



**Barbara Brown**  
**Homewood, Alabama**

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Date: January 22, 2020  
Location: Demetri's BBQ, Homewood, AL  
Interviewer: Michelle Little  
Transcription: Jennifer Thelusma  
Length: Fifty nine minutes  
Project: Career Servers

[00:00:02]

**Michelle L:** So today is January 22nd of 2020 and this is Michelle Little interviewing Ms.

Barbara at Demetri's in Homewood, Alabama. And this is for the career servers project.

So to get us started Ms. Barbara, will you just tell me your full name and when you were born.

[00:00:28]

**Barbara B:** Barbara B. Brown. July 6, 1946.

[00:00:32]

**Michelle L:** Okay so you were born in [19]46. Where were you born?

[00:00:37]

**Barbara B:** In Marshall County.

[00:00:41]

**Michelle L:** Marshall County, Alabama?

[00:00:43]

**Barbara B:** Up by Beech Creek.

[00:00:46]

**Michelle L:** Is that where you grew up or where'd you grow up in Alabama?

[00:00:51]

**Barbara B:** Different places, we moved a lot.

[00:00:54]

**Michelle L:** Oh okay, so where all you move around?

[00:00:58]

**Barbara B:** Well I'm the oldest of nine kids so we had to move a lot different places.

[00:01:07]

**Michelle L:** Okay, um-

[00:01:09]

**Barbara B:** Mainly around Blount County.

[00:01:12]

**Michelle L:** Okay, so I think Sam mentioned y'all lived on farms? Is that right?

[00:01:19]

**Barbara B:** Not really a farm, but we did have you know a cow, and worked in gardens and stuff like that.

[00:01:27]

**Michelle L:** Okay, and is that mainly what your parents did? Farm?

[00:01:32]

**Barbara B:** Yes.

[00:01:33]

**Michelle L:** Okay, and can you tell me a little bit about your parents, what were they like?

[00:01:39]

**Barbara B:** Well they were born and raised in the country also. My daddy loved to fool with cars and he would tow cars up from Michigan and back.

[00:01: 58]

**Michelle L:** Oh wow.

[00:02:01]

**Barbara B:** -And my mother she just stayed there with us kids. And when we had a garden she worked out in the garden.

[00:02:09]

**Michelle L:** So how did he get into cars [Laughter] and –

[00:02:16]

**Barbara B:** He just went up there and got ‘em and cleaned ‘em up, fixed ‘em up, whatever and sold ‘em.

[00:02:23]

**Michelle L:** And sold, 'em, okay. And can you tell me a little bit about your brothers and sisters, that's -- nine children you said, that's-- was it fun growing up with that bunch?

[Laughter].

[00:02:37]

**Barbara B:** Oh yeah, it just uh, I mean it's kinda hard to explain we just all tried to stay together cause we didn't have, you know much money too but my mother she made sure we had biscuits and gravy for breakfast.

[00:02:59]

**Michelle L:** Oh yum.

[00:03:02]

**Barbara B:** Yep. But there's only a few of us left right now. I've already lost my mother and dad.

[00:03:16]

**Michelle L:** I'm sorry.

[00:03:21]

**Barbara B:** When we started marrying off, you know, everybody went their separate ways.  
Different states, different countries.

[00:03:30]

**Michelle L:** Oh wow, so some of 'em left the country even.

[00:03:36]

**Barbara B:** Well they, went- I don't know if they went out of state or not but I know they  
moved up like in Michigan, Detroit, all different places.

[00:03:49]

**Michelle L:** Okay, for different jobs?

[00:03:51]

**Barbara B:** Yeah, moved.

[00:03:56]

**Michelle L:** What were some things you guys did for fun when you were little kids growing up in Blount county?

[00:04:05]

**Barbara B:** Well, go out and pick blackberries, and blueberries, and we'd have a cow and milk a cow before we went to school every morning. Have a garden, we'd have to go out there and pull the leaves out from around there 'cause we didn't have a machine to do it, we had to do it by hand. Just stayed busy doing something around the house with us kids, 'cause some of the kids didn't want to work.

[00:04:41]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter]. Did you mind the work?

[00:04:47]

**Barbara B:** No, I love working.

[00:04:49]

**Michelle L:** What else? Where did y'all go to school in Blount county?

[00:04:57]

**Barbara B:** Well, to start we moved around quite a bit so I don't remember all the schools but I did go to Locust Fork and Mount Pinson. Then I went to Talladega School for the Blind for two years.

