



Southern Foodways Alliance

Ryan Marquez
George's - Waco, TX

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Subminimum Wage

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Angelica Mazé: We are recording. This is Angelica Mazé. The date is May 17, 2024, and I am recording my Waco Restaurant Servers Oral History Project for the Southern Foodways Alliance at University of Mississippi in cooperation with Baylor University's Institute for Oral History, and I am here with my narrator Ryan. Hi Ryan!

Ryan Marquez: Hello!

Angelica Mazé: Welcome.

Ryan Marquez: Thank you.

Angelica Mazé: So happy you're here. Just to get things started would you mind stating your full name?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, Ryan Marquez.

Angelica Mazé: Ryan Marquez, wonderful. Thank you for being here. What is your date of birth?

Ryan Marquez: October 28, 1993.

Angelica Mazé: 1993, cool. Let's just dive right on in and start with where—where did you grow up?

Ryan Marquez: I actually grew up in Waco, born and raised, and lived there for my entire life up until about three years ago, and I recently moved to Austin. So prior to this, Waco is all that I knew.

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Angelica Mazé: OK, you're a Waco girl, wonderful.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Well, let's talk about how you got into restaurant serving. Lead me into what brought you into your first server job in Waco.

Ryan Marquez: I was a hostess. I just started off needing a job and the first thing that I got was a hostess, and so I stuck with it. I started, oh god, so long ago. I think I started—I don't even know if it's still there—but I remember my first job ever was a hostess job at Don Carlos, that was in the Central Texas Marketplace. I don't think it's there anymore.

Angelica Mazé: I don't think it is. [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: It was really slow, it was really uneventful. They had free soft serve, so I was like "This is great!" Then one of my friends got a job at Cheddar's, which was like, more interesting to me I guess because it was corporate, so I ended up following her, and was a hostess at Cheddar's.

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Also, at sixteen I was at Don Carlos for all of like two months, and then just went from there, and then when I got old enough to serve, I served at Cheddar's in Waco for, gosh, I think four or five years. It all kind of runs together. I worked there for four years total. And then after that I took a job at George's on Speight and worked there for five years, [laughs] while I was all the way through undergrad and grad school. And then it ended just because I ended up graduating and getting a post-graduation job. I was doing both for a while and it got really hard, and then I quit my serving job. I was bartending at the time too. And then I was gonna go back because I

wasn't making enough money in my entry-level job, and then the pandemic hit, [laughs] and I never went back. I don't know, it's just because—, I just never went back because of the pandemic.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, I think a lot of us had that experience in one way.

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A lot of the folks I've been talking to, and me also, have had that experience. Well, so let's back-track some. So, when you got that job at Don Carlos, which was a Mexican restaurant in that Central Texas Marketplace—I do remember it. I do think it's gone.

Ryan Marquez: Nice! [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: [laughs] How old were you then? You were—?

Ryan Marquez: Sixteen, yeah, it was my first job, so I've never worked in any other industry. It has only been the service industry. Well, up until now.

Angelica Mazé: OK. You said you were there for like two months?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, very short turnaround, and just wanted to kind of do what my friends were doing, and a couple of them got a job at Cheddar's.

Angelica Mazé: Something that stuck out that you said was that you thought, as you look back, maybe Cheddar's was appealing because it was corporate?

Ryan Marquez: I guess so, I don't know. I think maybe because I thought people that at the time I thought were cool were getting these jobs, so I was like, this is what I have to do, But now as an adult, I'm like, "The corporate was super not cool." [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Aha [laughs] so basically you went because your friends were doing it?

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Ryan Marquez: Yeah, there was no real draw at the time, like “This is what I want to do.” Even now, the draw of the lucracy that can come with serving wasn’t there. I just needed a job and then it just all kind of came in line, as the things came.

Angelica Mazé: So then you went to Cheddar’s and you were a hostess for a while, and then how old did you have to be to start serving?

Ryan Marquez: Eighteen.

Angelica Mazé: Eighteen. OK.

Ryan Marquez: So, it was a couple of years of hosting, and then as soon as we turned eighteen—it was like a series of my friends working there that also made it really fun—we started to serve and wait tables. And it was a lot. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, so let’s talk about that. So, you were in high school at the time, right? Sixteen.

Ryan Marquez: I was in high school, yes. I would go to school, which is so crazy to think about. And then you’re in high school so you’re partying too, and so I would go party, go to school, and then get dropped off at work, and work all night, and just do it again.

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Angelica Mazé: That’s a lot.

Ryan Marquez: I think I was working full time as a teenager, I'm pretty sure. Weekdays, weekends, the whole thing.

Angelica Mazé: Wow! Yeah, OK I was gonna ask if you remembered what hours you were working. So, working full time, going to school.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I worked any time I could, like I wanted the mo—my parents didn't have a lot of money to give me. The second I started making my own money I was like, "I want all the hours," and so I worked after school as much as they would let me, and then doubles on the weekends.

Angelica Mazé: Wow, OK, that's a lot.

Ryan Marquez: It is a lot.

Angelica Mazé: And you managed to find time for a social life as well?

Ryan Marquez: In the middle of the night!

Angelica Mazé: [laughs] Yeah, right? Cause you were getting off—presumably your shifts were ending at—

Ryan Marquez: Ten, when I was a host. I think we were getting off at like ten, and then when you started serving, you'd have to close up and everything. They still closed—I think they closed at like ten, nothing too crazy, and so we'd still get off at like 11:30, 12:00, but that's pretty late for a teenager. And I didn't have a car at the time and my parents are coming to pick me up. God bless them. I'm like—

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Angelica Mazé: [laughs] Thank you parents!

Ryan Marquez: No kidding.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, that's a lot. I mean, that's definitely late, and then for somebody who presumably sometimes has homework and other—

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, and I did OK in school. I don't know. I think about—I'm just like, that's crazy. I think about it now and the expectations, it's a lot, but I did alright.

Angelica Mazé: You did it.

Ryan Marquez: Makin A's and B's and surviving.

Angelica Mazé: That's incredible. Well done. [laughs] Not an easy feat. How was your experience overall at Cheddar's? How was that?

Ryan Marquez: Actually, I brought this up this morning, I don't know how it came into conversation with a friend, but just, it was, like thinking about it—and I have a friend who lives here in Austin with me who worked with me at Cheddar's, too, so we bring it up all the time. She worked at both places with me. But just, it was crazy. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Really?

Ryan Marquez: And you're so young, and you're exposed to everything in the restaurant industry, and it's insane. You meet people who don't have the experience, I guess, of the service industry, and they just don't get it. But I mean, there were people, I saw people coming in drunk, people doing drugs, making out in the walk-in.

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I was so young, and they would party. The party culture of restaurants, I think, put *me* on a bad track for a considerable part of my life while I was doing that, cause that is a huge culture that is

super acceptable and you get pushed into it super young and you're like, "Everybody does this, everybody parties." It can get really dangerous.

I'm fortunate in that I got out of there, but some people don't, and it's just—there's a lot of parts of it—like there's a lot of fun that I miss, and you meet great people. Like all of my good, long-standing friends, the majority of them I met in the restaurant industry. There's a lot of fun that comes with it, but there's a lot of—the hours and the culture with the partying, there's a lot of pros and cons.

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I say it all the time, I miss it. I think about it now just for extra money. I think about maybe even getting like a small—I would love a job where I could do pickup only, like just pick up the shifts, but I don't have that leverage here, 'cause I haven't lived here very long. But I don't think I could commit to like the full thing again, just with what I'm doing now. But there are parts of it that I do miss, and the money you miss, but there's a lot of, I think toxicity that comes with the culture too, whether it's your coworkers, management is usually not great, they're not having a good time, and then nobody's having a good time, so—

Angelica Mazé: [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: There's a lot to it. I didn't realize how much I could talk about this until I started talking about it.

