



Jackie McCray
Milo's Hamburgers

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Interviewer: Michelle Little
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
Length: One hour and eighteen minutes
Project: Career Servers

[*START INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:03.12]

Michelle L.: Okay. So, this is Michelle Little, here with Jacqueline McCray, and today is February 27 of 2020. We are at the Milo's in Vestavia Hills, Alabama, and this is for the Southern Foodways Alliance Career Servers Project.

[00:00:21.28]

Jackie M.: All right.

[00:00:24.07]

Michelle L.: Jackie—do you like to be called Jackie or Jacqueline?

[00:00:25.29]

Jackie M.: I do. Jackie.

[00:00:26.21]

Michelle L.: Okay. Will you just tell me your full name and when you were born?

[00:00:32.16]

Jackie M.: My name is Jacqueline Denise McCray. I was born on August 30, 1963.

[00:00:41.26]

Michelle L.: Okay. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

[00:00:47.14]

Jackie M.: I actually was born here in Birmingham, Alabama. I was born and raised in Wenonah, which is an area near Lawson State College.

[00:00:59.25]

Michelle L.: All right. For anyone that's just never driven through Wenonah, what is that area, town like?

[00:01:07.12]

Jackie M.: Um . . . it's not a suburb, but it's a neighborhood of houses. The street that I actually grew up on, it's actually kind of funny. It actually was called Cinema Hill.

[00:01:24.03]

Michelle L.: Cinema Hill.

[00:01:26.21]

Jackie M.: Yes. It's surrounded by a lot of woods, and it's hills within the area. So, around Christmas time, we had this one big, steep hill. Every Christmas, kids had bicycles, roller skates, skateboards, wagons, and that was our playground.

[00:01:49.04]

Michelle L.: Oh, fun.

[00:01:51.28]

Jackie M.: It was. It was.

[00:01:54.17]

Michelle L.: And can you tell me a little bit about your family, your parents?

[00:01:56.22]

Jackie M.: Let's see. My family, they actually grew up in Wenonah, as well. A lot of the neighborhood went to Wenonah High School. We also had an elementary school that was called Wenonah. However, the elementary school has now vanished. It's a part of the Lawson State College now.

[00:02:26.10]

Michelle L.: Oh, okay!

[00:02:27.10]

Jackie M.: It is.

[00:02:29.06]

Michelle L.: How about that.

[00:02:31.13]

Jackie M.: Memories, memories. I mean, sweet.

[00:02:33.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:02:34.29]

Jackie M.: They were half a block from one another. So, when you went to the elementary school, you graduated, you went to the high school.

[00:02:43.07]

Michelle L.: Was there a junior high, or . . . ?

[00:02:44.20]

Jackie M.: No. We just had—elementary was from kindergarten through eighth grade, and then high school, from ninth through the twelfth grade.

[00:02:55.20]

Michelle L.: All right.

[00:02:57.10]

Jackie M.: Yeah. The high school is there, but it's been transitioned into a brand-new high school. So, it doesn't even look like the old high school that we attended.

[00:03:04.04]

Michelle L.: Oh, yeah. The kids now don't even know then, huh?

[00:03:08.13]

Jackie M.: No. So, if you were not . . . if you were not a part of the Wenonah High School dragons, which was our mascot—if you were not a part of the dragons from 1950 up until 1983, you had no idea what the old school looked like. But it was fun, it was fun. However, my daughter, she has attended the new high school.

[00:03:42.13]

Michelle L.: Oh, nice.

[00:03:43.19]

Jackie M.: So she was like, Mom, what was the old high school like? 'Course, I couldn't tell her. [Laughter] But it was fun. So, yeah. Both my parents attended Wenonah High School. From there, they were married. Then, I came along. They moved to Florida. And then they moved back home.

[00:04:09.16]

Michelle L.: Oh!

[00:04:11.14]

Jackie M.: So, that's how that went. I'm the eldest of six.

[00:04:14.25]

Michelle L.: All right.

[00:04:16.26]

Jackie M.: I am. So, let me see, how many girls? Four girls, two boys. Yeah. Dad always wanted a house full of boys, but he wound up with a house full of girls. [Laughter] Yeah. So, it was just a lot of memories.

[00:04:37.20]

Michelle L.: Do you need a tissue? I've got . . .

[00:04:38.13]

Jackie M.: I'm—yeah.

[00:04:41.02]

Michelle L.: Okay. I thought I had my handkerchief with me, but it may be in my other pocket.

[Laughter]

[00:04:45.15]

Jackie M.: I'm good, I'm good.

[00:04:45.15]

Michelle L.: I usually always keep a handkerchief with me. [Laughter]

[00:04:48.24]

Jackie M.: That's a good thing. Yeah.

[00:04:53.03]

Michelle L.: So, well, tell me a little bit about all your sisters and your two brothers.

[00:04:57.18]

Jackie M.: Let's see. Well . . . I've got Joyce, Jean, of course, I'm Jackie. We have Joyce, Jean.

We have Melvin. We have Kevin. And then we have Katrice. Everyone's here except for Kevin; he's in Tennessee.

[00:05:21.29]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:05:24.16]

Jackie M.: But everyone else is here. They're all married. They have their own families, things like that.

[00:05:30.13]

Michelle L.: That's nice.