[00:05:19]

**Michelle L:** Okay, did you enjoy your time there at the Talladega school?

[00:05:25]

**Barbara B:** Oh yeah.

[00:05:35]

**Michelle L:** Yeah? And so then, at what point did you eventually move-- I know you said earlier you used to live close to the airport here in Birmingham. At what point did you move from Blount County up to near Birmingham?

[00:05:48]

**Barbara B:** Oh when I got married in [19]67 and we moved down here in [19]71.

[00:05:54]

**Michelle L:** Okay, how did you meet your husband?

[00:05:59]

**Barbara B:** He lived in Bradford on the other side of Mount Pinson and I had known him for a good while and then we just-- you know finally got married.

[00:06:13]

**Michelle L:** You decided he was the one?

[00:06:15]

**Barbara B:** Yeah.

[00:06:18]

**Michelle L:** Alright, and why did you guys pick the Birmingham area to live?

[00:06:25]

**Barbara B:** We were just tryna get close to town to where both of us could get a job. He was a surveyor.

[00:06:34]

**Michelle L:** Oh a land surveyor? In [19]71 did y'all go ahead and move out close to the airport? Is it Inglewood?

[00:06:49]

**Barbara B:** Inglenook.

[00:06:50]

**Michelle L:** Inglenook. Okay, Inglenook. Is that when y'all moved to that house?

[00:06:55]

**Barbara B:** Right, his mother helped us get the house. So we moved there in [19]71 and that's when- well I had my daughter- I think I said I married in [19]67. It was [19]64. And then I had my first daughter in [19]67.

[00:07:23]

**Michelle L:** Okay.

[00:07:27]

**Barbara B:** I worked little places there in Tarrant City. That's right close to Inglenook. In Chef's Castle and different places and then I came over here and well I think it was in August of [19]71.

[00:07:49]

**Michelle L:** Okay and--

[00:07:50]

**Barbara B:** This was up at El Rancho

[00:07:50]

**Michelle L:** Okay--

[00:07:55]

**Michelle L:** Oh I'm sorry- go ahead, I didn't mean to interrupt you.

[00:07:58]

**Barbara B:** No, I'm tryin' to get my dates straight.

[00:08:03]

**Michelle L:** Oh yeah, I know, it's tough. It's tough. Can you tell me a little more about the Inglenook area? Is that Near East Lake also?

**Barbara B:** No, East Lake is on 75 and this is on 79, close to the airport.

[00:08:26]

**Michelle L:** Okay gotcha. I know we talked about how that area has changed a little bit, but what was Inglenook like when you moved there? What was the neighborhood like?

[00:08:36]

**Barbara B:** Well it seemed, like any other place, it would be a nice place to live. And it was up until I moved. Um, 2002. I think. Anyway, they started breaking into my house and not really steal anything, just rambling. ‘Cause I really didn’t really have anything of value. But they would break in because both of my girls were already married and I was divorced and so I lived alone. But around the time that I moved out in [19]70-- no it wasn’t [19]70. When I moved out in 2002, for about a year to two years before that, that’s when it really got bad and I moved out and moved to Blount County.

[00:09:52]

**Michelle L:** Okay so you said y’all moved in, in the early [19]70s. So what was your first job? Was your first job- did you get that after you got married?

[00:10:10]

**Barbara B:** Well, when I lived at home, I would take and iron clothes and little-- babysit. Did little things like that out in the country. But as far as really a job, Chef’s Castle and – I’m tryna think of the other name of the restaurant in Tarrant. But it was all restaurants you know.

[00:10:41]

**Michelle L:** What was the Chef's Castle restaurant? What kinda place was that?

[00:10:49]

**Barbara B:** It was really like fast-food, young. It had I think about six tables inside and you just more or less-- like sandwiches, just quick stuff.

[00:11:05]

**Michelle L:** Do you remember your first day working at a restaurant? Do you remember what that was like, your first waitress day?

[00:11:24]

**Barbara B:** Not really. You know, I remember working there but I don't remember the first day cause its really like walking into a new place. You just have to get adjusted to everything-

[00:11:44]

**Michelle L:** Right

[00:11:45]

**Barbara B:** And there are a few people in the world that will take time to help you, explain things to you, but some of them wont. I don't care. They don't have time for you.

[00:11:58]

**Michelle L:** Oh okay, but you did find some people that would help show you the way?

[00:12:05]

**Barbara B:** Oh Yes, right. And not long after that, see then I started over at El Rancho up here on the next street.

[00:12:16]

**Michelle L:** Okay. Yeah, so tell me a little bit about-- so this place, Demetri's, was previously called El Ranchos, is that right?