Angelica Mazé: [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: And it was the longest standing job I've had so far, so it's a huge part of everything, I think.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, and during some pretty formative years, you know, those are you—

Ryan Marquez: Yes! [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: —learning how to be an adult and learning how to be an adult at this place. So, backtracking again, so at Cheddar's—we can just sort of start there, since you were there for a while—

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—were they paying you the 2.13 an hour? What were they paying you there as a host, and then as a server?

Ryan Marquez: For serving, yes. When I was a hostess, it was a little more, and it's been so long I forget, but I know that there was like a tip share thing going on, but it was more than two, but when I was serving it was 2.13, and then the rest of it was up to you.

Angelica Mazé: Gotcha!

Ryan Marquez: But more or less, you know?

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and we'll talk about that, how that—

Ryan Marquez: Cool. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: —shakes out, or how that shook out for you. But then also backtracking to when you're saying—we'll definitely talk a bit about that party culture, but also, you're saying people were coming in drunk, and doing drugs. Are those customers you're talking about, or those are—?

Ryan Marquez: Well probably, yes, but also employees. Out of the two places. I worked, they were both pretty wild, I think in different ways, but. I feel like Cheddar's, there was a lot of crazy—

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I remember one of the cooks got caught coming to work drunk, and then it was almost a domino effect of how many people were actually showing up to work inebriated, which at the time was right over my head cause I was so young. Now I obviously could catch it a lot more, but I remember noticing that and I was like, this is crazy, and like how normalized it was. I remember there was this server that was .. she was a little older than me, I really liked her. I was just young and didn't really catch on too much. I remember she was doing meth in the bathroom.

Angelica Mazé: Oh man.

Ryan Marquez: Yes!

Angelica Mazé: Wow.

Ryan Marquez: And I don't know. At the time, I didn't pause. I was like "wow" but it wasn't as shocking as it is to me now as an adult, because everybody just blew by it and was like, "Yeah, you know, so and so is doing this." Or like people are doing coke, and here, and I would just like—like, crazy. And it's so easy, what if I was like "I wanna try?" Someone would have been like, "Here!"

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Luckily, I was like, "no," but it's just so wild to think about the whole—those aspects of the industry.

Angelica Mazé: How did you find out about her doing meth in the bathroom? Did someone tell you?

Ryan Marquez: She told me!

Angelica Mazé: That person told you or—?

Ryan Marquez: She didn't explicitly tell me. I don't remember what she called it, but yes, she—yes. And she told me that she—that it didn't have a smell, which didn't mean anything to me at the time.

Angelica Mazé: Right.

Ryan Marquez: And then I think one other person put it together, and was like, "She's doing meth." And was like, "Oh, OK." [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: But it was all very accepted within the culture?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, and I don't think it ever got to management. Everyone just was like, they had that like, everybody had each other's backs in that aspect. Which I think has a time and a place, but I'm like, "Wow." [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, well, you didn't know any better.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, no kidding, but why would you tell somebody so young too?

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: I don't know. It's so interesting to think about.

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Angelica Mazé: What was the average age of—cause it sounds like some of these folks were your peers, like your age, you were all in school together, but generally speaking, how old were you guys? Was there a big range, or—?

Ryan Marquez: I would say generally like mid-twenties, early thirties, and then you have your occasional older servers, like people who just have done that their whole life, and I would say there was maybe, three or four of those, but the bulk in that particular restaurant was mid-twenties, early thirties.

Angelica Mazé: And so you were, at that point, on the younger end of the spectrum.

Ryan Marquez: Yes. when I started, you kind of like lingered between hostess and server, and so you were a little younger.

Angelica Mazé: Before we move on from Cheddar's overall—so, it was crazy, and you got kind of into this party culture, where you guys were like going out when you guys got off your shifts? Or what did that look like?

Ryan Marquez: A lot of people—yes, it was super normalized for just a lot of people would either go out underage drinking.

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I would be able to go out to places and drink underage, which is crazy. Another thing too that I look back on and I'm like, I didn't look old enough to do that. So underage drinking, there would be places that we knew we could go and get a drink. Or we'd go to somebody's house. Or I'd just go with my own friends that weren't part of—from the restaurant and just go party somewhere else.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, and then wake up and go to school and then go to work and do it over, that kind of a thing?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, I would go home some nights and rest, but it was not difficult for me to go out if I wanted to. And it was super normalized. And then you kinda get met with, like if you are like, “No, I want to go home,” then everybody’s like, “Oh, you’re lame,” and it’s like, “Why is it lame to go home?”

Angelica Mazé: [laughs] Because everybody’s 20 and invincible. [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Youth! Ah youth! Did you have any experiences with management that stand out to you at that time just generally? Or I can make that a more specific—

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Ryan Marquez: Yeah. I had a couple that I really liked. Another thing that kind of stands out to me in hindsight is how young some of the management would be. It was so easy for you to kind of get into that role, and like get, I don’t know, I was—like now I find that really interesting. But Cheddar’s in particular, it’s corporate—now I see it’s because they were short staffed, but at the time I didn’t understand. But they’d have lots of managers from different restaurants throughout the state coming in, like “So and so is going to come for a week.” They were short staffed. They didn’t have a consistent GM or somebody, and so that was always really interesting, and inconsistent. Sometimes they were really cool, and then sometimes they were not very cool. I didn’t quite meet the—I think this is just a Southern thing, but I’ve never really fit the bill of the smiley, happy girl, and so I would get a lot of *feedback* [laughs] about my face and how I could smile more, and there’s a lot that goes into that.

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Younger too, like my teeth weren't very straight. I just wasn't very confident. I was, what, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old. So, I would get that a lot from management, particularly men. I don't remember his name, not that it matters, but there was a manager that came in from, I think the San Antonio area, but I remember he slept with one of the servers. Just stuff like that. And there was a lot of—and I think she was my age, I think she was a little younger than me, so she must have been like, maybe, at the time, like seventeen. I don't know, just stuff like that. Some favoritism, favoring towards the girls who kind of fit the bill, versus, you know, not as much. Not that I really wanted it, but it just always made me—you know, you're young. It makes you feel lesser than.

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So, we ran into that a lot. But there were some—there were a few that were really kind and that I still regard with kindness to this day, but a lot of inconsistency, and a lot of sleeping around.

[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. And yeah, so young. And so you said from your male managers you were getting this kind of like, smile more—

Ryan Marquez: Yes!

Angelica Mazé: —present more—

Ryan Marquez: Yes, yes, it's always been that way for me.

Angelica Mazé: [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: We can talk about that more when we go down the timeline, but—

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, we definitely will, but I'm curious, were most of the servers you were working with there at Cheddar's women? Young women?

Ryan Marquez: No, not there. I would say there was a good split. Yeah, there was a good split, but—and if you just kind of didn't fit the like very charismatic, you know, or very attractive. . .

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But it's kind of that way anywhere, and that's not to say—I don't know, and I saw that it was worse for others than for me, but you would just kind of catch onto those things. Or they don't like so-and-so as much because they don't work fifty-plus hours a week, or you know, there's just a lot to it.

Angelica Mazé: Favoritism based—

Ryan Marquez: Favoritism and just, yeah, it was just a lot. I mean being so young, I don't know, you feel like you have to do these things that everybody else is doing, and then it's a lot.

Angelica Mazé: Did you ever get the feeling that any of your male counterparts who were serving with you were getting similar feedback from management about being smiley and perky?

Ryan Marquez: I don't think I've ever really thought about it prior to now, just because no.
[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: I've never really put much thought into it, like I've only really based it around women.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: ‘Cause that’s really where I see it, but I’ve never put deep thought into it, which I think speaks for itself, also.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, that is kind of an answer in and of itself.

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Ryan Marquez: Yes.

Angelica Mazé: Interesting, interesting. So, kind of a mixed bag in terms of management and how they treated you. Did you feel like you were being, at the time, I know you were very young, and you’ve already kind of referenced—you were probably taking cash home at the end of these shifts?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: Did you feel like at that time of your life, and at that job at Cheddar’s, did you feel like that was good compensation, did you feel like you were getting money to do—?

