'am; the girls are picky. They are very picky and they don't care about no lot of bread. They don't care--they want bread on the--you know on the menu but they don't eat a lot of bread, as where the boys love bread. They'll walk around and eat cornbread just by itself, you know. They love bread; I roll by--so they love bread. The boys don't care whether or not you have dessert; they'll eat an ice cream sandwich, you know. The girls, they want pies, cobblers, they love--they love rich food; they love rich food. And as to the boys they don't care no--a whole lot about it. Girls love pasta; boys eat hamburgers, you know; so it's a big--I have to switch up from you know--want to fix some apple crunch. The boys will eat it but they don't really care, you know they--but the girls, they love it, even though they know they don't need it but they love it. Boys--girls like a lot of tea; boys will drink milk with their dinner, you know. They want milk. Girls want salad; boys eat it, but you know you don't have to have a salad bar. You gonna have some that's--want it, but the majority of them don't care a whole lot about salad. You can give them a lettuce and tomato and put it on a burger; to them that's a salad you know. So they all really just--not really fond of salads. But girls, they love it--they love it. So it's--it's--I have to--I'll be gonna try a lot of different recipes for the boys but you know they don't--they don't care nothing about cake and--and you know... brownies, they'll eat brownies, you know, but don't really care about a lot of--a lot of cake. You know the icing part of it, they'll eat the inside, but they don't really care. They'd rather have just regular cake without the icing.

0:10:06.5

MB: Now how do you decide what to cook? How do you plan your menus?

0:10:09.5

PB: Well we have a house mother and she usually make out the menus. If--if--if I--she--but she will 'cause you know get with me and--and say, "Okay, Pat we are--this is the menu. Do we have this, this, this, you know?" So I let her know whether or not we have enough for a meal or whether she needs to order some more to go with this or you know and I usually--and we usually end up changing the menu 'cause--but she--she makes--she does--she makes the menus out. And then you know I go by the menu. But the recipe, you know I usually decide whether or not--if I'm gonna fix this or fix that, you know. But she--she makes the menus out.

0:10:52.9

ML: What sorts of things do you like to cook?

0:10:57.0

PB: I love vegetables. I love vegetables, baked potatoes; I don't like--I'm not into the fried food. I don't care no whole lot about fried food, you know. It's all right occasionally, but you know I like it baked, broiled or--I be trying to get them to cook on the grill. I like it grilled, too; so....

0:11:14.1

ML: Uh-hm; what is the difference between how you cook at home and how you cook in the fraternity for the guys--the types of foods and the ways that you cook?

0:11:22.8

PB: Well one difference is me as a black southern cook, I like spice. So--and I like season, so at home I season it and you know spice it up 'cause you know we love.... But I don't cook with as much salt. I have--you know okay, now in other words, I can't use much salt. I can't use much seasoning, you know. And you know how some--we like--like I'll do this a little bit crispy--not burnt, but a little crispy you know and I try to watch that, you know. And I love my stuff to look pretty--really pretty. If--if--I don't like nobody cut my bread. I like to be the one to cut my bread 'cause I don't want you tearing it up. When I put my food out there I want it to look good as well as taste good. So I take pride in you know the way it looks.

0:12:11.7

ML: How do you feel about cooking with so many packaged foods on the job? Is it convenient or do you omit--sort of a loss in cooking fresh stuff?

0:12:21.9

PB: Well I understand when you're cooking for as many boys as I cook for I understand that you have to go with that sometimes, you know 'cause see it'll take me half the morning if I want to, you know get the first piece, you know. So I--I can relate to you know the packaged food 'cause it's more convenient when you're cooking for a large amount. But at home personally if I'm gonna get--I don't even buy canned beans and stuff. I'd rather get it either frozen or fresh and I'd rather have frozen vegetables rather than have canned vegetables. The canned vegetables--the fresh vegetable--the frozen vegetables, excuse me, is more fresher tasting than the canned. Canned is--is you know--has already been cooked and put in the can, so you can't stand a lot of cooking. You can just open up a can of peas and put it in the steam table and 20 minutes it's ready. Frozen, you have to boil it so you kind of you know cooking that seasoning up really you know and getting that--that meat and stuff all in there together. So I kind of like frozen but it takes a little bit longer, but I like it better.