[00:12:25]

**Barbara B:** No.

[00:12:26]

**Michelle L:** No?

[00:12:27]

**Barbara B:** El Rancho is on the next street up, close to where the police department is, and I worked up there almost two years or a year and a half. Sam Nakos's father, Demetri Nakos was in partnership with a guy up there. When he built this place, Demetri's— Sam's father built this place in [19]73 and then we moved down here.

[00:13:06]

**Michelle L:** Okay, so what do you remember about El Rancho? What was that place like?

[00:13:15]

**Barbara B:** It's just a small place. It just had-- I think it had about two or three tables and it had the bar, a round bar. I didn't work too long up there. Just worked part time and then moved down here. We helped him build this place. We kept coming down here and helping out while they was building.

[00:13:42]

**Michelle L:** Oh wow. So you have been here since the very beginning [Laughter].

[00:13:47]

**Barbara B:** Oh yeah.

[00:13:48]

**Michelle L:** So what do you remember about the opening of this place and kind of the beginning of Demetri's here?

[00:14:01]

**Barbara B:** Well it just-- we still had to try to straighten things out as we went along but we just-- When we opened up, it's just like, I could do anything. I was cashier, server, even had to cook, build the fire, put the meat, Boston butts on. You name it, I did it.

[00:14:36]

**Michelle L:** Oh my word. How did you learn all of that? [Laughter]

[00:14:32]

**Barbara B:** I just learned it. Didn't have nobody and it had to be done so I just automatically tried to learn and I guess once you're kind of in the place, around other people, you see it but you really don't pay that much attention. But then when it comes down to it, that you have to do it yourself, it kinda comes natural because you have seen it done.

[00:15:12]

**Michelle L:** Okay, wow. So how many of you guys were working here when it first opened? I mean it sounds like since you were doing all of the things, was it a small crew?

[00:15:26]

**Barbara B:** During the breakfast it's usually just a waitress on each side and a cashier and then the cook staff. But during lunch now, they had to break it down so it's-- I'd say about four or five waitresses because they had both sides, dining, plus they had the counter too. And then you had to have a cashier for the takeout orders.

[00:16:00]

**Michelle L:** Okay, and has the layout changed since you guys first opened or is this pretty much the layout that was here when they built it?

[00:16:11]

**Barbara B:** Pretty much, but the patio wasn't there.

[00:16:15]

**Michelle L:** Okay.

[00:16:18]

**Barbara B:** But really I don't know exactly how it looks right now because back in – I'm tryin'  
think of the year-- well, it went blank.

[00:16:35]

**Michelle L:** It's okay, it's hard to think of the years.

[00:16:41]

**Barbara B:** I can't even think of the date.

[00:16:46]

**Michelle L:** That's okay-- that's okay don't worry about it.

[00:16:49]

**Barbara B:** But anyway, when my sight got to 2008-- when I had to stop driving. I had to get someone to-- I pulled my car over and someone come and got me. My cousin would bring me down here, but I would only come back here, help him count his money, do office work and things. I wouldn't go out on the floor. That was in 2008. Then Sam would take me home sometimes. So that's what I've been doing since 2008 back here.

[00:17: 32]

**Michelle L:** Okay.

[00:17:33]

**Barbara B:** That's why I've got so many keys.

[00:17:37]

**Michelle L:** You've got a key to all the doors.

[00:17:40]

**Barbara B:** The doors, well he did have more cabinets but he's gradually weeding them out you know cause I think now that a lot of this stuff that's in the filing cabinets is just in computers so there'll be less cabinets.

[00:17:59]

**Michelle L:** So in the early days, was the restaurant pretty much immediately busy or did it take a while to get traffic coming in?

[00:18:13]

**Barbara B:** No, a lot of the people that was up at Rancho, they came with us down here. We stayed busy all the time.

[00:18:23]

**Michelle L:** And what was Homewood-- what was this neighborhood like at that time? I imagine it wasn't quite as built up as it is now, there may not have been quite as many restaurants all around?

[00:18:39]

**Barbara B:** Like I said, I never did venture out. I just came to work and went home. So I really don't know about the area here.