[00:05:32.26]

Jackie M.: So, I just have the one daughter, and I've never been married.

[00:05:37.03]

Michelle L.: How 'bout that.

[00:05:37.03]

Jackie M.: That's right. Never been married.

[00:05:42.05]

Michelle L.: Well. So, who did the cooking in your family?

[00:05:48.27]

Jackie M.: Mom did the cooking. Mom did the cooking. I was always the babysitter. You know, because I was the eldest.

[00:05:56.22]

Michelle L.: You were the oldest.

[00:05:56.22]

Jackie M.: Of all of 'em, so. I had to be the one to maintain the house. Mom actually, she actually cooked; she worked two jobs, but she would have meals ready before she went to work. So, it was up to me to carouse everyone and get them in line and in order before

she actually came back home. I was responsible for laundry, you know. Chores around the house. And makin' sure that everyone under me stayed in line.

[00:06:30.00]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:06:31.14]

Jackie M.: Yeah, for sure.

[00:06:32.13]

Michelle L.: Did they pretty well stay in line, or did you have to—

[00:06:34.24]

Jackie M.: No. No. No one stayed in line. [Laughter] No one stayed in line. Somehow, I always seemed to be the one to get in trouble. [Laughter] You know, because it was always, "Well, Mommy, Jackie did this." Because I guess I was the oldest, I was supposed to be the more responsible, but somehow, I always ended up, you know, gettin' my head tore off because of what they did. I didn't like it, but you know, it was just part of growin' up.

[00:07:05.02]

Michelle L.: Yeah. You had to take the fall for them. [Laughter]

[00:07:05.22]

Jackie M.: I really did. I was the fall guy, for sure. Yeah.

[00:07:11.26]

Michelle L.: So, what was your first job? Did you start workin' in high school, or . . . ?

[00:07:16.05]

Jackie M.: Actually, my first job, my mother had a catering service. Myself and my sister under me, Joyce, worked for Mom with her catering company. We were the delivery girls, you know. We would go and help her set up at different events and things like that. Then, from there, I worked at . . . McDonald's. I've always been in the restaurant business for a long time, so it was either—from there, I went to . . . Burger King. I had a aunt that worked at Burger King, so it was fun. It was really fun workin' with her. She and I became very, very close.

[00:08:05.29]

Michelle L.: What was her name?

[00:08:08.12]

Jackie M.: Beverly. Yes. Let's see, she's my mom's . . . second-youngest sister. So, yeah, we're pretty close in age. But we were very, very tight. I enjoyed workin' with her, and she and I worked well together. From there, where was I? I moved around a lot, so I worked with Krystal. I worked with a place called Mrs. Winner's. That was a chicken place.

[00:08:44.20]

Michelle L.: I remember Mrs. Winner's, yes.

[00:08:46.21]

Jackie M.: Great, great chicken. Oh, my god, they had the best chicken ever. I don't know if we have any more of those around anymore.

[00:08:53.24]

Michelle L.: That's what I was just tryin' to think. I remember the last one I remember was downtown Birmingham.

[00:08:59.16]

Jackie M.: Yeah. But I don't know if we have any more of those around. But yeah, that was a fun place to work, because I had great managers there. So, I really, really remember that. I kinda miss that place, too. I haven't worked at another chicken place, outside of Ms. Winner's.

[00:09:18.11]

Michelle L.: Where was the location that you were . . .

[00:09:21.14]

Jackie M.: South Side, up near St. Vincent Hospital. Yeah, yeah, it was in that area. That's been some years ago. Oh, yeah, I was young, young then. But yeah, I enjoyed that place.

[00:09:37.11]

Michelle L.: So, did your mom teach you how to cook?

[00:09:39.28]

Jackie M.: Yes. I'm not great at everything, but I do pretty good. I do pretty good. Now, my sister that's under me, she's a better cook than I am. Where'd she get her talents from, I couldn't tell you. But I do pretty good. I'd say so.

[00:10:04.19]

Michelle L.: Um-hm. [Laughter]

[00:10:06.25]

Jackie M.: I just wish that I had her touch on collard greens. God, she made the best collard greens ever. She would put a little sugar in 'em, and I never understood why. I would ask her, "Mom, why'd you put sugar in your collards?" She said, "To kill the bitterness of the greens." Never knew that until I started doin' that myself. Turned out great, but they would never match her collard greens. Never.

[00:10:36.10]

Michelle L.: Oh, man. Mmm. Were there any other favorites? I mean, that sounds pretty hard to beat, but. [Laughter]

[00:10:48.10]

Jackie M.: She made good homemade gravy. She would do porkchops and rice and gravy, and the best gravy ever. Believe it or not, I just learned how to make homemade gravy.

[Laughter] I'm kind of embarrassed to even say this, but I would always make my gravy out of the jar or either packets, and mix a little water in. Tasted horrible, but that was the only way that I knew how to do it. But this year, I just really learned how to make homemade gravy.

[00:11:18.05]

Michelle L.: All right, so how do you do it?

[00:11:19.08]

Jackie M.: Well, you know, you just put a little flour in with the oil. You let it brown. It has to brown. Don't burn it, 'cause you'll be in trouble. But put a little oil in it, some flour, and get the color to where you want it to be, and then you slowly add the water in and stir. The more you stir, the thicker your gravy gets. It's the trick to it. So, now, I think I'm the best gravy-maker ever.