Ryan Marquez: At the time yes, yes, because I didn’t know anything else. I had worked at another restaurant and all things considered—me and my other friend who lives here, we both—we would work doubles and we would make nothing, but it was more than everybody else’s nothing, so I was like, “This is awesome.” Then I worked somewhere else, and I was like “That was really bad money.” [laughs] But at the time I thought it was great.

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Angelica Mazé: When you were working a double, like how many hours would that have been?

Ryan Marquez: Oh gosh, at least twelve. I think twelve to fourteen.

Angelica Mazé: Wow.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, at the time.

Angelica Mazé: And so on a day when you and your friend were making more nothing than the nothing that everyone else made, cause you had worked a double, was it nothing because the wage was low? Was it nothing because people weren't tipping? Or just one of those days where people don't come in? Tell me a little bit about how that income fluctuates.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I think a lot had to do with the clientele too, like it was just a lot of food for not a lot of money. So, that just kind of comes with, certain people can afford things and sometimes you can't. Like, I get it . You go somewhere, like, I'm gonna get a lot of food for ten bucks here, and like maybe you can't leave a tip. At the time I didn't understand that. So a lot of it had to do with the clientele. For whatever reason that place was a hot spot for big groups of teenagers.

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Big groups of teenagers don't have money to tip or they don't know. I didn't know until I worked at a restaurant. So there's just the parts—it's just those types of things were more frequent. Like there would be like twenty-five at a time, teenagers. I don't know if they would just drop them off, and they would just come in in flocks, and everybody was like, "Oh no."

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Angelica Mazé Nobody wants a teenager table? [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: No. It's just, it stinks, but yeah, there was stuff like that. Prom was a big one. Prom kids don't tip, and they would come in in *huge* groups. So, I think that had a lot to do

with it. It was just really low prices for a lot of food, like a ton of food, and so—and every now and then you'd get some people who tip average. There wasn't anything outstanding, in comparison to now. There wasn't a lot of over tipping or generous tipping. It was like 20 percent was pretty standard but then there was a lot of people who just didn't tip as frequently.

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Angelica Mazé: Yeah. Did you have a plan for the money that you were making back then?

Ryan Marquez: No, I was young. That was another part of it too. I lived with my parents, and I think I paid for my phone bill, that was it, so it was just a lot of, it didn't matter as much. Like "This was awesome! Yada yada yada." So it was good. At the time, it worked.

Angelica Mazé: So, it was living money, it was your money to do with as you wished. -

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: At that time you didn't have like a—Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I didn't have a car until I was about twenty? So, there were a couple years where I just truly just—I think I saved a little bit of it. I did end up putting a down payment on my car. But for the most part I did have a lot of freedom with my money, and could just buy whatever I wanted. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Nice, nice. Let's move on. What made you leave Cheddar's? How old were you roughly and what prompted that move?

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Ryan Marquez: I was twenty-one.

Angelica Mazé: OK.

Ryan Marquez: I think twenty, twenty-one. I'm trying to remember. I think I was twenty, something like that. Everybody just heard about the George's girls at the time. They made a lot of money, I don't remember what prompted me to apply there. I don't think I knew anybody which was scary for me, [laughs] but I just heard about it and I was like, "I'm gonna go for it," and I got it and I just wanted—and I heard they made a lot of money, and so I ended up just switching jobs. And at that point too, I was miserable. I hated working at Cheddar's. I worked there for x amount of years. I'm over it. I was over the uniform. The appeal for George's was they made a lot of money, allegedly, they got to wear t-shirts and shorts, and they were closed on Sundays. That was the big draw for me. I was like, I would kill to just have one consistent day off. So that is when I made that switch.

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I went in, I think I had an interview when I turned in my application—it's been so long—and I went in, and got it, I think, on the spot.

Angelica Mazé: Oh wow, OK.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

Angelica Mazé: And you said—just cause it stood out—you said that you had heard that the George's girls—

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: —made money, so—

Ryan Marquez: Make a lot of money.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: And girls specifically?

Ryan Marquez: Oh yeah.

Angelica Mazé: That's interesting.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, it was only women. Well, there was a couple of men, but it was mostly women.

Angelica Mazé: OK, we'll get to that, I'm interested in that. So basically Cheddar's, you didn't have consistent days off. You said that was one of the reasons—?

Ryan Marquez: No, it was just kind of like you wait for your schedule, and I mean, it was like that a lot, in a lot of aspects, with George's too. But I would really just wait for my schedule and see what they would give me.

Angelica Mazé: OK, and how much—cause you're in school for all of it, how much—when do you get your schedule? How far in advance do you know what you're working?

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Ryan Marquez: I wanna say they sent it out on—no, maybe they would post it on Saturdays? It would be in the kitchen. I think this was before—it would be in the kitchen, and then I think later they got HotSchedules, but I wanna say Saturday or Sunday. Like, I remember it would be at the end of the week.

Angelica Mazé: Did you say HotSchedules?

Ryan Marquez: Yeah.

Angelica Mazé: I don't know what that is. What's a hot schedule?

Ryan Marquez: You don't know HotSchedules? It's just a scheduling app.

Angelica Mazé: Oh gotcha, OK.

Ryan Marquez: So, it's just on your phone. They used HotSchedules, I think, at the end before I quit, and then before they would just post it in the kitchen on a bulletin board. So if you didn't remember your schedule you'd have to take a picture of it or if you forgot you'd have to go all the way in and look at it.

Angelica Mazé: The olden days. [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: So, I was gonna say—which is so funny to think about now.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, how we didn't have Slack, we didn't have all of these apps that are how you can clock in, you can clock out, that's crazy.

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: The paper days.

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: So, you went to George's, and like you said, you didn't know anybody, so that was a little bit scary cause you had to go have like a...

Ryan Marquez: I had to go put myself out there. I was like, this is going to be—it's all women and they're going to be mean to me.

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Angelica Mazé: Oh really? [laughs] Interesting.

Ryan Marquez: That was the thought I had in my head, yeah. That was before like being a girl's girl was cool, so—[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Fascinating.

Ryan Marquez: —it was scary, and I was like, “What if they're mean?” I don't know.

Angelica Mazé: Did you have to deal with mean girls at Cheddar's?

Ryan Marquez: Not in an abnormal way. I think there were just people that weren't nice, but I didn't feel the same way about it. There were just people that you don't really get along with, but I don't really remember anything that stood out in that way there either.

Angelica Mazé: Interesting, but you sort of had this impression that this sort of clique of girls working at George's might not—

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, that it was gonna be like this catty mean girls thing.

Angelica Mazé: [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: I was scared, and I was like, “What if I don't fit in, what if—?” I don't know. I was genuinely shocked that I got hired. I remember that.

Angelica Mazé: On the spot!

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, it just had this, at the time, this fanciness around that isn't real, but—

Angelica Mazé: A fanciness. So, does anything stand out to you about that interview and how they hired you, or the questions they asked, or what they were looking for?

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Ryan Marquez: It was just, I don't remember the questions, I'll be honest with you. I do remember that it was really quick. Like "What's your availability like? What's your experience like?" I think we were sitting at just a table in the dining room. It was one of the managers, and I think I just chatted, and he was like "Cool, you got it," and I was like "Great!"

Angelica Mazé: Awesome! Take us into your first year of George's or let's—

Ryan Marquez: First year—

Angelica Mazé: Bring me into George's.

Ryan Marquez: I mean, there's a lot. I have a group of long standing friendships that everybody has grown up and stuff, but I have a group of girls that I still keep in contact with, so there's a lot of good that's come out of it. The first year, I remember—I think I'd just go in and just wing it, and kind of kept to myself, and then slowly started getting invited out. And that was the culture there. The drinking thing was huge there!