[00:18:54]

**Michelle L:** Did y'all have some pretty regular customers?

[00:19:00]

**Barbara B:** Oh yeah, it got to where if the cook was late coming in or something, I'd be back there cooking, run back out there and run the register or whatever. They'd walk through the door and say, "Oh Ms. B's cookin! I want some biscuits." Or I want this or that. But when I was on the register they could look and see-- and they'd say "No waitress. Ms. B is waiting on the floor." And they'd get my attention when they'd come in the door and I'd say, "You want your regular?" They'd say, "Yeah." I'd say then sit at your regular table. They had certain tables that they would sit at. Then, I'd turn their orders in to Peaches the cook and then take it out to them when it got ready. I had one customer, his wife called me, and she said, "Ms. Barbara, I know you don't know my husband's name, but when you come in the door and turn to your left and that first big table." I said yeah, "That's two eggs over medium with sausage and wheat toast." She said, "That's what he gets." She said, "Can I talk to him?" I said "Yes ma'am." So I called him to the phone. I don't know 'em by names, but I know what they eat.

[00:20: 32]

**Michelle L:** Oh wow, so how do you develop that kind of memory? How do you remember what everybody eats?

[00:20:41]

**Barbara B:** Well, the only thing I can say is I just love my customers you know? I enjoyed what I was doing. Cause I've only been here forty-eight years, that's all.

[00:20:55]

**Michelle L:** --Right, right, that's a great question. I mean, what do you love about it? What keeps you coming back every day for forty-eight years?

[00:21:09]

**Barbara B:** Well, the main part was Mr. Jimmy, Sam's father. He was just like a father to me. Like I said, I loved my job. I loved the work and my customers-- I just enjoyed it, you know? I just-- I was happy, you know, working.

[00:21:42]

**Michelle L:** What—‘cause I never got to meet Sam’s father-- but what was he like? What did you remember most about him?

[00:21:54]

**Barbara B:** Well, he wasn’t one to really fuss or anything. He would stand back and watch. And when he would come around, and not say nothin’ and just look at you, you know you were in trouble. You know you done done something.

[00:22:16]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter]

[00:22:18]

**Barbara B:** But he would come in early in the morning during the breakfast shift and he would sit at that back table-- close to the bathrooms-- and I could be over here on that far side waitin’ on somebody and he’d call me, Ms. B. I’d walk around the-- I know what he wanted-- walk around the counter. Yes sir. He was wantin' his Equal for his coffee. He wouldn’t ask nobody else to get it. He would call my name all the way across the restaurant. Not loud, but I knew he was here. He wouldn't call my name too loud, but I could hear him and I knew exactly what he wanted. He wanted his Equal for his coffee.

[00:23:20]

**Michelle L:** Who were some other people that you remember in those early days? You mentioned one of the cooks was named Peaches?

[00:23:32]

**Barbara B:** Her name was Theresa but everybody called her Peaches, that was her nickname.

[00:23:38]

**Michelle L:** Why was she called Peaches?

[00:23:40]

**Barbara B:** That's just what her family nicknamed her and that's what she went by.

[00:23:45]

**Michelle L:** Okay. Is there anyone else you remember, just like some other characters from that restaurant that you remember in those early days?

[00:23:54]

**Barbara B:** There was-- her name was Pearl. She was at the other restaurant and she came over with me. She was an older lady. But, like I say, I really don't remember that as far as their background or their family part-- we just worked together.

[00:24:20]

**Michelle L:** And did everybody got along pretty well? Did they, working together?

[00:24:29]

**Barbara B:** Yeah, for the most part until the younger people didn't want to work so sometimes they wouldn't show up, call in, do different things, so you just had to pull double duty to keep going. The younger generation just does not want to pull their load or even work really as long as their parents back 'em up or help 'em get out of a situation or somethin'. The young generation now is not like it was years ago. You worked for what you got, but now, they don't.

[00:25:29]

**Michelle L:** So what was a typical shift like for you? What shifts did you usually work? What time did you have to get here?

[00:25:47]

**Barbara B:** Normally the breakfast shift was six to three. Six a.m. to three. But that didn't last long, it just-- sometimes I'd be here from the time--come in and build a fire, put the meat on, the lights on, have everythin', usually about four o'clock.

[00:26:17]

**Michelle L:** Four a.m.?

[00:26:18]

**Barbara B:** Four a.m. And then three, four o'clock in the afternoon I might go home. And I have gone home and had to come back and stay til eight thirty when they closed. Not every day, but it got to be pretty regular.

[00:26:40]

**Michelle L:** Take me through-- so the days you did have that kind of schedule, you'd get here at four, open up everything, start the fire, then what were some of the other next steps-- next things you had to do?