[00:11:49.04]

Michelle L.: I bet you are. [Laughter]

[00:11:52.16]

Jackie M.: You know, I think so. But yeah. So, the gravy's pretty good. But she did a lot of, like, pinto beans and stuff like that. I'm not real good with the pinto beans, but she taught me, anytime that you're doin' beans or greens, put some meat in 'em. I'm like, "Well, I always do bacon." I figure bacon goes with anything. Bacon tastes better with everything. So, every time I cook a bean or green, droppin' some bacon in them. It kind of brings out the flavor a little bit, but you still have to season 'em. Yeah, you do. For sure. So, that's about it. Now, Jean—I have two sisters that knows nothin' about cookin'.

[00:12:42.10]

Michelle L.: Oh, really?

[00:12:44.21]

Jackie M.: They don't. Huh-uh. Mom was the best cook, but the older two sisters, I think we got it, yeah. But the younger two, hm-mm.

[00:12:58.18]

Michelle L.: Hm-mm.

[00:13:01.03]

Jackie M.: Bless their hearts. And I can't fault them, 'cause now I've got a nineteen-year-old. She's my only daughter, but she won't know how to cook, either.

[00:13:11.12]

Michelle L.: Oh, no.

[00:13:13.10]

Jackie M.: You know. [Laughter] She told me, she said, "Mama, you know what? I'm gonna have a chef to make my meals for me." I said, "Well, you go, girl. Good for you. Because Mama's not gonna be around to cook for you all your life, so, it's best for you to get a chef or get in the kitchen."

[00:13:32.12]

Michelle L.: Well, as long as she's got a plan.

[00:13:34.14]

Jackie M.: Well, hey. Her plan is to have a chef. I ain't mad at her, not at all.

[00:13:43.11]

Michelle L.: So, you and your sister worked with your mom.

[00:13:48.21]

Jackie M.: Yeah.

[00:13:50.04]

Michelle L.: At the catering company. And so, what kind of events would she cater?

[00:13:54.06]

Jackie M.: Like wedding receptions, family reunions. Pretty much anything; baby showers.

What did we do one time? It was a summer function, and they just wanted her to, you know, caterin' in some Southern food. She had cooked up a pan of chicken wings, and she was real good at makin' pasta salad, so she taught us that trait of makin' pasta salad. The best in the world, I tell you.

[00:14:35.16]

Michelle L.: Oh, man.

[00:14:37.11]

Jackie M.: Yes. So, you know, we would do wedding receptions and certain family occasions, things like that. But we would go in, we would set up the . . . we would set up the . . . the long trays, and she would have the little . . . they're sort of like the tea light candles, but they were the burners for the actual food to keep warm. I always thought that they were just regular candles; for the longest time, I thought, "Hey, who's got a candle?" She said, "No, baby. Those are burners." So, yeah. It was fun.

[00:15:21.06]

Michelle L.: That's nice. The family business, yeah.

[00:15:21.14]

Jackie M.: Yeah.

[00:15:24.02]

Michelle L.: So, from there, you said McDonald's was your first restaurant. So, what did you start out doing at McDonald's?

[00:15:31.07]

Jackie M.: Actually, started out on the cashier. Started out right up front, you know, greeting the customers, welcoming them in and taking their orders and getting faster at my service. So, it was an experience. It was.

[00:15:50.28]

Michelle L.: Yeah. Was there anyone, either at the early McDonald's or I know you said you worked with your aunt at Burger King, was she the main person that maybe trained you and kinda . . . ?

[00:16:02.26]

Jackie M.: At Burger King, yes. At McDonald's, I had normal, regular managers that trained me. So, it was . . . it was all right. I liked it. I appreciate the experience that I gained from them, I do. And especially workin' with my aunt at Burger King, yeah. She and I had lots of fun there, we did.

[00:16:27.10]

Michelle L.: Which Burger King was it?

[00:16:30.26]

Jackie M.: Actually, it was one that was in Fairfield, but of course, it's no longer there.

[00:16:38.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah, I was just in Fairfield yesterday.

[00:16:39.28]

Jackie M.: Were you really?

[00:16:42.17]

Michelle L.: Down to interview Miss Wanda at the Milo's there.

[00:16:48.13]

Jackie M.: Right.

[00:16:49.26]

Michelle L.: Down by Western Hills, and all that.

[00:16:50.09]

Jackie M.: Oh, yeah.

[00:16:52.02]

Michelle L.: I could tell just a lot has come and gone in that area.

[00:16:54.15]

Jackie M.: At one time, it was a thriving community; now, it's like there's nothing there, little or nothing there. And I surely hate that, because there were a lot of business all along that strip over in Fairfield. It was. But a lot of stuff is closed, yeah. Terrible.

[00:17:19.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah, it really is very sad.

[00:17:23.11]

Jackie M.: So, I'm really hoping that at least that part of town, because I don't live far from Fairfield, but I would hope that part of town, you know, would come back to life, that they get some kind of revitalization going on over there.

[00:17:38.17]

Michelle L.: I hope so.

[00:17:38.18]

Jackie M.: Yeah, yeah.

[00:17:40.23]

Michelle L.: So, how long were you at that Burger King there?