0:13:26.0

ML: Okay; can you describe for me a typical day at work?

0:13:30.8

PB: Well if I'm--a typical day I would say would be I come in; I usually get--I'm--I'm at work from 9:30 to 6:30. I usually get there--it depends on what I'm having for lunch. If I'm having something that's gonna take a little time, I usually get there a little early--earlier. That way it will be--I won't be in no rush, but I get there I'd say from 9:00--9:15 and the first thing I'll do if I have--if I have... for instance, I have tacos; I take my meat out and put it in the refrigerator at night before I leave at 6:30. That way the meat is thawed up and so I can just come in and get started on that. And while the meat is cooking, I'm preparing to--getting my shells ready, getting my sauce ready, getting my--my lettuce cut up, my tomato cut up, you know and getting my cheese and everything together, getting--you know you have someone there for to do the salad--do breakfast and salad bar, so she usually is working in that area so I'm working in--in--on this side getting my stuff for lunch ready. Once I get my lunch ready and out, it's supposed to be out at 11, but you know how boys and girls are. They want to come in at 10:30 and if something is ready or they have an early class or something... so I'll let them go ahead and I'll fix them some, but I usually don't like nobody starting messing with my stuff until at least a quarter till that was everything is out there and I want to stop doing what I'm doing and start--and come over here and help Julie with this right here. So--and so 11 o'clock, as soon as my lunch gets started and gets out, I start on my dinner. It depends if I have meatloaf, well I'm not gonna have meatloaf if I'm having taco; that's two ground beef together, so that's another reason why I will have to change the menu 'cause she may have taco for lunch and meat--and a meatloaf for dinner. So that's two ground beef; I don't want them right there together. So I will change it and maybe have baked chicken or some--whatever we have in the freezer. They love poppy seed chicken, they loved baked potatoes, so if I have baked potatoes for dinner I go ahead on and wash them and wrap them and sit them off to the side. I'll put my meat--you know I get it ready, wash it, season it, put it to the side; so at 2:30, quarter to three, I'm ready to start with getting my dinner on and I'll put my meat in 'cause I--I'm like this; I don't like--I don't want no dried meat, so I won't cook it. If I'm not gonna eat it I'm not gonna fix it for you to eat. You know that's the way I am. So I like my stuff to be hot and fresh. So at 5 o'clock you can eat, but they don't serve till 5:30 'cause I want the meat--when I take it out and get it prepped up and get it ready, I want you to go ahead on and eat--let it cool off and go eat. But you know of course we have a certain time for them to eat, and you know; so--but....

0:16:18.7

ML: Now after you cook all day at the Fraternity House, do you come home and prepare a separate meal for your family at night?

0:16:23.0

PB: Yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am; I have my aunt here and she's on dialysis and she stays with me, so I have--you know I'm a caregiver for her and she's on medication, so she takes medication, you know three--sometimes four times a day. So I have to make sure she gets you

know a proper diet, you know or eat something, 'cause a lot of time if we have baked chicken and we're--when I get home she may not want baked chicken, you know. So I have to fix her something else, you know. So yeah, I do--I do have to come home and cook. It's not a whole--full-course meal, but you know I do have to come home and cut the stove on.

0:16:58.4

ML: So what time do you generally eat supper then?

0:17:01.6

PB: Here?

0:17:01.8

ML: Uh-hm; at your house....

0:17:02.7

PB: About 7 or 7:15 'cause I usually get home about a quarter till.

0:17:07.3

ML: Okay; tell me a little bit about some of your favorite things to cook at home. What do you like to cook for your family?