[00:26:57]

**Barbara B:** Put the money in the register, be ready to wait on the customers when we opened at six.

[00:27:02]

**Michelle L:** Right, and then you'd wait the tables?

[00:27:08]

**Barbara B:** Usually I worked the register and the counter but if somebody didn't show up, I usually told 'em I had to take the smaller side over here so that I could come out from the register because the counter made an L shape, I think it's still that way. [Clears throat]. But anyway I couldn't get over to the customers on that side as quick. [Coughs]. I've got a frog in my throat.

[00:27:39]

**Michelle L:** Oh yeah, go for it, do you need some more coffee?

[00:27:42]

**Barbara B:** I've got coffee. I have a sinus problem, that's the reason. But mostly I worked the small side and the register if needed. It wasn't every day, but it always managed at least

once a week that something like that would come up. But now Rita, the one who's out there now, when she started work she picked up a lot of that slack too. I'm not sure what year she started, but around about the time I had to come back here off the floor. That was-- that was in 2008 when I quit driving.

[00:28:46]

**Michelle L:** Okay, and had you had any eye trouble before that time?

[00:28:50]

**Barbara B:** Oh yes, I'm totally blind in this eye.

[00:28:54]

**Michelle L:** Okay, and always have been? Wow.

[00:28:52]

**Barbara B:** Like I said, I went to Talladega School for two years.

[00:29:03]

**Michelle L:** Right, right, Okay, so learning to waitress was that? That just--

[00:29:12]

**Barbara B:** Like I said, I worked at Chef's Castle but basically you just had a few people come in. A lot of times I had to stay behind the counter and cook on the grill so I guess it just naturally come to me cause I didn't have any experience except like I said, working at home, milking the cow and working in the garden.

[00:29:41]

**Michelle L:** Who cooked in your house growin' up? Did you cook any when you were growin' up or did your mom cook?

[00:29:48]

**Barbara B:** No, my mother. She did all of the cooking. I mean, you know, we would help her if she needed something you know. Sometimes we had to go down to the ranch and get her water to do a lot of things around the house. We had chickens, we would go out and get the eggs. Just like I do now. I've got some chickens at my house.

[00:30:17]

**Michelle L:** Oh wow.

[00:30:20]

**Barbara B:** But, my mother did most of the cookin'.

[00:30:23]

**Michelle L:** Was she a good cook?

[00:30:24]

**Barbara B:** Oh yes. Well even if she hadn't been, she had to learn pretty quick because I'm the oldest of nine, like I said.

[00:30:38]

**Michelle L:** So you learned to cook on the job, you didn't learn at home?

[00:30:45]

**Barbara B:** Right, right.

[00:30:48]

**Michelle L:** Okay. What was the first thing you remember learning how to cook in a restaurant?

Was it here or was it at --

[00:30:56]

**Barbara B:** Like I said, I did little like a hamburger, or a grilled cheese. Somethin like that, basically is all I did at Chef's Castle. [Clears throat]. But here, I just had to follow whoever else was cooking and it just gradually come to me-- and you paid attention to your boss, when he told you how to do something, you remember it. If you enjoyed your work and wanted to keep it and wanted to keep workin' or whatever, when they told you something, you know to follow the rules and that way it stuck in your mind and you learned how to do things a lot quicker.

[00:31:48]

**Michelle L:** That makes sense. So, do you feel like you were able to make a good living doing this type of work. Did customers tip well? Did the wages work out for you? I know you didn't look anywhere else, you stayed here a long time. Do you feel like you made a good living doing this for forty-eight years?

[00:32:31]

**Barbara B:** Oh yes, and like I say, I have customers if they know I'm back here, they'll come through the door there and speak to me. It's just if you show them that you care about them and you don't try to get on your phone or go outside or somethin' if they see that you're really interested in takin care of 'em and you love your job, your customers can see that, they notice it. They may not say nothin' to you, but they can see that when they walk in. That's the reason why, when they see that I'm by myself, they don't see another server cause we-- during the breakfast shift back years ago we had the same people. So if they see me by myself, they would stop at the door until I could turn around and when I turned around they'd say, I'd look at 'em and say you want your regular? They'd say yeah, I'd say then sit at your regular table. They got certain tables that they sat at. If there was somebody sitting there, they'd stand there until they got up.