[00:17:46.26]

Jackie M.: I was there for three years, and at that time, that was the longest that I held down my job. Because at that time, I was still going to school, too. But I only stayed that long, basically, because of my aunt. Yeah, yeah, I did. We had a great time. She taught me a lot there. She taught me a lot, because she was their kitchen manager. She would tell me how different stuff worked, and of course, I was working the front area there also, but she showed me how a lot of the kitchen, the back area, you know, operated. I was really amazed, because I just figured stuff was normally already ready. But when you get to the actual grill part and you start learning and see how the equipment works, because all restaurants are different. Burger King had the flame-grilled burgers. Man, those were really, really good.

[00:18:47.08]

Michelle L.: Yeah, they are.

[00:18:47.28]

Jackie M.: The fire, the actual flame-broiled, you would never think that fire, that you could actually see the fire cookin' the meat. Yeah, that was somethin' to see.

[00:18:59.07]

Michelle L.: Oh, wow.

[00:18:59.07]

Jackie M.: That was somethin' to see, mm-hm.

[00:19:03.13]

Michelle L.: Yeah, so the kitchen sounds like a lot of timing of things there.

[00:19:09.02]

Jackie M.: It was, mm-hm.

[00:19:13.00]

Michelle L.: So, did you start doing any of the cooking there?

[00:19:14.16]

Jackie M.: I did. I did. About a year and a half after I was there, yeah, I learned their procedure of makin' the sandwiches. Yes. Then, of course, that's when they started adding in new stuff, the chicken sandwiches and they started getting in, you know, like the different shakes and stuff. Because when we first started, they didn't have all of that.

[00:19:40.06]

Michelle L.: Oh, yeah.

[00:19:41.29]

Jackie M.: They didn't have the different desserts and stuff like that.

[00:19:44.10]

Michelle L.: Yeah. So, what years would this have been? [Coughs] Excuse me.

[00:19:48.11]

Jackie M.: Oh, this would have been [19]78.

[00:19:54.01]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:19:55.20]

Jackie M.: Yeah, yeah. In the late [19]70s. So, I was like, man, this is awesome. Then we got to eat whatever we wanted. That made it fun, too.

[00:20:08.05]

Michelle L.: [Laughter]

[00:20:09.08]

Jackie M.: At that time, I didn't have to worry about weight gain. [Laughter] But you wait a few years, it'll catch up with you. [Laughter] I tell you.

[00:20:20.10]

Michelle L.: Mm.

[00:20:21.21]

Jackie M.: Those were good times. They were.

[00:20:24.15]

Michelle L.: So, yeah, they've gone through a lot of changes since the [19]70s.

[00:20:29.04]

Jackie M.: They most certainly have. They have, they have. You know, back then, when the kids used to come in, they had the little paper crowns that they would give out. Yeah. I don't know what happened with that; they've done away with all that.

[00:20:45.16]

Michelle L.: Oh, I remember those! I was a kid in early [19]80s, and I remember gettin' the paper crowns.

[00:20:54.19]

Jackie M.: The little paper crowns, and you come in and get your crown, and hey. You felt like somebody.

[00:21:00.21]

Michelle L.: You did. [Laughter] It was a status symbol.

[00:21:04.16]

Jackie M.: You did. For sure.

[00:21:05.28]

Michelle L.: Now, when you were at McDonald's, did they already have the Happy Meal setup in the early . . . that would have been in the [19]70s that you were there?

[00:21:16.01]

Jackie M.: They did, but of course, they revised them and started adding the toys, because back then, we just had the fries, the sandwich, and the drink.

[00:21:26.11]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:21:27.24]

Jackie M.: But later, as the years were passing by, they started adding in the toys, the different toys and stuff like that. That's what brought in a lot of the kids, you know.

[00:21:39.06]

Michelle L.: Um-hm. That was a big deal.

[00:21:39.06]

Jackie M.: And then, too, Ronald McDonald . . . the mascot, they would have somebody dress up and he would come out and greet the customers, which I don't think was a good idea, 'cause a lot of the kids were afraid of him.

[00:21:54.06]

Michelle L.: Yeah, I did have some . . .

[00:21:56.06]

Jackie M.: 'Cause you remember the yellow and white—

[00:21:56.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:21:57.26]

Jackie M.: Suit and the big red clown boots?

[00:22:00.03]

Michelle L.: Um-hm, and the hair.

[00:22:02.29]

Jackie M.: The wild! They're like, "Ah! What in the world?" 'Cause he'd come out to the table and try to be friendly, they were not havin' any of that. No, ma'am. Um-hm. They were

like, "What man is this with the big red boots comin' to the table?" [Laughter] So, he didn't last too long after that.

[00:22:23.14]

Michelle L.: Oh, I've never thought about it like that.

[00:22:26.17]

Jackie M.: Yeah, uh-huh.

[00:22:28.16]

Michelle L.: I mean, he never scared me, but I can completely see. [Laughter]

[00:22:32.00]

Jackie M.: Yeah! You know, the little red and yellow outfit. With the white stripes. And he had

the biggest red boots I ever seen in my life. He was a fun guy, but not to the kids.

[Laughter] I say, "Uh oh, here comes trouble." Yeah, that was a sight.

[00:22:53.03]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:22:54.14]

Jackie M.: That was a sight.

[00:22:56.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah, I remember havin' my birthday party at a McDonald's.

[00:22:58.24]

Jackie M.: Really?