0:17:15.6

PB: Well we have--we have--we will have some kind of vegetables whether just--I have green beans. A menu for home is gonna be green beans, either potato casserole or mashed potatoes, rolls, maybe make a meatloaf with the green beans, and sometimes sweet potatoes. If I don't have the potatoes, I have sweet potatoes. If I'm gonna have--but we're gonna have vegetables. We're gonna have vegetables. I've got some lima beans cooking now. Got to have them vegetables; if I fry chicken--all they want is fried chicken; you don't have anything to go with that. You give them chicken, hot sauce, and bread. But spaghetti and salad either French bread or Texas toast, butter beans, candied yams, maybe some pork steak, you know baked pork steak, oh--greens--greens...

0:18:24.3

ML: How do you do your greens?

0:18:25.9

PB: I get fresh greens baby; I goes to the Farmer's Market or if they don't have any--or I go to Big Star and get me some fresh greens. I pick them, I wash them, put the meat in and let it be

boiled while I'm picking my greens, put them on; I usually--I put either--I'm gonna put some fat back in it, but I usually put some pig tails in--I love pig tails in that. And I may cook some ham hocks or some pig feet on the side. Oh, yeah... dressing; have dressing... well since it's getting hot now we don't have dressing as often as--but in the winter time oh, they want dressing--chicken and dressing, turkey and dressing; it doesn't matter as long as it's dressing. Give them gravy and cranberry sauce and rolls, English peas, and sometimes I do my English peas with--with potatoes or sometimes I let--cook them just by themselves.

0:19:13.3

ML: So what do you do--I understand that the Fraternity Houses are closed in the summers. What do you do during the summers?

0:19:19.2

PB: Well I have a few people that I go and clean houses for. So I--I do that on the side along with my unemployment; so....

0:19:26.4

ML: Okay; do you clean houses as well during the school year?

0:19:29.5

PB: No.

0:19:30.5

ML: Okay.

0:19:31.6

PB: I may go on a Saturday you know of if they having company I go on a Friday evening, but normally I just work--you know at the Fraternity Houses during the summer--during the winter months.

0:19:41.4

ML: So given that you love to cook, have you ever worked in restaurants or catering in town or have you ever given thought to doing that?

0:19:46.8

PB: I used to work--I used to work at Deanna's for a very short time, you know with the cakes.

0:19:51.3

ML: Now what is Deanna's?

0:19:52.3

PB: It's--it's where you take--she did cakes and--and donuts and wedding cakes and you know different stuff like that. I worked there for a... I worked at Shipley's Donuts, but like I said that was just you know--they did--one side they did--do you remember Shipley's? You're not from here? But they had a Shipley's Donuts and they would do the homemade donuts and I worked there and when I worked at the Zeta House I never forget this house--we had a house mother named Miss--Miss Lee--Miss Lee, and she had--you know and she was just so impressed with me, you know with my cooking that she wanted me to go to--to--go to school, uh-huh, yeah; but I wouldn't do it. I don't know why--young and just wasn't--you know just wasn't ready to just do no one particular thing; so....

0:20:43.4

ML: So all your cooking you've learned on the job or from your family?

0:20:46.4

PB: From my family; I learned everything I know from my family.

0:20:49.1

ML: Okay.

0:20:49.8

PB: Now when I started with the Zeta House she taught me about cooking you know different things like green bean casserole. You know we didn't eat no green bean casserole; didn't know what a green bean casserole was. All we knew was green beans, you know--so green bean casserole, different casseroles and stuff like that--that I learned that from you know--from working with Miss Eula Mae and Miss Sue; she was a real good teacher.

0:21:12.9

ML: Uh-hm; what is your relationship like with the house mothers? How--how do you plan for the kitchen and--and for the foods and do y'all meet once a week or how does that work?

0:21:23.7

PB: Well she--the house mother that I have now is Miss Miller. She--she--she lives there in the house and she--she oversees you know everything we does. She--she you know--she'll--she'll--if--but my job is to let her know what we have so she'll know how to prepare the menu. But as for as the ordering, she does all the ordering, you know. She will--unless she's going on you know--

got--gonna be out of town or got someone to go or something to do then she'll make a list of what we need. I'll tell her what... well I'll tell you what we really do is we keeps a tablet in the kitchen. When we run out of stuff, we just--you know we supposed to write it down, so that way when the salesman comes once a week, then we you know give her the--what we need and she'll in turn give it to the salesman.

