



**Mark Mindykowski**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

\*\*\*

Date: September 17, 2019  
Location: Bones, Atlanta, GA  
Interviewer: Annemarie Anderson  
Length: Thirty-six minutes  
Project: Career Servers

[*START INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:00.00]

**Annemarie A.:** All right. This is Annemarie Anderson recording for the Southern Foodways Alliance. Today is September 17, 2019. I am at Bones Restaurant with Mr. Mark Mindykowski.

[00:00:14.11]

**Mark M.:** Hello. How are you doing today?

[00:00:14.11]

**Annemarie A.:** I'm good.

[00:00:14.07]

**Mark M.:** Good.

[00:00:14.07]

**Annemarie A.:** Would you go ahead and introduce yourself for the recorder? Give us your name—

[00:00:18.11]

**Mark M.:** Let's see. My name is Mark Mindykowski. I live here in Atlanta, Georgia. I work as a waiter here at Bones Restaurant.

[00:00:24.08]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. What's your birth date, for the record?

[00:00:29.01]

**Mark M.:** Oh. 7-25-[19]58.

[00:00:29.01]

**Annemarie A.:** Great. Well, let's talk about your start in the food and beverage industry.

[00:00:31.04]

**Mark M.:** It was kind of a mistake. Started off working banquets at the country club where I grew up, and then went to college, of course. Getting out of college, needed to make money, so I started waiting tables and really enjoyed it, and was at that very difficult time where your counselors wanted you to move out of state to make less money than you're making as a waiter. Really enjoyed waiting tables, and so that's kind of what happened. Moved up here to Atlanta, tried to get into the number one steakhouse, which was Bones, but nothing was available. So, went the banquet route again at the Ritz-Carlton downtown. Finally got into one of our other restaurants, Trotter's, and worked there for a year and a half. Then, when availability finally came here at Bones, I was able to transfer over.

[00:01:27.18]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:01:29.08]

**Mark M.:** I've been here thirty-one years now.

[00:01:30.28]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. What was the first place you worked?

[00:01:34.14]

**Mark M.:** It was just a country club, yeah.

[00:01:35.19]

**Annemarie A.:** What year did you start?

[00:01:37.12]

**Mark M.:** Gosh, let's see. [19]75, [19]76, yeah.

[00:01:42.13]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay. Could you talk a little bit about what you learned there?

[00:01:44.09]

**Mark M.:** There it was just the basics, you know. It was basic banquet service, so not the fine-tuning of it, I guess you'd say. That all happened when I moved up here to Atlanta, and got—first went in with the Ritz-Carlton, where everything is completely written down; this, that, everything's controlled. I liked the control of that. But there you were just an employee. Then, when I finally got in with Liberty House, you realize that they treated waiters as professionals. That's why I really enjoyed it here.

[00:02:21.28]

**Annemarie A.:** For sure. What year did you start at the Ritz-Carlton?

[00:02:25.16]

**Mark M.:** At the Ritz Carlton was [19]85. And I started here in [19]88.

[00:02:33.19]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay. At Trotter's, what year did you start?

[00:02:35.04]

**Mark M.:** [19]88. So, I started with the company in [19]88. Trotter's was one of our sister restaurants, and then moved over to Bones.

[00:02:43.08]

**Annemarie A.:** Gotcha. Well, tell me a little bit about, where was that first place you worked, that country club at?

[00:02:48.05]

**Mark M.:** Oh, that was in Jacksonville.

[00:02:49.08]

**Annemarie A.:** In Jacksonville, Florida?

[00:02:50.09]

**Mark M.:** Florida, yeah.

[00:02:50.09]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay, cool. That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about moving from banquet service to more, like it's a different kind of white tablecloth . . .

[00:03:02.11]

**Mark M.:** Well, by going, I went to find a job here in Atlanta and went to the Ritz-Carlton first, thinking that would be the easiest leg in, would be banquet service. Really enjoyed that. Then a manager that I was workin' for at that time said, "You seem to enjoy this. Do you want to move into either the cafe or the dining room?" There was no room at the dining room, so I ended up going into the cafe at the downtown Ritz-Carlton. They just never seemed to have an opening in the dining room. So, I started looking around. And started scoping out. We came to dinner here a couple of times and really liked the atmosphere and the vibe and everything else, so I said, let's try to give it a shot. But once again, nothing was available here, so I ended up going to Trotter's and worked my way over to here.