[00:33:58]

**Michelle L:** Really? They'd stand by the table?

[00:34:00]

**Barbara B:** Well not at the table. Kinda up close to the front door. Or they'd walk up to 'em. Sometimes if somebody just got their plate, they'd sit at the bar stool right next to the register. I mean there was a few that did that, they wouldn't sit nowhere else.

[00:34:21]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter]. Like church pews. Got their own table. I mean that's quite the system.

[00:34:41]

**Barbara B:** Most of 'em, I mean not young people, excuse me, kind of I guess middle age or a little older, they were kinda just set in their ways and that's what they did.

[00:35:00]

**Michelle L:** Yeah, yeah. So were most of the customers- what, were they people that worked around here were they younger? You said there was an older crowd? What kind of customers did you usually have?

[00:35:15]

**Barbara B:** Most of 'em were older people. You know. I'd say maybe fifties, sixties, somethin' like that. Cause most of the younger people that come in were in the afternoons. I guess they went to school, college, or whatever. So when they would come in, it'd be in the afternoon.

[00:35:44]

**Michelle L:** So the breakfast and the lunch crowd was mostly older folks then?

[00:35:50]

**Barbara B:** Right, I mean they were kind of young people. Probably around my age at that time, but most of 'em were older people.

[00:36:02]

**Michelle L:** Okay and were they people that worked around here in Homewood, or lived around here, or do you know? Would you ever talk to 'em about work--

[00:36:12]

**Barbara B:** I didn't, I didn't talk to them about their-- well I really didn't have time to do that, cause like I say, I usually had to run the register because it'd be one person that didn't show up or was runnin' late or something or maybe, at that time, the person that was running the grill for the meat maybe they didn't show up on time and if the fire blazed up, whoever could get to it fast enough to put the fire out before it burnt the meat as soon as we saw it, somebody would take off to it. So I really didn't-- I wasn't that type of person. If they was sitting' at the table and told me somethin', I'd listen. But most of the

time, it went in one ear and out the other. 'Cause I didn't believe in all that stuff. so really, I didn't take time, or I didn't want to take time to listen to their problems, cause it's their problems and they need to take care of it instead of tellin' everybody else. So I never did get into any of that.

[00:37:41]

**Michelle L:** And what do you mean you didn't believe in-- what you just said, you didn't believe `in all that stuff, I didn't know what that meant.

[00:37:52]

**Barbara B:** Well there's a lot of people that will take and kind of like cry on your shoulder.

They didn't make enough money or they didn't have this or that. Well, if they would stop talkin' and gripin' about somethin', and work, take care of their self instead of waitin' for their momma and dad to take care of 'em, they would have a little something. But there's a lot of 'em that will do that. They don't want to work. But yet they want everything.

[00:38:31]

**Michelle L:** Alright, so you had some regular customers and then the younger crowd that would come in in the afternoons, do you think were they college students maybe, did y'all ever have any Samford students? I know Samford isn't too far away from here.

[00:38:52]

**Barbara B:** I'm sure they did cause like I say, I really don't know if they went to school, or if they were workin' somewhere or what. I just know it was usually later afternoon when the younger crowd would come in.

[00:39:08]

**Michelle L:** Okay, got you. So then, you said in 2008 you started having more eye trouble and kind of made the shift from workin' in the front to doing more work back here. Can you tell me a little more about that shift?

[00:39:30]

**Barbara B:** Yeah, that was in June of 2008. [Coughs]. I was on my way to work and my vision just got, comin' and going kinda getting real blurry on me and I pulled over on the side of the road and it was so blurry that I-- you know, I could see the cars but couldn't tell how close they were to me or nothin' and I was lucky-- I hadn't had my cellphone too long-- And I called my cousin and him and his girlfriend come and got me. But, from then— well I think I was off work for a couple of months, so then I would come back here and count the money I needed to, and make deposits, and file papers. Just anything in the office that needed to be done, I could do it, except, I couldn't get on the computer because I had trouble focusing. But now I could take and push that-- I call 'em a mouse-- push him

up to the top where that little seam is across the top, like the sky. I could get him up there and keep my eye on it and slowly bring it down to where I want it to. I could move it just a little bit and I could follow it, but if I ever accidentally touched it, I lost it. So I did very little on the computers but I did everything else in here.

[00:41:23]

**Michelle L:** Did you miss being out and waitressing or did you--

[00:41:30]

**Barbara B:** Oh yeah, I like I said I had people come to the door and speak to me cause they knew I was back here. I didn't miss work too much. Yeah I miss it now, bad.