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It's already a bar. Everybody—they loved to party and so, I just kind of kept to myself, probably for most of the first year, and I got invited out a few times, and it just kind of like fell into place on its own. I made really good friends, and there's a lot of parts of it that were really fun. I think I had some of the most fun I've ever had at a job there, but there's also the unhealthy parts that come with that, like the drinking was a huge thing. We got off much later there, just because they closed on the weekends, and we closed at midnight. So, sometimes if you're lucky you could get

out of there with an hour to spare at the bar and we would go in there and get as drunk as possible in an hour. [laughs] Power hour!

Angelica Mazé: Oh!

Ryan Marquez: [laughs] That was just super normalized too. But there was a lot of good that came with it. The actual—it was a lot different than working somewhere corporate. I remember seeing that. Because corporate, they had all these corporate rules of your uniform and you have to be presentable in this way and that way. That’s not to say it wasn’t there; it was just—

0:28:08

The best way I’ve always described it is, I guess, they didn’t really have anybody really to report to, so sometimes it would just be—like it was locally owned. It would get busy. It would just get hairy and tensions would rise, and people would get upset and they’d be on edge and they’d be a lot more—there could be more fighting or, what have you, bickering, however that looks, and it would just kind of fly under the radar. It would just be normal. Like I just got screamed at, on the expo, and the girls are like, “Screw him, yada yada yada,” but it doesn’t go much more than that. There’s no really, I guess—at Cheddar’s or somewhere corporate that has all these higher ups to answer to—

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—it would be a whole thing. There would probably be somebody—there’s somebody at a higher level where you can be like, “This happened to me,” and then you’d have to go through a whole process. Then there, it just was pretty normal to be like, “Just get over it.” [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: How did that feel? That's a big change. There's no HR department, there's no—

Ryan Marquez: Yes.

Angelica Mazé: Which I totally get, and I think I'm getting from you too, that that's a mixed bag. There's some good things about that and maybe some not good things about that.

Ryan Marquez: Yes. Yes.

Angelica Mazé: Did you—was that ever a problem for you? Did you ever feel like the drama got too far, or fights got out of hand, or grudges or anything like that, where you wish you had someone to talk to?

Ryan Marquez: Sometimes I do wish there were some consequences for something. This is a really good example that I actually bring up pretty frequently. This was further into my career, and I had become much more comfortable working there. I had become comfortable being, just kind of bitchy, I guess.

0:30:02

Cause it's a country bar, little shorts, T-shirts, and there's an expectation that comes—I didn't fit that bill a lot of the time and I just rolled with it, and sometimes it worked really well for me and sometimes it didn't, but I was just like, I'm just too tired to pretend to be something I'm not, so I was just myself, and a little spicy, but a great time. But there was an instance—it was during a football game, [inaudible, Zoom recording issues 0:30:28]

Angelica Mazé: Oh, hold on, I think I just lost your audio, I'm gonna pause the recording for a second. Where is the—?

Ryan Marquez: —responding and [inaudible 0:30:42]

Angelica Mazé: No no no, you're good. It's totally fine. So, we're recording again. So, you were recounting a time—oh and I actually was going to say—anyway, you were talking about a time when maybe you wish that there had been some kind of—

Ryan Marquez: Yes, a higher consequence, I don't know.

0:31:00

So, I was pouring a beer during a football game, really busy, drunk people everywhere, and there was a gentleman sitting right in front of the bar top where I was pouring. I was talking to another one of the girls, and I don't remember what we were talking about, but I said something like—I laughed and I was being silly and did like a “Huh!”, like a weird—I was talking to my friend. The guy interjected, and was like “What'd you say,? Do it again.” I was like “Oh, I don't think I was talking to you.” And he—[laughs] he was very drunk—he shouted at the top of his lungs—[laughs] it was pretty loud, so there was a lot of sound otherwise, but he was like, “This girl's a fucking bitch!” And I was like “OK,” and I was like, whatever,” and it didn't really bother me. But I was like “He's probably pretty drunk,” so I just went and told my manager at the time and was like “Hey, this guy at the bar, just to give you a heads up, he did just call me a bitch in front of everybody, he's probably pretty drunk.” And they didn't do anything about it. They didn't kick him out. They didn't do anything about it.

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I just let it roll off the shoulder at the time. I didn't have time to worry about it. I had other things to do. But he just was staring at me the whole time, just watching, but he had no consequences. And, one: you probably shouldn't be out in public if you're—he was like slumped over, you

know? You probably shouldn't be out in public and continue to drink if you're that drunk anyway. But, there was also just the human decency aspect of it, and that was something that was chosen not to be regarded as important. But I thought about what if it happened to one of the other girls who isn't commonly regarded as feisty or a bitch, or whatever. Would they have been like "You can't talk to her like that"? Or were they just too busy to care? Or what if it wasn't me and somebody who cares about that more? Cause I was able to just be like, "whatever," and just went about my day and it was just a small bump in the road. But I think about that pretty often, enough for it to—

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—I guess not bother me clearly, but just that kind of stuff and, I don't know, people who are more impressionable than me, too, and a lot of that culture is normalized, or to feel like you have to fit in this perky little box to make money. And I made money there, but I don't think I made as much money as the girls who kind of fit that bill or would play the part. And hats off to them, truly, I just can't do it. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, and it's interesting that there's maybe as sense that because you didn't fit this, whatever you wanna call it, hyper-feminine—

Ryan Marquez: [sighs] Yes!

Angelica Mazé: —role that was expected, that maybe you would've gotten more managerial support if you hadn't already been perceived as difficult or whatever.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, the common thing about me was my RBF was out of control.

0:34:00

And sure, I do have RBF, whatever, but I am nice. In particular, I remember this one gentleman who came in—this is another, the same kind of example—and it was a smaller bar, not as loud, everybody can hear what’s going on, and he came in. He was from New York, he owned some restaurants in New York. I don’t care. It’s like a Saturday morning, by the way, it’s like 11:00 AM, and it was a Saturday, so I worked the night before. I’m tired, and I’m just getting in the swing of the day. I remember that he made three or four comments about me smiling, and I’m just annoyed, and there was a part of me at the time who really wanted to retaliate against that, too, because you just hear it all the time. So, I just had no capacity for those kinds of things. Then he made three or four comments, and I came by and walked by another time, and he told me that I looked dead. He was like “You wouldn’t be. . .”—it’s just such a rude thing to say. People heard him. Several people heard him. And I didn’t, also, by the way—and he just like—“I would never let you work in my restaurant,” and I was like, “Great, I don’t work in your restaurant,” I was like, “You don’t even live here!”

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I just thought that—but just to have the gears turn and be like “This is something I should say out loud to a young person,” or anybody, ever, and it was just so, whatever. Nobody asked him to leave, and just stuff like that. I feel like a lot of just basic manners and human decency just kind of get disregarded in those settings, because it’s “normal,” but it shouldn’t be.

Angelica Mazé: And kind of a recurring theme here, that customers and management are telling you to smile.

Ryan Marquez: Yes, yes all the time. And I’ve gotten over it now, but it used to be triggering for me. After I worked there—cause I was like, I’m so tired of it. And there was a lot

that went into it. I had braces for a few years. I wasn't very confident in my teeth. I didn't like to smile. I liked to just do what I was doing. So there was a lot more than just a surface level of this girl isn't smiling. It's like, you're making it aversive, you know. There's so many aspects to it.

0:36:04

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. There's a lot of weird gender stuff going on there in addition to strange customer-employee relationships and all of that stuff clearly. Weird waters to navigate as a twenty-one-year-old. [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: [laughs] Yeah.

Angelica Mazé: At this point you had graduated from high school?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, I graduated high school, I think I was in between—I didn't immediately pursue higher education. I was unsure about what I wanted to do. I think I started working on my bachelor's right before I went to George's, like right before.

Angelica Mazé: Where did you go to high school? I meant to ask.

Ryan Marquez: Oh, Midway High School.

Angelica Mazé: OK cool, Midway. And so, you had graduated, so you started college right around the same time that you started working at George's?

Ryan Marquez: I think so, like right before is when I decided to pursue a bachelor's.