[00:03:48.14]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. What drew you to service?

[00:03:50.22]

**Mark M.:** I just enjoyed entertaining. So, what better thing than to entertain every night and have somebody else wash the dishes and pay the bills?

[00:03:58.15]

**Annemarie A.:** That's a good way to put it.

[00:04:00.15]

**Mark M.:** That's the only way to put it. Otherwise, it's a job. Who wants a job?

[00:04:05.07]

**Annemarie A.:** That's true.

[00:04:06.08]

**Mark M.:** So here, they treat you like a professional. We have many regular customers, and you gain a rapport with these customers. You wait on them, you wait on their children, you wait on their children's children, you build rappsorts. This is a company that only strives

for excellence in everything. Otherwise . . . I would have not have stayed. But here, everything is—they have their thumb on everything. See, that's why, when you did this interview, I thought it was about Bones, not about just being a server. No. You've got to find the place in your heart and the location that you want to make it a career. This is my place that I've found to make it my career.

[00:04:48.01]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:04:49.09]

**Mark M.:** So, it's not like a genre thing or location thing or anything like that. It's where you find a company—and I hate to use the word company, because they are owners, not, quote, company—and they look at service as important, if not more important, than the food and the atmosphere and brick and mortar building itself.

[00:05:11.11]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, talk to me a little bit. Let's get into you starting at Liberty House. What was your . . . do you remember the first day you started working?

[00:05:21.02]

**Mark M.:** Oh, gosh, yes.

[00:05:22.05]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, could you tell us a bit about it?

[00:05:23.18]

**Mark M.:** Yeah, it was fascinating. You go into this place that is busy and vibrant and you just want to be a part of it. Of course, you start in the dish wash, you know, as a dishwasher. You go through that, you go through kitchen training. Then you go through SA training. That takes about a good six months, and then you finally get your jacket, and then you get to fly. You start off as a back man, but the manager at that time realized that I leaned more to a front man than a back man, and started building clientele. Working my way up the ladder, which takes forever here. Finally got fourth on the ladder.

[00:06:01.12]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:06:02.16]

**Mark M.:** Yes.

[00:06:03.17]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, tell me a little bit about that. How do you build clientele? How do you personally?

[00:06:06.24]

**Mark M.:** You let them, you greet them the way you'd greet them at your front door. The minute they sit at your table. Here, we have a full list of points that we have to strike, and once you strike all those points, then you just get to know them, their needs, their wants. We have a system of . . . recording what you like, what you don't like, your seating preferences, everything. You keep that on file, you put that in your little memory bank. Eventually, they will ask for you or your station next time they come in.

[00:06:44.18]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about maybe some of the regulars—you don't have to mention them by name—if there's any folks who you kind of developed relationships with?

[00:06:56.04]

**Mark M.:** Oh, many. Many. Many. You meet their family; you meet their children. You find out their likes, their dislikes. They like you, they ask you. We are on stage, but we're not part of the party. We are . . . behind the scenes. So, that's the difficult, fine line you have to keep apart. You have to be there, but you can't be familiar. That's the hardest thing. But you do gain a rapport for people, and it's very difficult. Because you're here as a professional to professionally serve them, but you're also here as an acquaintance. But you can't be an acquaintance. You have to be professional. But they know you, you know them, I know their families, I know their kids. I know many, many things about them. Celebrate their birthdays, their anniversaries. Their graduations. Their job promotions; everything.

[00:07:54.29]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

[00:07:56.05]

**Mark M.:** Oh. Over thirty years, you see the same people over and over. You know their names.

They know your name, which is very, very different here, where the customers know you just as much as you know the customers.

[00:08:10.28]

**Annemarie A.:** Sure. That seems to be kind of a tension. How do you negotiate that, being personal and developing a rapport, but not being overly personal, if that makes sense?

[00:08:22.21]

**Mark M.:** Because you're a waiter. You stand in the back, watch a lot of Downtown Abbey.

[Laughter]

[00:08:27.08]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:08:28.19]

**Mark M.:** No, you're there! But you're not there. But you're there. So, you just—it's like having a guest at your house that you never met. You greet them at the door. You make sure they have their drink. You make sure they're comfortable. You make sure if they need anything, this. But you know, you're not there—it's usually like, dealing with them like a friend of your friend, or a spouse of your friend. You're one tier over from friendship. So, that's where you have to keep it. You're still friendly, but you're not familiar. So, it's very tight, tight wire that you walk.