[00:41:47]

**Michelle L:** What do you miss the most about it?

[00:41:51]

**Barbara B:** Being around the customers and just being at Demetri's. It's just like a second home.

[00:42:14]

**Michelle L:** So you were able to continue working in some capacity at least?

[00:42:19]

**Barbara B:** Right, up until...I can't remember exactly what day. I think it was about the middle of last year. I don't remember the exact month now but I could see light only. My vision, it just went so-- I couldn't focus, I couldn't see anything. I could tell there was some light, then if you walked by, I could tell there was a shadow or somethin' went by me. I couldn't see to do anything. I was sitting' here count the money and doing things and it just kept gettin' worse and worse. Well, way over a year, I got a little machine that enlarges and I had to take one bill at a time and see what it is and I had it laid out on my table and then I had to count it.

[00:43:53]

**Michelle L:** Wow.

[00:43:55]

**Barbara B:** But then it got to where I couldn't see to do that so I had to leave in the middle of my shift that night to go home and I couldn't work no more. I finally got to where I could see light for a while and then it was almost nothin'. They wanted me to go see a-- have

cornea transplant, but as long as I could see light and totally blind in this one, nothing to do in this one- I was kinda scared. But finally, like I said, when it got down to just barely seeing light, I said I can't work anymore and I just made up my mind. I said well. Well he had already referred me to this doctor and she looked at my eye several years back. I just couldn't make up my mind. I was afraid that I would lose what I had--

[00:45:15]

**Michelle L:** Sure.

[00:45:17]

**Barbara B:** -But when it got down to just seeing that little light, I decided to go and I had the cornea transplant and everything went fine and I'm supposed to go back and have the stitches taken out. And it was sixteen stitches they put in there. That was in August and I'm supposed to go in March and have those stitches taken out, and I don't know how long after that, then I'm supposed to have a new pair of glasses to where I can see a lot better than I am now.

[00:45:55]

**Michelle L:** That's wonderful.

[00:45:56]

**Barbara B:** I know, I can't wait. Then I can see the world again, see how it's changed.

[00:46:07]

**Michelle L:** Oh I'm so happy for you. So what are some of the first things you want to do after you get your new glasses?

[00:46:16]

**Barbara B:** Just to be able to get out and just kind of see-- like I said-- see the world, how it's changed. If nothin' else, come over here and just sit and watch.

[00:46:27]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter].

[00:46:31]

**Barbara B:** But the thought has crossed my mind about me gettin' a car and drivin'. Go where I want to. But, there's so much going on the drinkin', drugs, and all that stuff. That's first of all, that kinda makes me skittish about gettin out there by myself. And second of all, I'd

have to make sure that my glasses, new glasses, is gonna straighten me out a lot more cause I have to focus. In other words, I could be looking over here, and look back-- now I can see, but there, for a while, when I was lookin' at something and looked back at what I was lookin' at, I won't see it. I have to focus. So I have glaucoma. And you have to focus. So I'm afraid if I get out there drivin' I can-- out of the corner of my eye, I see this car coming towards me that I ain't supposed to be. If I take my eye off the road and look at it, well then I can't focus back on what's in front of me. So drivin's out. Driving's out cause there's too many crazy drivers out there.

[00:48:03]

**Michelle L:** Right. But maybe, at least, Sam will come and get you and bring you to the restaurant some more--

[00:48:10]

**Barbara B:** Well that's what Sam's been doing for a year-- two years. I really don't know how long it's been. But now my cousin, his eyes are bad too. He's done lost sight in one eye and he had to quit driving. So he's got a cousin that drives his car, you know, drives him around when he goes somewhere. But now, what I can see, he can't see. He can get around, but, if there's steps, something like that, he can't do it cause he can't see the steps. But there's nothing they can do for his. He-- he had a transplant of some kind but there's no surgery. They can't do another transplant, they can't nothin for his eyes. So when it goes out, it's out. So I don't know how much longer Sam's gonna be

able to- I mean he enjoys going out there in the country. It's between Mount Pinson and Locust Fork is where I live. Spunky Hollow.

[00:49:46]

**Michelle L:** I love that name, Spunky Hollow [Laughter]. So would you ever wanna come back here and work or do you wanna just come back and kind of just look at the people comin in?