0:22:09.1

ML: Okay.

0:22:10.0

PB: So we kind of stay connected. We--we--we talk every day--every day; we connect every day as far as you know the menu, what we have, what we need, what can wait and what we have to have, you know this week and what can wait till next week, you know--stuff like that. So she--she--she--she... I'm gonna say it like this and I'm not trying to sound bossy but that's my kitchen. You know I run the kitchen; I just let her know what we need, but as far as the menus and the--and the--what we need, she takes care of that.

0:22:38.2

ML: How do you supervise your kitchen? You have a staff in there; do you give them assignments or how does that work?

0:22:44.0

PB: Well not really; we have a breakfast cook. We have--I do lunch and dinner. We have Trevor--we have him; he works there but you know he--he--he's kind of like downstairs--to take care of the downstairs--that would hurt him and the breakfast cook; they kind of take care of the dining room for it, the tea, the coffee--well she does the coffee and the lemonade and all this stuff; they kind of run that. I--you know if I go out there and I see something needs to be done, I do it. I--you know if--if I'm doing this right here, I ask them [**Coughs**]--excuse me; I ask them if he'll bring up to... well she don't mind doing this, you know. But usually I'm not trying to sound like I'm a one-man show; I don't like no lot of people messing around. If I'm in here, I want to be in here. If I need you to do something I ask you to do something, but I--I--you know I don't like no too many helps. I like--to kind of like doing things myself, 'cause they say I'm 'ticular which I am. [**Coughs**] Oh excuse me.

0:23:57.3

ML: You okay? Well given that you're very particular about how you present your food and run your kitchen and you take great pride in it...

0:24:05.2

PB: Uh-hm; yes, I do.

0:24:07.6

ML: ... do you have--do you allow the students to go back in the kitchen while you're working?

0:24:11.9

PB: [Coughs] Oh excuse me.

0:24:18.8

ML: You're fine.

0:24:20.9

PB: [Coughs] Who is that? Jamie?

0:24:25.7

Jamie: Yeah.

0:24:30.0

PB: [Coughs] Oh excuse me; bring me a paper towel son.

0:24:34.7

Jamie: Okay.

0:24:39.8

PB: Thank you. [Coughs] Oh.

0:24:47.6

ML: That's a nasty cough. [Laughs]

0:24:55.4

PB: Excuse me.

0:24:57.3

ML: You're fine.

0:24:57.7

PB: I just went to talking so much that I didn't take time to breathe.

0:25:01.4

ML: *[Laughs]*

0:25:02.4

PB: But anyway, excuse me; now repeat that question.

0:25:07.1

ML: I was asking you that since you--you know you take pride, you like your--your kitchen a certain way...

0:25:12.4

PB: *[Coughs]*

0:25:15.1

ML: Are you okay?

0:25:15.8

PB: Oh excuse me.

0:25:16.0

ML: Do you want to take a break for a minute?

0:25:17.0

PB: Uh-uh; no, I'm fine.

0:25:17.4

ML: Okay; I was just wondering if you allowed students in your kitchen.

0:25:20.4

PB: Okay; they're really not supposed to you know come in there, but they do. I don't have no problem with them. I don't--I mean you know as long as you don't mess with my stuff, I don't have no problem with you. If you want to come in and get you some milk, go ahead; my hands may be you know doing something else, but they always gonna ask, "Miss Patricia, can I get--is

it all right if I get some milk?" Sure, you know; so it's--it's... [Coughs] Oh, excuse me. Uh, oh, I get to going through this once in a while. But they--they--I don't--we don't have no problem--not really 'cause they don't--they don't--I mean it's not like they come in cooking and taking over nothin' or anything like that; they don't do that. They--they'll ask for what they want and you got--you're gonna have a few of them that's just gonna you know--know what things are you know and just gonna come and get them, but most of--the majority of them, 99.9 percent of them are gonna ask is it all right if they get chips, is it--do we have any cookies or if we have any--you know whatever, so they usually ask. They don't just come in and just you know--now you've got--when I leave at 6:30 I don't know what they do, but if breakfast comes in--in the morning and said somebody been cooking eggs, I don't--if they clean [inaudible] like it that so--you know I don't have a problem with it. I haven't ran into a problem over that.