[00:23:00.06]

Michelle L.: Yeah, in the [19]80s.

[00:23:01.20]

Jackie M.: Wasn't that fun?

[00:23:02.28]

Michelle L.: Yes! That was a big deal.

[00:23:05.24]

Jackie M.: Was the mascot still out?

[00:23:08.25]

Michelle L.: I think so, in the early [19]80s. Now, this was in South Carolina, but . . .

[00:23:13.29]

Jackie M.: Really?

[00:23:15.11]

Michelle L.: I think they still had the mascot.

[00:23:15.12]

Jackie M.: Now, my youngest sister, Katrice, she was . . . she wasn't born then, but . . . I think she came along, like, in [19]84. 'Course, by then, you know, the mascot was gone, but she would love those McDonald's French fries. She couldn't say, "McDonald's." She called it, "RacDonald's." "I want to go to RacDonald's." [Laughter] "I want to go to RacDonald's." I'm like, "Girl, you can't go to RacDonald's." Don't tell her she couldn't go; she would have a fit. I was in charge of babysitting and I had to drive her, and we couldn't pass by McDonald's without her spazzin' out. "RacDonald's! RacDonald's!" I'd be like, "Oh, my God."

[00:24:09.04]

Michelle L.: It's pretty addictive.

[00:24:10.07]

Jackie M.: Thank God she outgrew that.

[00:24:12.06]

Michelle L.: Um-hm.

[00:24:13.26]

Jackie M.: I am so glad, 'cause it was a sight. She was not having us pass McDonald's without stopping. I said, "Man, I tell you. These little kids, sometimes, they just don't know." You know? And the restaurant business, especially if you have mascots like that, they don't know the influence that they have on little kids.

[00:24:37.05]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:24:38.26]

Jackie M.: No. She was really impressed with McDonald's.

[00:24:41.15]

Michelle L.: Um-hm. A lot of us were. [Laughter]

[00:24:46.12]

Jackie M.: She was really impressed, she was.

[00:24:50.28]

Michelle L.: Um, okay. McDonald's, then Burger King, and then what was next for you?

[00:24:59.02]

Jackie M.: And then Krystal's.

[00:24:59.16]

Michelle L.: Then Krystal's, okay. Which location were you at here in . . . ?

[00:25:06.17]

Jackie M.: What location? We had a Krystal's at Green Springs, in the Green Springs area.

[00:25:12.24]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:25:14.25]

Jackie M.: That job didn't last long. I didn't like workin' there at all, so I don't really remember much about . . . you know, 'cause that was short-lived, for real. But then, shortly after that, I got into the waitress-type work, and I worked for this place called Shoney's.

[00:25:35.14]

Michelle L.: Yeah, oh, yeah. I remember Shoney's.

[00:25:38.11]

Jackie M.: Man.

[00:25:39.19]

Michelle L.: The breakfast buffets.

[00:25:42.16]

Jackie M.: Yes. You know what, I had such an experience there, because for me, waitresin' was totally out of the realm of what I was used to doin'. When I got into that field, I was like, "Hey!" There's money to be made, of course, with the tips and all that. Once I learned the routine down, I actually started having guests to come in and just ask for me, and I never thought that I was that good of a waitress, you know, to where I would have my own special customers. But it wasn't until I was off one day, and I came in to work, and one of my team members said, "You know, Ms. So-and-so wanted to sit on your section." "I'm like, 'Are you serious?'" So, I said, well, I was askin' her, "Well, did you wait on her?" She said, "No, they wanted you." I said, "Get out of here." I thought I was the stuff then, you know. Which I was! Apparently, I was doin' something right. [Laughter] I was like, "Hey!" And the very next day, you know, I forget but she was the older lady, her and her sister used to come in all the time. And when I came back the next day, they came in, they were like, "Hey, Jackie, how are you?" I'm like, "Well, hello, how are y'all?" "Where's your section?" You know, I set 'em down, and she told me, she said, "We came in yesterday, but we didn't stay, because you were not here." I was just . . . I said, "Well, look at me. Hey." So, from that point on, I loved it when they had the Talladega races, yes, there was money to be made.

[00:27:38.04]

Michelle L.: I bet so.

[00:27:38.15]

Jackie M.: There was money to be made.

[00:27:41.01]

Michelle L.: So this Shoney's, was it near the track?

[00:27:43.13]

Jackie M.: This was actually over in the East Lake area.

[00:27:47.04]

Michelle L.: Yeah, okay.

[00:27:49.12]

Jackie M.: Well, not East Lake. Eastwood.

[00:27:51.00]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:27:52.23]

Jackie M.: Yeah, right along the Crestwood Boulevard area. Oh, man. I stayed there about seven, eight years. I really, really loved workin' at Shoney's, 'cause you got to meet a lot of different people. You know, I seen a lot of managers come and go. But the main thing was to stay here, so it was all good. It was. I remember makin' a lot of money as far as

makin' those tips. I made a lot of money workin' with Shoney's. And I was really impressed how a lot of those waitresses and waiters did that, because we had to carry the tray a certain way, and like a lot of the newcomers that were comin' in after me, they were so nervous. They would drop water and drinks all over the—oh, now that was an embarrassment. That was an embarrassment. You know, I dropped a couple of glasses in my day, but hey, I soon got over that. You know, and then I kinda just took 'em under my wing and just showed 'em the ropes. "Hey, it's no big deal if you waste a glass of water. Not a problem. Get a dry towel; a mop. We can keep it movin'." So, it was really fun. But I loved that breakfast buffet that we had with the—I'm talkin' about the whole realm of breakfast, anything you wanted. Anything that you wanted; all you can eat. Then we would set up for lunch with the hot soups of the day, the salad bar. You know, we had people that just come in and wanted soup and salad. Then, of course, the big Shoney burgers and those strawberry pies, I'll never forget 'em. Strawberry pies with the whipped cream, I became addicted to those. I did. I would have to order one, you know, quite often and bring it home, and a can of whipped cream. I was a happy girl.