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Angelica Mazé: And where were you doing that?

Ryan Marquez: Just Tarleton Waco.

Angelica Mazé: Tarleton.

Ryan Marquez: At MCC.

Angelica Mazé: At MCC, cool. Cause they have some sort of program where you can take classes—

Ryan Marquez: Yes, and you get your four-year degree through MCC, and it was really good for me. Plus, there was a lot of hybrid, like I could do school online. I had a lot of flexibility to get my classes done.

Angelica Mazé: Were you in college and working full-time both? Were you taking a full load of courses?

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: Wow, OK. Like forty hours a week at George's on top of that, or something?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, there was a period of time, I can't remember where, but I think it had to have been when I was really in my bachelor's degree, but I would work three doubles back-to-back, and cram all of it in. I don't know, I would do it again now, honestly. I had four days off. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Gotcha, OK.

Ryan Marquez: It was by choice, I requested it. I think I just worked Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Three doubles, back-to-back.

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They were like sixteen-hour shifts apiece, give or take. They would be prioritized, 'cause overtime, so they would let me go early and stuff like that. But then on Saturdays and stuff, when the need was higher, I would have to stay. Thursdays would be a little shorter. But I would cram all of those in three days in a row, and everybody thought I was nuts, but I don't know. I talk about it a lot. I would do it with my job currently. I would. If I could get my full workload in, in three or four days, and have more days off, I think I still would. I had four days off to myself. It was awesome.

Angelica Mazé: When you were in school was any of your income from your restaurant work paying for school, or were you able to put that towards other things?

Ryan Marquez: I think I paid for a couple of classes out of pocket. I took out a lot of loans. I was paying for a car, and then I want to say—at twenty-one too, by the time I was working at George's, I had also moved out of my parents' house, so I was also paying for rent, and started living with a roommate and stuff.

0:39:03

Angelica Mazé: If you don't mind my asking, what did rent for—maybe a two bedroom you had?

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, it was a two-bedroom?

Angelica Mazé: What was that like back then?

Ryan Marquez: I don't know, it was before—I moved in with a roommate first, didn't love that. Then lived by myself. I wanna say we were paying like—I couldn't even tell you; it's been so long. I remember my one-bedroom was five hundred dollars a month. I talk about that all the

time because of how expensive rent is. I think I was paying more for the two-bedroom. I think we were paying like fourteen [hundred] for a two-bedroom. It was pretty big, like a townhome, it was pretty cool. So, like seven hundred-ish dollars a month.

Angelica Mazé: So, you're in school full-time, working full-time, paying for some of your classes, and then you had loans to cover the rest.

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: And paying rent. How did that all—did that all feel manage—how did you—and you did that for—?

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Let me backtrack and say, did you do your four years of college all at once? Were you kind of doing these two things concurr—?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, I did, yeah. I did everything all at once. God, it felt manageable at the time. I look at it now, and I don't know if it just comes with being young, but it was OK. It was manageable. I got it done so—[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: You got it done! Congratulations! So, what were you studying?

Ryan Marquez: My undergrad was psychology, just general psychology. That was with no idea—at the time I wanted to pursue a PhD. I think I wanted to go more clinical, which I didn't. So, I just got an undergraduate degree, bachelor's, in just general psychology, and I think I graduated with that in 2019, was when I achieved that one.

Angelica Mazé: Congratulations.

Ryan Marquez: Thank you.

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Angelica Mazé: And so were you at George's for the whole time that you were in school or did you end up moving—?

Ryan Marquez: Yes. Yeah, I was unsure. I finished my bachelor's at George's and then I started my master's program at George's while I was still working there.

Angelica Mazé: Oh wow. What was your master's program?

Ryan Marquez: Special education with an emphasis in applied behavior analysis. So, I work with people with autism, children and adults, and we work on—I just work on helping them with adaptive living skills, communication skills, vocational skills if they're older. So that's what I do now.

Angelica Mazé: Did you sort of find that direction while you were finishing your bachelor's?

Ryan Marquez: I did.

Angelica Mazé: OK.

Ryan Marquez: I did. In full transparency, I was in class and one of my professors was like “this place hires people,” and I was approaching the end of my degree, and I had no experience that wasn't service industry, and I was like, “I need something.”

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It was just a job as a behavior technician working with children with autism, and I had absolutely no idea that I would even—I was like “I don't even know that I like children,” and it turns out

that I do like them quite a bit, and it was great, it just stuck, and I ended up going to grad school for it.

Angelica Mazé: Cool, so was that job in Waco as well?

Ryan Marquez: Yes, I work for the same company actually, just ended up transferring locations, but yes, it was in Waco. At the time I lived in the Baylor area. The clinic was like in Robinson, so like ten minutes down the road, and then George's is on the circle right there, like it's all pretty close in proximity. So, I was doing all three.

Angelica Mazé: That's what I was gonna ask. What was your title at the behavioral—?

Ryan Marquez: Just behavior tech.

Angelica Mazé: Behavior tech, and if you don't mind me asking, what were they paying you at—I'm assuming that's kind of entry level?

0:43:00

Ryan Marquez: I think I started at thirteen dollars an hour there, and that kind of jumped from serving and bartending where I was making more, and that's why I kept both. I reduced my hours at George's. I think I was still only working Thursday through Saturday, and it got really hard.

Angelica Mazé: Were you Monday through Friday at the clinic, and then overlapping Thursday through Saturday or Sunday at George's?

Ryan Marquez: I would start at like 6:00 PM. I think I would get off at like 4:00, so I would be able to go home. Yeah, it was crazy.

Angelica Mazé: That's a lot.

Ryan Marquez: I think about it all the time, and I'm like, I was nuts, but like, also impressive.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, I mean—

Ryan Marquez: Impressively nuts.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, hats off! But an interesting kind of gear shift too, to go from George's, which is this sort of youthful party down-home bar scene to—one night, and then the next morning it's like eight or nine AM and you're in this office—

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

0:44:00

Angelica Mazé: Working with kids?

Ryan Marquez: In a clinical setting with people's children, yes.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: How did you navigate that? How did that feel at the time?

Ryan Marquez: I reduced the partying a lot. I did not like being hungover around children, and I think it happened one time, by accident when I was like, "I need to go to work", and I was like, "I definitely don't like this feeling." It was a lot of cognitive dissonance, I don't feel like I'm doing a good job, this is not an environment where I want to do that. That's when it kind of started clicking, in seeing that other people in these other settings don't behave like that normally. It was really hard for me to make friends. I wasn't feeling like I had anything in

common with them. I was still pretty young, like twenty-four, twenty-five, and it was just a lot different. And there were a lot of adults too, and there was a lot of professionalism that I hadn't stumbled across yet, and it was weird, and I was scared, [laughs] so scared.

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Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: It went well clearly, but it was just very interesting to make the jump. And the two couldn't really cross over, I guess. When I would try to talk about my job—this happens a lot in other settings—but I would go back to George's and would be excited about my job, and there was a lot of like, you know—and so that was a big pivotal moment for me, of like maybe these people, or like you know, this isn't the crowd for me forever. I made great friends, and I still stick—but a lot of them too, we worked there for a long time and everybody starts getting older, people start—same thing, like branching off and getting their adult jobs and careers, and so it was really interesting to see the difference between the two.

Angelica Mazé: So not just for you there was this sense—I'm kind of just restating—but the sense that clearly, you had this growing sense that you didn't want to be a server forever.

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Ryan Marquez: No.

Angelica Mazé: Through college—

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, yes. And that's what pushed me to—but it's so interesting now, because the grass is always greener on the other side. Sometimes I'm like, I would take it. Like

not forever, but to have a weekday off, there's a very, there's some real specialness in having a Tuesday off. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, yeah.

Ryan Marquez: It's really interesting.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, what else do you miss? We'll talk a little more about what you're doing right now in a little bit, but what else are you missing just out of curiosity since we're on the topic?