0:26:47.1

ML: Do you ever have students come and tell you they really liked a particular meal that you fixed or...?

0:26:51.2

PB: All the time.

0:26:53.2

ML: Really?

0:26:53.7

PB: See, oh excuse me--not knowing a whole lot about the KA House and how--you know the cooks and stuff that they had--the stuff they had prior--before me coming here, but they act like I was the best thing that came to the house. You know they--'cause see they haven't been getting--they--when they was getting it, it either was bland and didn't have no season to it or it was burnt up or dried out or something. [Coughs] Excuse me; then it was my understanding they started renovations and they started, you know catering from the cafeteria that you know--and the food just--just it--just wasn't good. It just wasn't good, but I--I--I--everywhere I go I always get praised with my cooking 'cause see I love it, and I think that when you enjoy doing something, you put your heart and soul in it--that's what makes it you know taste so good 'cause see you enjoy doing it. If you come to work and you're mad and you've got a problem, you're not gonna care if the eggs is over-cooked, you're not gonna care if they're burnt up. I cook it; here you go you know. And--and I think if you love doing what you're doing, it makes a difference. It really makes a difference, and I love it. I enjoy it.

0:28:11.1

ML: Well good; do you have any special students that you remember or fond memories of working either in a special function or something for either a Fraternity or a Sorority on campus?

0:28:21.4

PB: Well the--well the ATO them were my boys 'cause that was my home and--and I had a few that would come in and--and I tell them all the time that--we got a particular one that comes in and he just wanted to cook so bad, he'll just stir the pot. I used to--my grandmother used to do this--I go, "Boy get out of my pot," you know but he--he--he's a good boy and I have--you're gonna have a favorite everywhere you go; you're gonna have a favorite one. But the ATO I'm not trying to sound prejudice or nothing like that, but them were my boys and--and it's about a--10 or 12 of them you see what I'm saying that I really, really did just enjoy. I really enjoyed them. And miss--and a few of them graduated and go on--gone on, and but it's still a few more that you know that's left; so.... Yeah; you get attached to them and just like this--a couple of them over here at--at the KA House I like, uh-hm. There's a couple of them that I like--about three of them. The rest of them, I say--[*Coughs*]... okay, excuse me for one minute.

0:29:34.9

ML: You can excuse yourself, that's fine. We'll just put these on pause.

0:29:37.0

PB: Okay.

0:29:41.8

ML: I'm going to unpause this voice recorder. All right; can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with the University apart from the hours you work at the KA House? Are you ever on campus? Do you go to games?

0:29:55.0

PB: No [*Emphasis Added*]; I mean--I ain't studied no football and care nothing 'bout no basketball, but I'm going for the home team, uh-huh. But I--I goes to the--to the Grove when they have the gospel singing or you know something like that. I have you know worked--well I guess it was through the Fraternity with the Red and Blue Guys, you know at the Grove and stuff but I just don't really participate with the University. I may need to, but I don't.

0:30:23.7

ML: What kinds of things do you do in your spare time?

0:30:27.0

PB: I don't have no spare time, baby. I--I'm--if I'm not working on the campus I'm at home working and like I say I have my--my aunt and she's 64 and she's on dialysis and I you know take care of her. So in the summer, I usually spend most--most of my time with her. [*Phone Rings*]

0:30:43.7

ML: All right; we'll pause this for you to get the phone.

0:30:45.4

PB: Okay.

0:30:46.7

ML: I'm just going to resume it, okay. Tell me a little bit about your family.