[00:30:02.08]

Michelle L.: You were set to go.

[00:30:03.22]

Jackie M.: It was a happy day, it was. And I really miss, I hate that they took them out of our area.

[00:30:11.12]

Michelle L.: 'Cause they're still in other states, or I think there's some in other states. I don't know of any around here.

[00:30:17.20]

Jackie M.: There's not any more Shoney's around here. I actually worked that one in Eastwood until they, you know, got ready to close down. I couldn't understand why, because they were doin' the business. We were on the main strip. I don't know what happened, but they wound up takin' a lot of them out. I'm like, "Man, I'll never have another waitress job ever." And I didn't.

[00:30:44.17]

Michelle L.: Oh, no.

[00:30:46.17]

Jackie M.: I did not. I really liked workin' there, though.

[00:30:51.11]

Michelle L.: Yeah. So, did they have a training program specific to Shoney's, or was there someone there that showed you the ropes on waitressing when you got there?

[00:31:04.18]

Jackie M.: Yeah, that's basically what it was. Yeah. We had this lady named . . . what was her name? Ms. Mary. She was like one of their top headlinin' waitresses. She had been there a good little while, but she took everybody in and kinda showed 'em the ropes, "This is how we do it. This is what you can expect." On summer race days, which I—[Laughter] Which I was thrown aback because I really didn't realize how much fun that a lot of the guys would have comin' in to the races, phew. Man. [Laughter] Well, they be hungry, but they'd been already drunk breakfast before they got there. Oh, my God. They get a little out of hand, and we had an incident one time where we had to escort the people out because they were just rowdy, they were rude.

[00:32:07.23]

Michelle L.: Oh, no.

[00:32:09.09]

Jackie M.: And they were boisterous, and they were just, they didn't even think of Shoney's as a restaurant. I guess it was a pick-up place to them, because they had to go, you know. We weren't even able to serve them. I said, "Well, you know, that's kinda rough, you know." But they were just wild. And when you get a group like that, we wasn't allowed to wait on them, because it was kind of certain incidents that wasn't supposed to happen. But yeah, outside of that, it was a great place to work.

[00:32:46.12]

Michelle L.: I just wouldn't have thought that the race day in Talladega would have affected—

[00:32:51.13]

Jackie M.: Yeah, you know.

[00:32:53.26]

Michelle L.: That area.

[00:32:53.26]

Jackie M.: They would come in town and they would just be . . . they would be like a live wire.

[Laughter] I'm like, "Uh oh. Somebody's got a full party back there." And they were already partyin', you know, when they came in. But I used to have some pretty . . . decent groups. You know, it'd be one or two kinda get loud with you, but they tip really, really well. So, that was the part that I liked. I didn't like the rowdiness, but hey, I was on top of 'em. You know, yeah, I liked that experience that I got at Shoney's. I really did.

[00:33:34.15]

Michelle L.: So, what schedules did you work when you were there? Was it set, pretty much, or did you get to pick?

[00:33:41.24]

Jackie M.: Yeah, 'cause I would go in at, like, seven in the morning, work the breakfast shift, come straight in through lunch. I think I would get off about four, 4:30 in the evenin's, and then we had to have the, you know, five o'clock shift come in. But yeah, used to roll

up that silverware, get your area stocked, catch up. Salt, pepper, just get your area stocked. By that time—and it was good, because we didn't have to share our tips then.

[00:34:13.12]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:34:14.23]

Jackie M.: So, every dollar or dime that we made was ours to keep. We didn't have a shared pot.

[00:34:23.04]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:34:23.07]

Jackie M.: So, I was glad about that, too.

[00:34:27.12]

Michelle L.: So, you'd do your sidework kind of in the mornin's, and then . . .

[00:34:31.08]

Jackie M.: Kinda in between breakfast and lunch, when it kinda slows down, because we're movin' out of breakfast into lunch. So, we don't really have that—we have that little time frame to go ahead and get your stuff set up for the next shift. Then, when we leave, if we needed our area stocked, we would do that again. But after that, wasn't much to it. You

know, because we just took care of the front of the house. And like the kitchen manager took care of the back of the house, so there wasn't a—we didn't serve alcoholic drinks, so we didn't have to worry about a bar. You know. So, that was pretty good.

[00:35:15.15]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:35:16.28]

Jackie M.: I really, really loved that job. That was one of my favorites. Yeah.

[00:35:21.14]

Michelle L.: So, when they closed, then what'd you do?

[00:35:28.05]

Jackie M.: Let me see. I went, where did I go . . . ?

[00:35:33.01]

Michelle L.: And what year would that have been, when they shut down . . . ?