Ryan Marquez: Well, not getting up. I work a nine-to-five, and that has its pros and cons, but when I worked at the restaurant, I was in the best shape ever because I just had the time to go—I still work out in the mornings, but I was more consistent when it was on my own terms. Just having that mid-morning hour to go to the gym, or get errands done, I do miss that. And that was a constant, weekdays off.

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And I do miss the friendships that I made. I haven't really found that in my new career. There are great people in the field and I've made friends, but—and I don't know if that's a coming of age thing too, if those are just like your pivotal friendships that you make. So, it's been harder, but I still really love what I do, and I've met a lot of good people, and my job is a great time, and I work with really special humans. But there's just, you know—I think you could flip the script and I could go back to serving and I would have all these things to say about “I miss being in the clinic and working with kids.” So I think everything has some aspect that you miss to some degree.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, yeah, definitely. So then when you got that job in the clinic as a tech, you were starting your master's program at that point, or you had finished it and then you were—?

Ryan Marquez: I hadn't quite decided yet.

0:48:01

Angelica Mazé: OK.

Ryan Marquez: So, yeah, I went to try out this job and give it a shot at the end of undergrad, and then worked there for I think maybe six months before I was like, "Let's try grad school." It was a little fast [laughs] looking back on it. I felt I could've let it marinate a little more, but I also think I felt this pressure to get a degree, and so I gave it a shot. That's when George's started to fade, and I started to kind of pursue my career.

Angelica Mazé: Where did you get your masters? Also at Tarleton?

Ryan Marquez: No, Ball State, it's out of Indiana. For what I do, behavioral analysis, there's a handful of schools that have pretty good programs to get your licensure. So, you have to go get your master's and then you have to take a board exam. [laughs] It's terrible. So I went to Ball State University out of Indiana. They are one of the schools that are in pretty high regard.

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It was a pretty good program, and it was all online which was super helpful, because of just all of the different things that I was juggling. Then I finished that up in May of '21.

Angelica Mazé: So, you had that job to kind of get your feet wet and see if you wanted to do it, and then very quickly were like, "Let's do this master's program." I'm impressed! That's

not a small undertaking. So then you, it sounds like in the least amount of time, completed your master's. While you were doing that, were you working at George's the whole time, or were you also working as a tech, or all three, or what does your schedule look like?

Ryan Marquez: I started in the master's at the end of 2019, the fall semester I think, and then I was still working at George's at the time, and it ended up being too much. My quality of life was shifting dramatically and that's when I had to put in my notice. They were really cool about it. It had been long time. Then I tried to—the money, I wasn't making as much money, and there's a money management aspect of that too.

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I had to learn how to manage my money now that I wasn't getting paid cash every single day. So, I was like "I'm gonna go back," just to balance it out. I think it was a very short amount of time, but they had just shut down, or severely reduced their hours because of the pandemic, and I was like, "Well, it doesn't make any sense for me to go apply," and I just never went back.

Angelica Mazé: OK. So you were pretty well out of serving then when everybody shut down and then opened back up for the pandemic. You didn't have to deal with the masking and all that stuff.

Ryan Marquez: No, and my current job, it's actually considered medically necessary so I didn't lose—I was very fortunate that I didn't lose—I lost some hours just because some parents decided to keep their children at home, and to pull back on services, but there's a lot of need for what I do too, so it would be detrimental for these kids to lose their therapy hours.

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So, I was very fortunate in that I didn't lose a lot of work. We did have to do masking and stuff, but that didn't bother me, so I was kind of grateful to be here already during that, because I was like, "I can't imagine, that's so hard to"—

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. So, just timeline wise, then you finish your master's and then you move to Austin? I think we're at the point where you're out of George's. Walk me through how you came to be where you are right now.

Ryan Marquez: Yes, yeah. May of [20]21, I finished my master's. I moved to Austin July of [20]21. Then when I got here, I had a board exam to take that fall, and so I transferred to a new clinic, got my new boss, all that, and then my whole life was just cramming my brain for this board exam that I had to pass to become—I'm a behavior analyst is my technical title.

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But you have to pass a board exam prior to receiving the certification. So that's what I did. I passed that in November of [20]21? November 18th of [20]21. And that's what I've been doing since.

Angelica Mazé: So, you basically—I think you said this at the beginning—you continued to work at that clinic here in Waco, and then moved to their Austin branch where then—

Ryan Marquez: Yes, they had a branch in the Bee Cave area, or Spicewood, I don't know. I still don't know all the parts of Austin, I'm sorry. That's where I started. Then we opened a new one in the Lake Travis area, and that wasn't super—we weren't getting a lot of foot traffic in-clinic. Now I primarily go to people's homes, and my home base is in the Round Rock area. So we have some kids that come to the clinic and we do school readiness, social skills and stuff, but I go to homes a lot and we do adaptive living, we work with parents, we go out in the

community. I got to go to Urban Air yesterday, and go jump on the trampoline and work on some community skills. So there's a lot of fun to be had.

0:53:08

Angelica Mazé: That's cool! What'd you call it? Adaptive living? What is that?

Ryan Marquez: Life skills, sorry. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Oh no, no, that's good. I want to hear a little more about that if you don't—

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, so life skills, adaptive liv—like self-care, chores, making your own meals, washing your face, washing your hair, just all—I am a supervisor so I have a caseload of children or adults, and then I have a team of techs, which is what I was, who carry out the interventions that I write, and every client gets their own intervention. So like, “So and so really needs to work on street safety or community safety,” so we write something specific for them. “So and so over here, we're working on getting them their first job.” So, we just hone in on—it's a one on one, so it's just practicing in a very contrived setting with the hopes of them not needing us anymore.

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We practice these skills, let's try it at work. Some places—it was easier in Waco; it's really hard here—but sometimes I'm fortunate enough to get to go to the workspace with them, and so we really get to practice the skills and then we transfer them to Mom, teacher, whoever, with the hopes of them, sadly, not needing us anymore.

Angelica Mazé: That's really cool.

Ryan Marquez: It's really fun, yeah.

Angelica Mazé: And you have a really wide age range, kids to adults, it sounds like.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, my youngest is three currently and my oldest is forty-four. We work with Texas Workforce Commission a little bit too. So, there's a lot of cool stuff, and very fulfilling aspects to it.

Angelica Mazé: Wow, that's cool. And so, Texas Workforce Commission would be people—that's sort of some of the jobs skills things that you were talking about presumably.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, we kind of contrive the job skills stuff, and then they typically get set up with a job coach, and then it's less hands-on from us and we just push them through the process there. So, we start small and then go big.

0:55:01

Angelica Mazé: Cool. So, you're several years into this new career now, how's it feeling?

Ryan Marquez: Five!

Angelica Mazé: Five!

Ryan Marquez: Five years, yeah. It's cool. It's weird to think about. I always think about Cheddar's Ryan, or teenage Ryan, would never picture me with a nine-to-five with children. [laughs] I always wonder if she'd be like, "You're lame," but I'm like "Look at my hair, though. She's still there, she's just grown a lot."

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, a little more grown up, it happens. I think it's OK if you're teenage self thinks that your adult self is lame.

Ryan Marquez: That's true. I think if I had to work with her, I'd be like, "Go home."
[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: [laughs] I don't know if I would wanna work with my teenage self either.

Ryan Marquez: I don't think I would either. Especially working in behavior and I'm just like, "I was a nightmare, I was [laughs]—sorry."

Angelica Mazé: Well it's funny, you were at George's while you were—and I was thinking about this while you were talking—you were at George's while you were getting a psychology degree, and I'm wondering what was going through your mind as you were learning about disorders and behavior and all these things, and then also working in an unusually—well, working in a restaurant. [laughs]

0:56:09

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, it came later, like much later. It was all going through the motions at the time, and then now—and I have my friend who—we reflect on it all the time, and she's a lot more, [laughs] she's a lot more—she didn't last as long as me. Jesse worked there for a little bit, you should touch base with her about it and see. [laughs] My two friends that worked there with me didn't last very long. There's a lot that I think I kinda took in stride that a lot of my friends didn't, [laughs] and I very much pushed through it in the moment, but now with some growth and perspective, I'm like, "Maybe that wasn't the best." [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, I have actually interviewed Jesse, and another woman, who both have George's experiences, and we're definitely kind of collecting some similar stories about a gendered workplace, and some interesting—yeah.