0:30:50.7

PB: Well I'm the mother of three children. I'm--well I'm divorced; I have two boys and one girl. My oldest girl is 32 and my youngest child is 14 and--well 13 and the other one is--he's 15. I'm--I think I'm very family oriented. I--I--and I believe in strong family val--you know values. I believe in that. I believe in education. And I believe in a second chance 'cause I have truly been blessed--truly been blessed and I was given a second chance. I quit school in the 10th grade and then about 10 years later, I went back and got my GED. I've you know--so I believe in values--believe in education and I believe in--I believe everyone has a--you know a right to an education. And it's there for them; all you have to do is go get it.

0:31:59.2

ML: Uh-hm; have you ever thought about taking classes at the University while you worked there?

0:32:03.2

PB: Uh-um; I couldn't--I wouldn't have time to devote to it. I really wouldn't 'cause you see like I said when I get off from work, when I come home I'm taking care of my family. And when I get up she have to be at dialysis at 6 o'clock in the morning, three days a week. So you know, uh-um....

0:32:26.2

ML: Do you have anybody that helps you care for your aunt or do you have flexibility where you can leave work if you need to--to go care for her or how's that?

0:32:33.2

PB: Well I have my daughter; she lives up the street, so you know she's--she's able to help with you know as far as I work, she takes her to her appointments and she makes sure she gets her dialysis and makes sure she gets her medicine and stuff. So my daughter, she does help me with

her. But she has two kids, too, so you know I don't want to put my responsibility totally on her, but she does good. She does real good with her. And I appreciate it.

0:32:58.0

ML: So is--is most of your family here locally in Oxford then?

0:33:01.7

PB: Well my brothers--all of my brothers is out of state. I have one in the Army, one just retired from the Army, and one in Jackson and one in Memphis and--but all the sisters are here. I have four sisters and they're all here.

0:33:22.4

ML: Tell me a little bit about your co-workers at the Fraternity. Do y'all see each other just at work or do you see each other outside of work? Do you have any communication or relationships with people who work in the other houses?

0:33:36.4

PB: Uh-hm, yeah, all of them; I'm--I'm--I think I'm a very well liked person. I see a lot of the other Fraternity cooks all the time. We kind of like SAE, the Pi House, well [inaudible] the Pi House; the Sigma Nu, Kasa--all of--all of them, really all of them. I have--I have associates that work at each one of them and--and we usually you know--we usually get together you know and then I have some of them that you know I see and talk to like on a daily basis, you know. They share--we--we share recipes and you know and they--and then they have..., "What you having tomorrow?" We having poppy seed chicken. "Oh okay, we can have that, too," you know. So it's--you know like--keep in touch.

0:34:40.0

ML: Okay; let me check over my questions and see if I can--if I've missed anything that I wanted to ask you about. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationships with the students that you work with? Have you--do you see differences either over time? Have the boys changed now from what they once were? Or, are there major differences between working in the Sororities and working in the Fraternities besides the sorts of food that you serve?

0:35:12.1

PB: Well they--to me and this is just a personal evaluation now, but they all the same. They all the same; basically you know they--they--the boys is not to me--they are--they are not as--as friendlier--not going to say friendlier--friendlier may not be the right word I'm using--trying to find, but the boys is not as compassionate as the girls. You know the girls, they're like "Oh, Miss Trish, oh that was just so good." You--you know they just--I mean you know they--more emotional. The boys is like, "Okay," you know and it's--it's--it's different in that part. But as far

as--as work wise, it's--it's basically the same. You--you--I know the girls, they--they--they really expect more to me than--than the guys. The guys like I said--the guys, they--it don't take much to satisfy them, you know. It really don't. The only thing they want--the only that they'll get upset about..., "No dinner; what's going on," you know. But other than that they--they--they show their--they show--well I don't know--I don't know; I can't find the word that I really want to use and I don't want to say well-groomed when I really don't want to use that word. But I don't know; the guys--I know by me having--well I've got a daughter. I raised a daughter and I'm raising two boys. The boys are more messy eaters than girls. They are--they are really messier eaters than girls, you know. They will drop something and go on, but the girl that drops something, she's gonna stop and try to get it up, you know or let you know it's there. But they'll just walk over and won't even say, "Well it's water out there," you know--just--you know how boys are.... There's water down here; let's you know..., "Hey man, get that--that--that towel. Just bring it over here and put it in this water," you know. That's a typical boy. But a girl, "Uh-uh, no; don't do that. Let's clean it up," you know; so.... But they--they all kids.