[00:35:37.26]

Jackie M.: Oh, man, that was, like in the . . . like middle-[19]80s, I want to say [19]85, [19]86.

Might have been a little sooner than that, but yeah. Yeah, it was in the [19]80s, for sure.

Then, after that was when I went to Mrs. Winner's. Yeah, I went there. They had the best

cinnamon rolls in the morning, man. Rolls be about this big. Seriously! And they had the best, oh, my god. I forget, they had a special name for 'em, though. The . . . the winner bun or something like that.

[00:36:31.11]

Michelle L.: Winner bun . . .

[00:36:36.19]

Jackie M.: Yeah, 'cause they wanted to take part of the restaurant name. I guess as a marketin' somethin' or another. But, yeah, I believe it was called the winner bun. But those were the best. You could just eat one and have a cup of coffee, you know? And that's breakfast. They were just that big.

[00:36:57.03]

Michelle L.: And maybe part'a lunch.

[00:36:59.16]

Jackie M.: Yeah. But they were really, really big. Those were some of the biggest cinnamon rolls I had ever seen in my life. They were really good. Yeah, I did that, and then I started workin' with a temp service and doin' some other things, like workin' as a mail sorter. What else? I did some hospital work, worked as a . . . as a . . . what do you call it . . . ? As a patient transport.

[00:37:35.05]

Michelle L.: Oh, okay.

[00:37:37.02]

Jackie M.: Yeah, yeah. So, I was likin' that. Just didn't last long. Restaurant was really where I felt most comfortable at.

[00:37:46.05]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:37:47.23]

Jackie M.: I didn't feel too comfortable workin' as a mail sorter because wasn't many people comin' and goin', and it was, like, three of us in a room. We would just sort mail all day. That was so boring. That was job was not . . . it was just ho-hum, you know. You just sort mail, mail goes, mail come in. You sort mail all day. But it was a different experience, you know, but somethin' I wouldn't want to do every day. Patient transport, I was cool with that, 'cause I got to see a lot of different people come in and out of the hospital and stuff like that. Now, what scared me the most was the really sick patients. And I was like, "Oh, no." I was too sensitive for that type of work. I didn't want to see anybody really sick or close to dying or anything like that, and I saw a lot of that, you know.

[00:38:52.05]

Michelle L.: So, that was within a hospital, or was it with the ambulance service, or . . . ?

[00:38:58.15]

Jackie M.: No, it was actually within the hospital, yeah.

[00:39:00.13]

Michelle L.: Like getting 'em to and from different rooms. Okay, gotcha.

[00:39:07.02]

Jackie M.: Yeah. So, that was kinda just a little too sensitive for me. I remember one time they called the clergy in for the family, one of their members were dying and they were tore up. And I was tore up with 'em, and I didn't even know these people, but I'm like, this is not the job for me. 'Cause I wouldn't be able—I wore my emotions here, and it was just too much.

[00:39:39.09]

Michelle L.: Sure.

[00:39:40.19]

Jackie M.: And I don't want to stay and stay around that environment, 'cause it was kind of depressing. The job itself wasn't bad, but you had somebody really big you had to transport, I needed some help with. [Laughter] But outside of that, it was just the sensitivity of seein' somebody sick and close to death. I couldn't handle that, not for a very long time. So, I left there and got back in the restaurant business. Then, where else

did I go? I think I went back to . . . McDonald's. 'Cause I had moved from one side of town to the other, and so, McDonald's then was the easiest job to get. That's what I did. In fact, there's where I was workin' before I came to Milo's.

[00:40:38.20]

Michelle L.: Okay. And does McDonald's have a pretty rigorous training? It seems like they're—I mean, I've heard they have a very specific way of doing a lot of things, so they have a pretty . . .

[00:40:54.15]

Jackie M.: They really do. They do. But you know, it's just the add-ons. It's like they've got a huge variety on their menu board, and it's like, every so often, they would add in somethin' new. They would decide if they're gonna keep it or not. A lot of times, if it didn't go over well with the customers, 'course, they'd get rid of it. But they were just always adding something new to the menu, and so, you either deal with it or you get with the program or you get out of it, you know. But it was okay. Yeah, it was. So, once I did that, I kinda got tired of going in one place to another, and I found Milo's and have been here ever since.

[00:41:52.20]

Michelle L.: And what year did you come to Milo's?

[00:41:53.16]

Jackie M.: 1998.

[00:41:55.25]

Michelle L.: Okay. And was it—which location? This location wouldn't have been here in the [19]90s, would it?

[00:42:03.20]

Jackie M.: No. Actually, it was a Milo's across the street, where the Pine Straw—

[00:42:12.25]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:42:14.04]

Jackie M.:—Building is, that was the old Milo's. That was the actual building that I started in.

[00:42:19.23]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:42:21.07]

Jackie M.: In 1998.

[00:42:23.17]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:42:24.26]

Jackie M.: Uh-huh, and I made a true, dear, dear friend of mine. She came in after me, but her
and I are still friends to this day.

[00:42:33.23]

Michelle L.: What's her name?

[00:42:34.29]

Jackie M.: Her name is Felicia Kirksy. Yes. And she and I have been . . . we met and we have
been friends to this day. Believe it or not, she started right after I did, like a couple'a
months later after I came on in [19]98, which is, I think August of [19]98. So, we worked
there, and two years later, both she and I were pregnant.