0:57:04

Ryan Marquez: It's really interesting. And I mean, I loved it. Don't get me wrong; there were parts of it that I loved. But there were parts of it that were *wild*. But out of the two, if I had to do it again, I would pick George's to do again. And I keep in touch with those people. I went to a wedding recently with one of the girls, and all the managers were there, and it was—I don't know. It's got its pros and cons. I can't say I remember it super fondly, but there was a lot of fun.
[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: And you didn't leave with none of the sort of, customer abuse, or lack of managerial support there or anything poisoned the water so much that—it sounds like you still—

Ryan Marquez: No. If I lived in Waco still and was doing this—I have another who, she has a full-time job, she's a flight attendant, but she's on pickup basis with them. If she feels like going to work, she can. I would do it. It would probably still bother me in the same way that it did, but it would be easy, I think. I don't know, I would do it.

0:58:05

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, so when we were emailing, one of the things I think about too, is it seems like you were also able to achieve your goals, right? One of the things that I ask folks, is like on this salary—and of course a lot of folks are really young when they get into this work, so there are no goals except to just go and make money, and live your life, but it sounds like you were able to kind of get where you are financially.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I think a huge motivator was—I remember being like, “I don't want to do this for the rest of my life,” which is very true. I would definitely do it now and then for a little extra cash, but it's hard, and your feet hurt so much after. Or even the shorts [laughs]. I'm

not a skinny girl, and my legs would rub raw. At the end of the night, me and some of the other—we'd be like waddling to keep our legs apart. Just stuff like that.

0:59:00

Angelica Mazé: Because of your short shorts at George's.

Ryan Marquez: It's also like you could wear—or I would rub through my jeans, from working all day. I would buy cheap Forever 21 jeans and I'd have to go through all these pairs. But, I don't know. It's a long day, and it's your whole day. I think about that a lot too. I just spent my whole Saturday, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM just in that building, and that's crazy to think about now. I don't think I would work like that again.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. Well, and it makes sense too, you were talking about all the social aspects of this job. When you're there so much, and then you're sort of getting off work at a time when nobody—that I think that is why people get thrown together there so much, right? Because just—

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, and then you zoom out from it and then I get my career, and I still do regard those girls in high regard, but on like a personal, or a common interest level, we don't have much in common. We really, really don't. I have one really good friend who I could hang out with without drinking, but that was always our common denominator.

1:00:03

We would all hang out and just get [sigh] *inebriated!* I'm actually working on full—I don't drink much now, it really just comes in—like I get nervous socially and I'll have to have a drink, but

looking back on that and the rate at which the drinking occurred, the volume, it's just not normal or healthy.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: So that was really interesting to step away from and just be like, "Wow." Sure, I wasn't drinking before work or drinking before school, but I would consider myself an alcoholic during that time, just by how much I was drinking when I did.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: And then meeting new people, in a new city, or making new friends, and talking about going out, or people seeing how much you have to consume to get drunk, and being shocked. I was like, "Oh!" But that's a Waco thing, too.

1:01:00

The culture there, it is super, super normalized to drink for everything. That's not to say it's not here, but I just see it—and maybe it's just that bubble of people, but I went to that wedding and a lot of people showed up with Yetis with like—there's alcohol. You're already gonna get to drink. Just stuff like that, little steps. And it's weird to get to step away from it and be like, oh, maybe that wasn't super healthy, and maybe we didn't have that much in common. Like, would we be able to spend a weekend together without drinking?

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, it is very normalized, and it sounds like you have friends who are more or less your contemporaries who are still kind of doing that same thing?

Ryan Marquez: I think so, or at least to some degree. I don't know, I could be wrong, but I just know that I guess the wedding was a big one for me. I hadn't been with my Waco friends

since—I hadn't really hung out with my George's friends too frequently prior to moving, just because life, and working, and stuff, and that was the first time I had really been kind of back in that setting, and it felt very much that way, and it was weird.

1:02:10

I felt this urgency to get really drunk.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: And I don't feel that way if I'm not in—I don't know if it's anxiety, or if it's just—the best way I can describe it is like, I don't really—like I said, I don't really fit that hyper-feminine, Southern girl bill, and so I don't know if it makes me anxious, but I stood out pretty hard at that wedding. I'm the most, I was the most “alternative” person there. That's not to say that those people don't exist in Waco. I lived there, some of my best friends are there, I know that they do. But just in that bubble. And so, I was always that. And I was vegan for eight years, and that was always like a [whistles], to them, and so it was just, there's just aspects of me that I consider to be very normal that, that group of people really considers me to be abnormal, I guess.

1:03:07

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: It's just not that crazy.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. Outsider.

Ryan Marquez: Like someone told me that I was regarded in their little group as their Lib friend. Which like, sure, but it's like, I don't think it's that deep. I'm just—I don't know. But I thought that was interesting. And I was like “Are we that different?”

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, Lib meaning liberal right? That's what that means?

Ryan Marquez: Yes! I was—I've never—I don't know, it was just weird to—I mean, it makes sense, but I was like, that's just weird to hear me described as that when I was like, "People should have rights,"—hot take. Like I'm not over here, you know—

Angelica Mazé: [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: —on a soap box. There's political differences when we hang out that I'm aware of. I don't say anything.

Angelica Mazé: Right.

Ryan Marquez: But that's kind of what it goes to. I do think that all we really have in common is the partying sometimes.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, and somehow, I mean especially since it sounds like you aren't sitting down and talking politics with all of your George's friends, that—

1:04:01

Ryan Marquez: I would not.

Angelica Mazé: —it's some of these outward characteristics like not being hyper feminine, you know, whatever, whatever, they just immediately had you earmarked as a Lib—

Ryan Marquez: Yes!

Angelica Mazé: —even though you weren't, like you say, getting heavy into politics.

Ryan Marquez: I feel like it's apparent, but it's like, do we have to talk about it? Because I was like, "You don't want to hear from me." [laughs] So let's just hang out and have fun and not

talk about any of that stuff. But that's another thing too, is I wouldn't be caught dead having those conversations because I know how they're gonna end.

Angelica Mazé: Right.

Ryan Marquez: That's not to say that every conversation has to be political, but even just hobbies and stuff, we're just very different. So, it's like, what other fun is there other than seeing who can chug this the fastest, or who can—we're gonna play a game.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: But can we have a conversation in a coffee shop? [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah. I am familiar with that, and we can talk more offline at some point, but I'm familiar with that phenomenon. The sense that if you sort of scratch the surface even a little bit—

1:05:00

Ryan Marquez: Yes!

Angelica Mazé: —there will not be very much common ground. I'll put it that way. Which is interesting. Makes it difficult to navigate like you said without booze. Otherwise there can feel—and I'm not advocating for—I don't think it's a healthy way to interact either, to have to rely really heavily on alcohol, but I do think that's why it happens, 'cause it can facilitate socializing.

Ryan Marquez: No, absolutely, 1000 percent. It's something that I even struggle with here that I'm trying really hard not to—I'm like, "We're just gonna socialize without drinking," and it's hard!

Angelica Mazé: It's hard. It can be done. Backtracking just a little bit, because I had meant to ask you this while you were going your way through your story, you had mentioned that serving, one of the things that you look back on, really hard on your body, your feet, your back. I mean, you're young and you're talking about these things. Did you ever have health insurance? Or like how did you—?

Ryan Marquez: No!

Angelica Mazé: OK, so through none of this time?

1:06:00

Ryan Marquez: No!

Angelica Mazé: Yeah.