[00:09:09.07]

**Annemarie A.:** For sure.

[00:09:11.06]

**Mark M.:** But that's what makes Bones successful.

[00:09:12.17]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:09:14.21]

**Mark M.:** Everyone wants to know, to hear their name. It's an easy concept.

[00:09:16.27]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about—could you go into a typical day for you here at Bones?

[Pause in recording]

[Recording resumes]

[00:09:29.24]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay. Go ahead.

[00:09:31.07]

**Mark M.:** All right.

[00:09:33.08]

**Annemarie A.:** Do you need a minute? [Laughter]

[00:09:34.18]

**Mark M.:** No, it's just funny.

[00:09:36.17]

**Annemarie A.:** I'm sorry.

[00:09:37.29]

**Mark M.:** I don't know, typical day. You just get here. I mean, we open at 4:30. 5:30, you get here if you want employee meal, you get here early enough to eat. You relax. You catch up with everybody you're working with; you check your pop sheet. You set up your station. You wait on your tables. You do your check out, and you go home.

[00:09:53.05]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:09:55.00]

**Mark M.:** That's typical.

[00:09:56.03]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah.

[00:09:57.10]

**Mark M.:** Doesn't change. Five nights a week.

[00:09:59.10]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, talk to me about workin' . . . at your station. Go into description, tell me about that.

[00:10:05.05]

**Mark M.:** You're in control of your five—you either have five to six tables, you're in complete control. You work with a partner and an SA. Minute they sit down, you welcome them with their name, ask them, basically, the whole routine. Bring them something to drink. "Have you been here before? Do you have any questions on the menus?" You tell 'em if we have a special. Let them relax, ask them if they're ready to order. Go over the wine list with them. Take their order, hand it to your back man so the food, check on, make sure

everything's perfect. If not, we take care of it immediately. Do not let the customer walk out the door without makin' sure it's perfect. Nothin' you can do when they walk out the door. You can do anything you want when they're still at their seat.

[00:10:48.04]

**Annemarie A.:** Definitely. Well, do you usually work front man, or—

[00:10:52.05]

**Mark M.:** Front man.

[00:10:53.06]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay. So, who's in your team?

[00:10:54.27]

**Mark M.:** We have myself, my back man who does all the heavy lifting and running the food and like that, and assists me in any way I want—not want, but need—and then we have

an SA who waters the table, breads the table, helps us clear the table, resets the table, takes care of . . . the linen, the china, the silver.

[00:11:15.23]

**Annemarie A.:** That's nice.

[00:11:15.23]

**Mark M.:** Yeah.

[00:11:18.21]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, let me see. There was something else I was gonna ask you about, I can't remember what it was . . . tell me a little bit about, so, I know Bones has an excellent reputation.

[00:11:27.27]

**Mark M.:** Right.

[00:11:29.11]

**Annemarie A.:** Both with food and wine. Tell me a little bit about how you have educated yourself over the years to be able to kind of convey that your guests.

[00:11:39.02]

**Mark M.:** Because they have standards. Standards never go down. You're required to know the standards, reflect the standards, and respect the standards. So, look at the table right here. It's always cotton linen, starched. The best silver you can get. We have all-linen service. There's always—the quality's always there, even during that wonderful recession thing we had. Where all the other restaurants were cutting back, they were pushing forward. They're always on the cutting edge of everything. They are thumbs-on more than hands-on; they have a thumb on everything at every moment.

[00:12:21.14]

**Annemarie A.:** That's a good way of putting it.

[00:12:22.19]

**Mark M.:** Yeah. But then, you have owners that take care of their employees. So, big difference. We don't have that guy in Cleveland saying, "You're four percent over on linen. You're ten percent over on glassware. You're twenty percent over on liquor costs." They're right there, seein' why.

[00:12:35.15]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

Could you talk a little bit about the relationship that you have with the owners? And with your management?

[00:12:43.11]

**Mark M.:** Management's very professional. They are very in-touch if you have any issues or anything. It's an open-door policy. If you do have an issue—I've had several surgeries—they are thumbs-up on that, make sure you're taken care of, because you've taken care of them. It's a back and forth. It's very difficult restaurant to work at, but it's also a very unusual restaurant. Unlike, probably, a million other restaurants you're going to talk about, because there's a lot of chaos in this business. There's a lot of uncertainty. There's a lot of turnover. But this is one place where you don't have to worry about turnover, because we get 401K. We have profit sharing. We have everything. So, that's why—most of the waiters here have been here ten years or more. It's not a stepping stone.