0:37:20.0

ML: Is there ever an occasion when you--when you have the time to maybe do something like your homemade rolls you were talking about...

0:37:26.6

PB: Uh-hm.

0:37:27.2

ML: ... or the cakes that--is it the prepackaged foods? Do you ever have special meals where you do something from scratch for them?

0:37:33.0

PB: All the time; vanilla pudding I do from scratch.

0:37:35.8

ML: Tell me how you do it.

0:37:37.1

PB: Take some milk, egg--milk and egg yolk; only use the white. I use that for meringue, and egg yolk, flour, and you know cooking this on the stove and let it cook and let it get a little thickness to it, which after it cools off put you some vanilla flavor in there. Take your--your bananas, you'll cook it you know. What I do with mine, I'll just crumble my cookies up and make it kind of like a crust at the bottom and then I'll cut my bananas up and then I'll pour my thing--and then I'll make another layer, and then on the top I'll take some Cool Whip and mix it with meringue and spread on top. They love it. They love it.

0:38:17.6

ML: What are some other things that you make that are favorite recipes for them--personal recipes that you use?

0:38:24.6

PB: They love my soup.

0:38:26.8

ML: What kind of soup?

0:38:27.2

PB: Vegetable soup, but I--I--it's what I put in--a little of this and a little of that and with vegetable soup you can just throw in a little bit of this and a little bit of that and you know--and make it good without just opening up a can of mixed vegetables and I'll--and you know putting some stuff in it and putting it on the table; I don't like that. I like to--you know--and to tell you the truth, I put--sometimes I put green--I don't know green--green nothing--I put some ground beef, you know. I cook some ground beef in some onion and bell peppers and put it in there. And--but at home, I--I will take some chicken and debone it and--or put it in there and my family loves it. But it's too hot for soup now, you know; so I don't really cook that. In the winter time they love--they want--they could eat soup and grilled cheese once a week. Yes... check the mailbox.... Once a week; they love it.

0:39:19.9

ML: Well before we--before we wrap this up, I just wanted to ask you one more question about your grandmother...

0:39:23.6

PB: Okay.

0:39:25.2

ML: ... because she said--you said she taught you how to cook really. Can you tell me a fond memory about your grandmother or a favorite thing that she used to make for you?

0:39:34.1

PB: Well it wasn't so much as making it for me, but she--she--her--she--everything she cooked was good. Her dressing, she could cook some good dressing. My mother cooked some good dressing, and then I later found out that my--well my mother told me; my mother used cream of

chicken--a half a can of cream of chicken and a half a can.... Thank you..... Half a can of cream of chicken and a half a can of cream of mushroom with it and it's really good.

0:40:01.4

ML: Okay.

0:40:02.9

PB: Really, really good.

0:40:06.6

ML: Do you see your daughter continuing your cooking traditions?

0:40:09.6

PB: She tries--she tries; she really does. She told me--I don't know, a couple Sundays ago, she didn't want to take my bread and my--and my little granddaughter said, "Taste it grandma 'cause it's almost as good as yours, grandma." I said yes; I said yeah baby but she's still got a little piece to go. Yeah; and she--she always wanting me to cook some bread for her or my brother in Memphis, he always saying, "You coming down," you know such and such you know, so, "You gonna do some--some homemade rolls," you know 'cause my mother used to cook them. She worked for the [Inaudible] and she used to cook them.

0:40:50.4

ML: Well thank you very much for talking with me today.

0:40:52.3

PB: Well thank you.

0:40:52.7

ML: I appreciate it.

0:40:53.3

PB: I enjoyed myself.

0:40:56.5

ML: All right; we're going to cut off these recorders. It looks like I stopped it.

[End Patricia Brown Interview-KA Cook]