[00:50:02]

**Barbara B:** Well I seventy-three years old- -

[00:50:06]

**Michelle L:** Right [Laughter].

[00:50:10]

**Barbara B:** --And I still believe I can handle that out there.

[00:50:14]

**Michelle L:** I believe you could too.

[00:50:16]

**Barbara B:** Because it'd take me a little bit to get acquainted with the area and all that 'cause it's been a while since I've been out there but I believe it would come back to me pretty quick. But I don't think I need to get back out in the public like that. It'd be somethin' sitting back here, in my slow pace or whatever, I can do just about anything. But I don't think I need to get back in public. Not only it would take me-- there's a lot of changes that's been made since I've been off the floor. You know he's done remodeling and the prices have changed and you know just a lot of changes have been made so it'd be-- if I was still younger-- I still get around on my own and everything. I just don't feel I need to get back out on the floor or anything if it'd come down to it. I'd come back here--now I'd go out there and sit and talk to the customers but as far as workin' out on the floor or anything, I wouldn't.

[00:51:46]

**Michelle L:** You brought up a good point about the changes, what are some-- and I know you mentioned the floor has changed a little bit. But, while you were waitressing, and cooking, and doing all the things here, what are some other ways that the business changed that you saw?

[00:52:07]

**Barbara B:** So he did a lot of remodeling too out there, I know. And there's not many of the regular customers that will be comin' in. Because, I was younger at that time, now they're a lot older, so I know they're not out there. Well, I know a couple customers that's already passed and so not many of the regulars are out there anymore. So it would be almost like first day on the job, because the menu, the prices, the diagram, the restaurant, everything has changed and there's older people, different people, and it's like a new job, really. So I don't think me at my age I need to try to attempt to do that. So like I said, I could go back here and do just about anything I wanted to. If they needed help, you know I would do my best to help 'em but I don't think I'd go back on the floor.

[00:53:31]

**Michelle L:** Okay. Well, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you wanted to talk about or that you wish people knew about the job as a waitress. You know are there things you wish people knew about the work you've done all these years? Or that you think people don't think about maybe?

[00:53:59]

**Barbara B:** Well, first of all, instead of thinkin' about yourself and make you a dollar or two and don't show up for work the next day, start thinkin' about the customers, or your boss.

Work every day that you're supposed to and if you need a day off or gotta take off or somethin', talk to your boss. Don't just don't show up. Take and be a-- I don't know the exact words, but, in other words if somethin drastic comes up and you need to take off or not show up or somethin', you know take and have better contact with your boss instead of not showin' up. But now, there's so many, they get a few dollars in their pocket and they don't even call or show up the next day. It's usually the kind of younger generation. I've heard a few of 'em say, "Well, my mom and daddy gives me money." I mean they're in their twenties, twenty-five and I don't know if they live at home or they just get money from their parents. Because they won't hold a job. So the best thing is for these younger generations to let their momma and daddy rest and get off of their rear-ends and pull their own load and work. . . like I did.

[00:55:56]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter]. What do you think really instilled that drive in you? I mean, 'cause you clearly have been a hard worker your entire life.

[00:56:12]

**Barbara B:** I love my job. You work at a place for forty-eight years, it's just like my second home. I don't-- me and Sam-- we kind of disagreed there to start with after his father passed. Then it got to where, you know, anything that he had a question about or anything, he would call me. If I was at home, he would call me and ask me where

something is. He says, ask Ms. B, she can tell you. In the filing cabinet not too long ago, the invoices in the door-- I'd take them out when I do get a chance to come in and I couldn't see what they, I'd just straighten 'em out and stack them in a stack. You know I'd put 'em, in that top drawer where the rest of 'em were. And he called, he needed an invoice for a company. And I said the invoices from last week is in filing cabinet number two, top drawer, in the front.

[00:57:44]

**Michelle L:** [Laughter]. You knew exactly--

[00:57:45]

**Barbara B:** I know exactly, I mean because, I had the keys—well, he has the keys too. But me and him are the only ones with the keys. I'm sure Rita does now. But they call me at home to ask me where somethin' is and I tell 'em 'cause I know exactly where it's at.

[00:58:08]

**Michelle L:** Well, thank you so much for tellin' me your stories, I appreciate that.

[00:58:14]

**Barbara B:** Well. I've never did anything like this, so I mean, I hope that-- that I don't know if there's anything you want to change about it or not but-

[00:58:33]

**Michelle L:** I thought it was a great interview so I'm gonna go ahead and turn the recorder off unless there's anything else you wanted to talk about.

[00:58:41]

**Barbara B:** No, like I say, these younger generations instead of their parents still takin' care of them, they need to get out and do a little work on their own and it'd be a different world.

[00:58:59]

**Michelle L:** Alright.

[End of Interview]