[00:13:36.22]

**Annemarie A.:** Definitely. It seems the pinnacle.

[00:13:38.13]

**Mark M.:** It is the pinnacle.

[00:13:39.26]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah.

[00:13:40.16]

**Mark M.:** Especially here in Atlanta. It doesn't get any better. There's no lateral move for me, where a lot of times, restaurant employees, it's always the lateral move. Okay, I'm a bartender here; now we got this new restaurant opening up. Now I'll just laterally go over there, make my money until something opens up, laterally move over there. There's no—no, for me, there's no lateral. This is it.

[00:14:00.05]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:14:00.16]

**Mark M.:** This is it.

[00:14:01.15]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about . . . I think I've heard this a lot. No matter the restaurant, the kind of . . . fast pace, physicality of the work.

[00:14:15.03]

**Mark M.:** Yes. You're cramming a twelve-hour day into four hours.

[00:14:18.29]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah.

[00:14:20.04]

**Mark M.:** It's very, very quick. It's very . . . invigorating. Yeah. Some people will thrive on it; some don't. I thrive on it, you know? To be too busy. I don't stand around, waiting for people to come in. We are full all the time. So, yeah. It's a very energetic vibe here.

[00:14:40.23]

**Annemarie A.:** For sure. Well, how do you develop relationships with your fellow servers?

[00:14:46.17]

**Mark M.:** Respect.

[00:14:47.22]

**Annemarie A.:** With cooks in the back? Could you talk about building that?

[00:14:49.05]

**Mark M.:** Respect. Just respect. You respect them, they respect you. There's no room for petty anything. No. Everything's based on respect, you know? It's like bein' in the military. This is the hierarchy; this is the way it works. If you don't fit in, then somethin's not gonna work. No. This is not . . . it's all professional. No, it's like any other profession, whether it's restaurant service, whether you work for I.B.M., whether you work for whatever. It is straight . . . this is the pecking order, this is what you do. This is your responsibility. You come in; you accept all this, you crank it out, and then you go home. Then you have your personal life.

[00:15:28.08]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about . . . I don't know if I asked this question at the beginning, but it's one that I'm interested in. Who mentored you, or who taught you, how to work in this industry? Or who were some influences on you?

[00:15:46.12]

**Mark M.:** Gosh, everybody I've worked with. You go in—I didn't have a mentor or anything like that. It's not like the music business, where I wanted to be Kenny Rogers or something like that. No. You go in, you start. You like it; you enjoy it. This really works, you can make money this way. You realize if you do this, you do this, you get in the right house, you stay firm, you get your call parties, you get this. You get your bonuses. I don't know. You mentor from what's around you. I don't know, you can't read that in a book.

It's not something you can read a book—okay, this is what you do, what you do. We have a manual that covers everything, soup to nuts. But you can't read the manual and be a waiter. You either enjoy it or you don't. Very simple. I mean, you know. Who mentored you to do this? You either love it or you hate it. You're sitting there in front of somebody you've never met; you're trying to dig something out of 'em. So, who, same thing, who told you how to pull some—how did you become an interviewer? You've got to have a mentor. Did you watch Barbara Walters, did you watch Oprah Winfrey? Who was your mentor? So, what did you do? Do you do the stand back? Do you do the pounce? Do you do the dig approach? Do you fall back, ask a question? Yeah. It's all visual. Visual and mental. You see what works, and if it works, why not do it that way? But if you sit there and you think, "Okay, I can short cut what works and do less," but then you get caught at the end. So, that's the thing about Bones. There's no cutting corners. No, this is the way it's done. Period.

[00:17:18.10]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:17:19.01]

**Mark M.:** So you're either uncomfortable in a military—I don't want to say military scheme of things, but it's a military scheme of things. A lot of people aren't comfortable with that.

[00:17:28.24]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense. You have to have order.

[00:17:32.14]

**Mark M.:** Yeah. This is a tough place. You have to have a hard skin. But then, you have to be passionate, and you have to be compassionate and passionate, which are the two separate things, too. You can be compassionate about a lot of things, but then be passionate about something that's different. So, that C.O.M. makes a big difference. I'm passionate about it, but I'm also compassionate about making sure everyone else is passionate about it.