Ryan Marquez: Oh, I'm so glad you brought this up, this is like a huge—well, I didn't have health insurance growing up either, that's just the way the cookie crumbled, and so I didn't have it serving, and then you're just brought up a certain way, you don't go to the doctor. Like that's just what it was! But I remember this one time in particular, one of my good friends, she actually lives—she still does—across the street from George's, and so we would park at her house, and I would walk to work. It had been raining or something—she has a yard—and I rolled my ankle in this hole in the ground, like rolled it *hard*. I heard it crunch. I was walking into work that morning and it started to swell, and I was limping, and it was pretty bad. There was a people-pleasing part of me, that instead of straight up asking to go home, I wanted them to send me home, and they didn't. And so I ended up working—I don't remember if it was a double, but it was at least a single shift. I was looking for the pictures of this ankle the other night, but it swelled up like purple-black. I didn't go to the doctor or anything, 'cause I couldn't.

1:07:01

I didn't have insurance, but that too, and they were like, "See if you can make it." And now, being in a managerial position, it's so—cause if that happened to one of my employees I would be like, "Go home!" And they don't even walk that much for like—yes, there's children, and you have to chase them around some, but not like that. And it's just so interesting now that I am in a managerial position, I would never make somebody work on that swollen of an ankle. Especially for that type of job too, like, "It'll be OK." So, I think about that a lot too. I've also learned to speak up for myself a lot, cause I didn't in that setting. Now I would also be like, "Hey I'm not coming in cause I just busted my ankle outside." [laughs] So there is I think accountability on both parties there, but still. And I was pretty young too, and most of the girls that work for me are pretty young, and I would never make them do that. [laughs]

1:08:00

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, well, accountability yes, but I think it's important that you mentioned, you were very young. We have to learn to advocate for ourselves, but that can be a really steep learning curve, especially when you maybe have expectations that there will be protections for you that then are not there and you realize that nobody is gonna [laughs], nobody's gonna have your back unless you—

Ryan Marquez: No. And so that's why I always tell my employees—they're all girls currently so I say my girls—but to advocate. I really preach that. It's like, you have to tell me when you don't like something, or you have to tell me—even if there's a part of me that is being told to give you x, y, z, or push for x, y, z, but if you don't like it you need to say something. I don't want you to sit and people-please. And so they're really good about that, too. But it's just

crazy to think—I don't know, I think about that one a lot. Because I'm like, I can't believe I just walked around. And it got a lot worse, I think, because I walked around on it for like eight hours, instead of just going home.

1:09:06

Angelica Mazé: Well, I'm glad that you're advocating that for your employees, because it is something that we need to see [laughs] and hear more of. And like you said, if you don't have anybody to model that for you it can be a really tough learning curve.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah.

Angelica Mazé: So, you're full on in this, five years, gonna keep going.

Ryan Marquez: Mmhmm.

Angelica Mazé: Not looking back to the server days except with occasional wistfulness?

Ryan Marquez: [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Are you planning on staying in Austin? What other kinds of goals and hopes and dreams are you making for yourself?

Ryan Marquez: Well, Austin—my dad still lives in Waco, so it's still close enough to home. And then, I don't know. I'm not closing any possibility elsewhere, I'm just kind of taking it as it is. My dad is a little older, so I'm just taking it as it is while he's in the picture. I do really like Austin. I'm sure that you hear all—it is expensive. [laughs]

1:10:02

Angelica Mazé: Yes, yes.

Ryan Marquez: I don't want to go back to Waco to any degree. There's a lot of, personally, parts of Waco, and things that happened, and it's just not a good fit for me. I do feel much more like I can be myself here. I don't know if that had to do with working in that environment for so long where it really didn't feel like I fit in, in a lot of ways. I think about that a lot. There's other parts that go into it. But currently Austin is where it's at. I do live with my partner, and I met him here, so there's a lot of good that comes with that, and I do like it. As long as it stays affordable, I'm open to staying here. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, yeah, but it's working so far?

Ryan Marquez: So far so good, and then we'll see where it goes, and see—I would be open to living in another state at some point. Just taking it day by day.

Angelica Mazé: Well, I always ask. For what it's worth, as a never have ever had a five year plan, I always feel guilty [laughing] asking other people, "What are your plans?!"

1:11:00

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, I think that's one thing too. I don't think I've ever really made a big plan. Like I never really saw myself in a managerial position. I think I just take the opportunities as they come. I don't know what'll happen in five years, but I do enjoy where I'm at currently.

Angelica Mazé: I'm not gonna keep you for too much longer, I think we can wrap up pretty soon here. I think we had exchanged emails, and I said something about one of the reasons this whole thing came on my radar—I'd never heard of the sub-minimum wage before I moved here, cause I moved from California and that was not—

Ryan Marquez: Oh really!

Angelica Mazé —it's not a thing there.

Ryan Marquez: What is it?

Angelica Mazé: It totally varies, but—and I wasn't actually working in restaurants. My experience is more in the food production, kitchens, and bakeries and things like that, line of work.

Ryan Marquez: Cool.

Angelica Mazé: I had a lot of friends who worked in restaurants. But yeah, basically, as far as I know in the San Francisco Bay Area everybody was making minimum wage, which when I left in 2014—I probably should've looked this up ahead of time—I want to say it was twelve. It's definitely fifteen now.

1:12:10

Ryan Marquez: That's insane!

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, but they were definitely, definitely making minimum wage. There was no federal sub-minimum wage, at least in the Bay Area. So, you made minimum wage and then you made your tips on top of that.

Ryan Marquez: Wow, that's awesome. See, and that's the whole thing. We would ride on those tips and sometimes you just have a bad night, and you make like fifty bucks. And then sometimes you would pick up a shift with the hopes of, you know, you need to make x, y, z to cover a bill, like something happened, and if it doesn't work out, you're just SOL.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, and then they haven't raised it since 1991. So, it's been \$2.13 since—just like two years before you were born was the last time it was changed. So I think

about that too with cost of living and everything, like how feasible it is to do things like get a college degree, or whatever it is, whatever it is you're hoping to do.

1:13:06

Or continue to do that kind of work, but in such a way that you can afford the life that you wanna lead. Which is kind of the point of the whole project.

Ryan Marquez: Like comfortably too, without working yourself to death also.

Angelica Mazé: Yeah, yeah.

Ryan Marquez: [sighs]

Angelica Mazé: Interesting! Well, is there anything that I didn't ask you that you wish that I had, like the health insurance thing? Are there things that we didn't cover that you feel like are sort of important to this?

Ryan Marquez: You got the gist of it, yeah. I think you did a great job.

Angelica Mazé: Thanks.

Ryan Marquez: So, thanks.

Angelica Mazé: Oh yeah, totally. Well, if you think of anything else, you can always give me a shout. If a story comes to mind, or whatever, I'd love to hear it. But that's great! I'm just looking at the clock right now, but I think we're making good time, and I think we covered all kinds of good stuff. I'm so—

Ryan Marquez: OK great. I was gonna tell you just to stop me cause I just start going.

[laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Nope, that's great! I want you to go! I'm here to facilitate you going on whatever and—

1:14:03

Ryan Marquez: Fantastic!

Angelica Mazé: Thank you so much for taking time—

Ryan Marquez: Of course!

Angelica Mazé: —to meet with me today, and I'm excited for this career path that you're on, and I hope it goes well, and your new life in Austin!

Ryan Marquez: Thank you!

Angelica Mazé: And not coming back to Waco! [laughs]

Ryan Marquez: [laughing] Thanks, I'm there now and then.

Angelica Mazé: Well, yeah. Permanently.

Ryan Marquez: Yes, hopefully not. [laughs]

Angelica Mazé: Cool, well, thank you so much, Ryan. I will stop recording in a second and then we can talk a little bit more before we say goodbye—

Ryan Marquez: No problem.

Angelica Mazé: But thank you so much again. I really appreciate you taking time to talk to me today.

Ryan Marquez: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. [laughs]

[End]