[00:17:58.05]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:18:00.02]

**Mark M.:** Yeah.

[00:18:01.12]

**Annemarie A.:** What have been some of the most important lessons that you've learned throughout your work here?

[00:18:06.04]

**Mark M.:** Humility. Fess up to what's wrong. Fess up to what you did. We have a house policy here, where the—first say if something says wrong, the three words are: "It's our fault. What can I do? Let me take care of it." You do not yell. You know, you spill a bottle of wine, you spilled it. It's nobody's fault; it's just something that happens. Happens in every

restaurant. But do not, "Oh . . ." Just recover. Get 'em another bottle of wine. If they don't like their dinner, it was our fault. Can I get you something else? We don't try to cover anything up. Like I said, get it done while they're in the house, because there's nothing you can do when they walk out the door. That's what I hate about this whole Yelp! and everything else. You read these reviews constantly, constantly: "My steak was cold." Did you say anything to Mark? "No, but I didn't want to say anything." Then how can Mark do something about your cold steak? Instead of waiting til you get in front of that thing that I hate so much, "Everything was, my steak was cold." Or, "It wasn't what I expected. It was a small portion. It was cold. It was hot." But they don't say anything, but boy, they can say things on the anonymity of that—*anonymity*, whatever that word is—of that little typewriter. That's what—that really helps our business, and it really is a detriment to our business. Well, detriment to anything. You know. Can't please anybody—can't please everybody. We try to do the best we can to please everybody, but we can't please you if you don't tell us what's wrong. That's the thing I hate about this business.

[00:19:40.24]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense. That makes perfect sense.

[00:19:43.28]

**Mark M.:** Yeah, so.

[00:19:45.17]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, tell me a little bit about—well, could you describe for the recorder, for the record, what you serve here at Bones and how you try to convey that to a table?

[00:19:58.01]

**Mark M.:** Well, we are the number one steakhouse. So, we have prime steaks. We have the full list of steaks. We also have several appetizers; five to six salads, ten side dishes, ten desserts. The thing is, we do not do what every other restaurant does, where “you have to get this, we sell the most of this.” It's the one question that drives me crazy is, the first thing out of everyone's mouth is, “I was on the computer . . . So, what's your best steak?” “What do you like?” “Oh, I don't know. But what's your best steak?” Then I go down, if you want a tender steak, get the filet, more flavor with the marbling in the strip. Best of both worlds, get the porterhouse, get a full filet, full strip. And the most flavorful are the ribeyes. “What do you sell the most of?” Once again, what difference does it make? Nobody knows that they like. They want to tell you what to get.

[00:20:50.28]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, talk a little bit about, I guess, your relationship with guests and how you either try to guide the table or kind of create an experience for them.

[00:20:57.14]

**Mark M.:** Well, you feel, you figure out what's going on. If it's an anniversary or birthday, we have birthday and anniversary sprinkles we put on the table. We, on anniversaries, offer a glass of Champagne. On birthdays, we always bring what we call our mountain-high pie;

it's a five-layer ice cream cake. But, yeah. Sometimes you have to dig it out of them. I mean, if you've got a couple and two kids walk in, they've got greeting cards and a package, you ask 'em, "What are we celebrating? Is something going on?" But once again, you cannot pry or—but you want, and basically it's, keep your eye open. Keep your mouth shut. You know? Like many things. If you see they need something, just bring it to 'em. You know, they drop a fork. "Do you need another fork?" No, just—very quietly, very precisely. You don't pry, you don't dig, but you just figure out what's goin' on. I mean, it's like you. If I saw you getting out of your car and you've got this huge thing, you've got all this, I don't ask, "Do you need help?" I just, "Can I help?" You know. We skip that whole step. Of course, a lot of people are upset because they assume too many things. They assume we have a piano. They assume we have a dance floor. They assume we have a high chair. They assume, assume, assume. Then, yeah.

[00:22:21.13]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:22:23.03]

**Mark M.:** See, I just would assume you have somebody carry your bags for you. Then what happens? You schlep all this in. But no, I see what's going on. There's no time to interpret. "Does she have somebody helping her? Is she okay? Is she a woman?" You sit there, "Can I help you?" But you motion to help you before—then, of course, if you say no, type thing. We have the same problem with basically, now, backpacks the most. People will walk in with them and they'll try to put them—I'll say, "May I check that for

you?" Some want to hold onto it because their world's in there, but then, there's no room for it to be anywhere else.

[00:23:01.23]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:23:04.06]

**Mark M.:** Yeah.

[00:23:05.14]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, tell me a little bit about what's your favorite part of the job, and what's the most challenging part of this job?

[00:23:09.10]

**Mark M.:** Most challenging part is to let us do Bones. That's the most challenging. Everybody's had such bad service and everything. Number one thing here is, "Let me take your order and we will time it out." I mean, I go to dinner all the time and I order a calamari, a salad, and my entree; my calamari and my salad come together. No. I want my calamari, then I want my salad. But we do that automatically. But everybody's so afraid of that, that yeah. But, my favorite thing is just having a good time and makin' everybody happy. It's very simple. It's like I said at the very beginning, it's like having guests in your house. All you want to do is make sure they're comfortable and happy.

[00:23:53.28]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:23:56.07]

**Mark M.:** You welcome at the door and you say good-bye when they leave, but in the meantime, they're in your house. So, if you see somebody's uncomfortable or—yeah, do the exact same thing you do when you have somebody for dinner. Only, like I said, I'm not washing the dishes and I'm not paying for dinner.

[00:24:11.04]

**Annemarie A.:** That's good. Well, tell me a little bit about in what ways—you've been here quite a bit of time.

[00:24:18.27]

**Mark M.:** Thirty years. Goin' on thirty-one, yeah.

[00:24:21.22]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah, that's great. Tell me how you kind of lead and help other waiters who are coming in.

[00:24:29.07]

**Mark M.:** You mentor. Like I said, we have a training manual. They get a trainer every night.

You see they're faltering, ask them where their strengths are, where their weaknesses are.

Just make sure everybody's doin' what they need to do, yeah.

[00:24:48.06]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. And kinda, how's your job, I guess, over these years, how has it kind of evolved or changed over time, if it has?

[00:24:59.24]

**Mark M.:** Most of the thing is the internet. People have too much money. Food has changed. It all goes up and down. Twenty years ago, if you'd ordered a wedge of iceberg in a restaurant, your wife would kick you under the table. Now, it's one of the number-one selling salads. Food changes. It goes up and down. We went through, eat meat, don't eat meat, eat eggs, don't eat eggs, drink red wine, don't drink wine. Atkins diet was the greatest thing that ever happened to a steakhouse, and now we're on keto diet, which is the second-greatest thing to happen to a steakhouse. Just food trends. I mean, right now, pork fat is the number one seller in the world. Pork belly is gone crazy. But before, no. But no, just everything evolves. And the best part about Bones is, it evolves with 'em. So.

[00:25:54.10]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, how have you seen—I hear you talking about things as far as dining goes and dining habits, and diners themselves. How have you seen their—you

talked a little bit when it comes to food, how their expectations have changed, but as far as the entire experience—

[00:26:22.10]

**Mark M.:** The number one thing is, people don't go out to dine anymore. They go out to eat. We still have our diners, don't get me wrong. We have a lot of regulars, a lot of diners, and a lot of new diners. But we also have a lot of people who go out to eat.

[00:26:37.05]

**Annemarie A.:** What's the difference between a diner and an eater?

[00:26:38.14]

**Mark M.:** A diner is an experience. You dress. You have guests. We have people that go out to eat, they have no idea what they're wearing. They're on their phone. They just want to eat and go. And we're expensive, don't get me wrong. We're just expensive if you just want to go out and eat. But that whole dining experience, yeah, that's one that's failing the most.

[00:27:04.29]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:27:04.29]

**Mark M.:** Um-hm.

[00:27:05.18]

**Annemarie A.:** What do you hope to see for the future of that?

[00:27:09.25]

**Mark M.:** That people put their devices down and go out to dinner and have dinner with the person sitting across them, not the person tap-tap-tap. Nobody lives for the moment anymore. You're here having dinner at Bones. Enjoy it. But everybody's so worried about what's going on outside of Bones right now. It's incredible. They cannot . . . it's gotta be right there, next to their fork, because it's almost as important as their fork. Yeah. This whole iPad, internet, everything has ruined dining. It's ruined society. I'm old-school. I'm old country club school, yeah.

[00:27:51.08]

**Annemarie A.:** That's okay.

[00:27:53.08]

**Mark M.:** No, it's not, because it's difficult to deal with people. Everybody's in a rush, everybody's . . . you know. They can't even get off their phone from the front door to the front desk. I mean, I think if you're going out to an event, to dinner, to a friend's house, the minute you get out of the car, that phone's over. You don't need—you're outside, the real world, or whatever you want to call that, but no, people can't leave. Literally can't even walk to their table.

[00:28:23.05]

**Annemarie A.:** Interesting. I've heard other people say similar things about just the change, and I was wondering how you've seen dining change.

[00:28:30.09]

**Mark M.:** That's the number one, is people are just eating now. No one's dining.

[00:28:35.26]

**Annemarie A.:** That's interesting.

**Mark M.:** No. Most people are just eating. They're, okay. Somebody told me to go here. This is it. Okay, I spent all my money. Boom. It's pretty good. Boom. Yeah, it was expensive. It was okay. Nothin' special. You didn't make it special. You know? So, we're very, very fortunate we have excellent customers, excellent clientele. We are very, very, very fortunate. So, yeah, no gloom and doom here.

[00:29:06.14]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, tell me a little bit about . . . let's see. I think that I've seen, too, the idea of service and the idea of hospitality are two concepts that—

[00:29:24.22]

**Mark M.:** They're all one thing.

[00:29:25.00]

**Annemarie A.:** Interrelated—

[00:29:25.00]

**Mark M.:** Not interrelated.

[00:29:26.05]

**Annemarie A.:** Okay.

[00:29:26.05]

**Mark M.:** One thing.

[00:29:27.24]

**Annemarie A.:** Well, give me your definitions of them.

[00:29:29.10]

**Mark M.:** Hospitality, Southern hospitality. You greet them at the door. You make sure everything's perfect while they're in your house. And you say goodnight when they leave. That's hospitality, whatever they need. And then service is bein' hospitality, yeah.

[00:29:45.03]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:29:45.19]

**Annemarie A.:** No, it's our motto, make you feel comfortable, special, and valued. Number one, valued. I don't have a job unless you come in. So, we have that motto, you know? Want to make you feel welcome, make you feel special, and make you feel valued. Then you do that with hospitality, service, and food. So, it's all one big circle. This doesn't cancel out this; you can't have this without this. You know? So, hospitality. People don't know what hospitality is anymore, no. It's welcoming. It's comfortable. It's engulfing. It's everything you want when you try to break out of that world. So, you come to Bones, and you feel comfortable and you feel welcomed and you feel treasured and valued and special.

[00:30:36.09]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:30:37.27]

**Mark M.:** No, it's the whole thing here. That's why this is such an anomaly from everywhere else, everywhere else. Some people try to do it. Some people get away with it. Some people, you don't know. You just don't. You know? But everybody just wants to hear their name, and "Welcome." That's hospitality, you know.

[00:31:02.12]

**Annemarie A.:** Definitely. What does it take to provide this level of service? Like for you personally, what does it take to provide this level of service on a day-to-day basis?

[00:31:12.00]

**Mark M.:** Passion. That's it. You don't have the passion to do it, leave. You're not gonna have fun. Who wants to go to work? I don't want to go to work. So. What drives you to do this? I mean, you've gotta sit here with somebody you don't know in an uncomfortable questions, asking stupid—you're not stupid—questions, asking questions, but having . . . so, it's that passion. Okay, I'm going to get something out of this guy, whether he wants to or not. You watch the number one newscasters that do it all the time in interview. All interviewers have different approaches. You get some people that sit back and let them run. But then you get some that keep going—and then that one word that drives me crazy that all these people use now is, "Listen." No, you listen. It was like, where did that word come from, listen? No, that's what—you've got me here. So, to have to tell an interviewer, "Listen," that interviewer's not listening. So, it's just passion. I just love it. It's a crazy thing.

[00:32:22.13]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. No, it seems like it.

[00:32:23.10]

**Mark M.:** No, it is what it is.

[00:32:25.07]

**Annemarie A.:** When did you decide to make service your career? When did you decide serving is what you wanted to do?

[00:32:30.02]

**Mark M.:** When I got that spark and that passion out of this, I really enjoy. And this, I can make a lot of money out of. And this, I don't have to go to work. And I watch all of my friends who graduated the same college, the same year, they're all in these jobs and they hate them. It's just mundane, it's boom, boom, same thing, every day. The thing I tell a lot of my customers, the number one thing is, "Everybody else's job is like a sitcom. You have to keep track of who's the good guy, who's the bad guy, who's sleeping with who, who did this, and it goes on for weeks and weeks and weeks." So, it's not—normal sitcoms, you can't just walk in and watch one episode, 'cause you have no idea what's going on. Absolutely no idea what's going on. Then you try and then boom. Mine's *Law & Order*. It's bing, bing. You set up your station. Bing, bing, there's your customers. Bing, bing, find out what's goin' on, solve the crime, bing bing. You either go to jail or have a great time.

[00:33:27.14]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:33:27.22]

**Mark M.:** And it's done. It's a job that's from beginning to end. I don't have to cold call people, I don't have to rely on my cold calls to fill my station. Yeah.

[00:33:36.24]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes a lot of sense.

[00:33:37.28]

**Mark M.:** It's the number one thing that makes sense. It's a different job every day. It's the same job, but it's a different dinner party every night. If you like having dinner parties, it's the greatest thing on earth. I like having dinner parties.

[00:33:53.17]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, I don't think I have any more questions.

[00:33:56.23]

**Mark M.:** This was fun.

[00:33:58.23]

**Annemarie A.:** Is there anything that we haven't talked about or anything that you haven't shared that you want to?

[00:34:01.29]

**Mark M.:** I think the number one thing now is . . . I don't know. People are just too busy to enjoy service. You know? And then they complain about it. I watch this every day. I go pick up my dry cleaning, like I did before I came in here, and I'm talkin' to the lady. For thirty years, she's done my jackets, extra starch, on hangers. Her name's Brenda. Brenda, how you doin'? How's everything? Family good, family good, thank you very much. The next lady is like, "Oh, here's . . ." Boop, boop, boop. And walk out. And then they complain about the service. Everyone's on that stupid thing. I just want to rip them out of their hands, and then you can have hospitality again. Yeah, yeah, just slow down. Enjoy the country store, you know? I mean, people can't even pump gas without talking. But who are they talking to? Why don't you talk to the person pumping gas next to you? You know? It's easy to say, "Goddamn, what are these gas prices?" Blah, blah. Nobody . . . not even in an elevator will they talk to each other. So, yeah. But people don't want to talk to each other, but then they want to talk to somebody. Or they want to know why they're alone. Why . . . yeah.

[00:35:17.27]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes sense.

[00:35:17.27]

**Mark M.:** Yeah. It's very complicated. Best part about service is service, yeah. And if you enjoy it, you enjoy it. I go to Publix because the cashiers love their job. They talk to me, I talk to them. And Publix has customer service, you know? I'm tired of going into stores and you have to get the guy behind the register to get off his phone so you can ring up your

stuff. It's all service; it's all hospitality. It's all interlaced, it's all passion. It's one big circle.

[00:35:51.02]

**Annemarie A.:** That makes a lot of sense.

[00:35:51.26]

**Mark M.:** It's wonderful. It doesn't make sense, it's just easy. It's easy and wonderful, okay?

[00:35:57.05]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great.

[00:35:58.19]

**Mark M.:** So, you're not gonna get any complaints outta me. [Laughter]

[00:36:01.29]

**Annemarie A.:** No, you don't have to. It's fine.

[00:36:05.17]

**Mark M.:** See, but then you got the other side of the business, which I would never do, is the back of the house. There's where you have the problems. People don't show up; produce doesn't show up; something gets burned; something gets hurt; somebody gets sick. No,

no. I'm in the front of the house. There's no problems at all. Front of the house can correct anything that goes wrong while you're in your seat.

[00:36:27.19]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah.

[00:36:27.19]

**Mark M.:** But then the magic is in the back. So, yeah.

[00:36:32.13]

**Annemarie A.:** Yeah.

[00:36:33.16]

**Mark M.:** So, I'm on the fortunate side of hospitality.

[00:36:36.09]

**Annemarie A.:** That's interesting. Yeah.

[00:36:39.01]

**Mark M.:** So, yeah. I mean, yeah.

[00:36:41.24]

**Annemarie A.:** That's great. Well, thank you for talking to me.

[00:36:44.12]

**Mark M.:** Yeah, yeah, it was fun.

[00:36:45.28]

**Annemarie A.:** I appreciate it.

*[End of interview]*