[00:43:08.09]

Michelle L.: Oh!

[00:43:10.03]

Jackie M.: At the same, same time. She had her baby in April, and my daughter was born in July
of that same year.

[00:43:16.21]

Michelle L.: How 'bout that.

[00:43:20.02]

Jackie M.: Yes. And our girls are the same age. They've grown up together, so she's a real special, dear friend of mine. She really is. But that was . . . the old Milo's, it was fun, except or when it rained real bad, because we were next to the creek. When the creek rise, rised up, the floods began. The building used to flood out a lot. That old Milo's had carpet in the dining room, it was not a good idea for the flood. It would rain, rain would literally be in the building. We'd have to squeegee the water out. It was somethin' serious. One time it rained, it rained so bad, the cars started floating because we were next to a car lot.

[00:44:11.28]

Michelle L.: Right.

[00:44:13.09]

Jackie M.: Yeah. The cars started floating, and it was so funny, the guys from the car lot, they were running out with all these different keys, trying to move the cars off the lot and across the street. Man, that was a sight that I had never seen before. I'm like, "God! I never knew that it would flood like that." But it did. It did. You know, they used to have to close a lot of times when it rained real hard. They would have to shut the building down. So, they were losing a lot of money in the old building, and decided to put us up on a hill at this place so we didn't have to worry about floods here. So, that's a good, good thing. But that was fun. It was. I enjoyed that.

[00:45:01.21]

Michelle L.: So, what was the training like shifting over to this company?

[00:45:08.22]

Jackie M.: It was really a whole lot easier than any training that I had ever had, you know, because the menu was simple. You know? Wasn't really much to pick up on. You just had to learn the ways of the business, how to do. But outside of that, once you picked up on that, easy-breezy. Just flow through and, you know, the better that you get, attitude, you know, that it came. I guess that's why I've stayed so long, 'cause it's a easy job, simple menu. We don't have a lot; we don't add a lot. They're tryin' to bring in some different things, but it's a little at a time, it's not just overwhelming like it was at McDonald's. We would have chicken sandwiches and chicken tenders and—well, the chicken nuggets. Then they wanted to bring in the grilled chicken; all these different sandwiches. And wanted to sell fish. I mean, to me, if you're gonna be a hamburger place, stick to one thing or two. Don't try to sell hot dogs and all that. You know. Leave that to Sneaky Pete's. [Laughter]

[00:46:30.06]

Michelle L.: Right.

[00:46:31.22]

Jackie M.: That's what I say, 'cause they have good hot dogs.

[00:46:34.02]

Michelle L.: Yes, they do. [Laughter]

[00:46:37.03]

Jackie M.: I love their sauce.

[00:46:39.17]

Michelle L.: Um-hm.

[00:46:41.13]

Jackie M.: Yes, I do. So, it was a whole lot easier, comin' to Milo's, than any other place that I had worked.

[00:46:51.10]

Michelle L.: And did you start out in the register, or the kitchen, or what . . .

[00:46:56.13]

Jackie M.: Actually, I started out in the kitchen. I was doing fries. I started out on fries and worked fryers for a couple years, two or three years, and then they started to put me in the drive-thru window, and I was doin' that. You know. But then, they started gettin' the timers in on us. You know, you had a certain time to take the order, certain time to move the cars out. In the beginning, we didn't have that. So you can kinda chit-chat with the customers when they come in. But when they started gettin' the time, hey, we gotta move,

we're on a timer, so it wasn't that personal . . . you know, conversation that you would get with some of your people. It was like, "Hey, here's your order. Bye." But it was okay. I loved workin' drive thru windows, especially in the spring and summer. I don't like it cold.

[00:47:53.28]

Michelle L.: Right.

[00:47:56.12]

Jackie M.: So, I wasn't too thrilled when the weather changed. But I hung on in there, and eventually, I got moved to the front counter. Then I got training on the grill, which I love that. I do.

[00:48:09.12]

Michelle L.: Okay. Now, how does the timing in the drive thru work? This has always fascinated me. I mean, so, you're saying now y'all have a timer that tells you exactly when to do, but just—

[00:48:23.20]

Jackie M.: Yeah. Actually, we've got a timer, and when the car pulls up, we have, like, three seconds to at least answer the speaker. Customer gives the order. They drive around, and I think we have, like, a minute and a half, somethin' like that, to get 'em out.

[00:48:41.27]

Michelle L.: Wow.

[00:48:43.18]

Jackie M.: So, we have to be really proficient on that drive thru.

[00:48:49.02]

Michelle L.: Yeah, I'm always amazed. I don't know how y'all do it. [Laughter]

[00:48:52.14]

Jackie M.: Comes with a lot of, you know, let's get it; let's go; let's go ahead and do this. Outside of that, if you're dragging or something like that and the red light comes on, then it doesn't really make much of a difference, but it just pushes your time back. And Milo's wants you to have a decent drive thru time 'cause we have a lot of people come in, they're on lunch break, they just want to come in, grab somethin', and go.

[00:49:30.05]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:49:31.18]

Jackie M.: So, when you get some of your regulars comin' through, you know like I say, you don't really have time for the, "Hey, girl. What's been happenin'?" You don't have time for the chit chat. And that kinda seems impersonal, because they'd be like, "Well, you

used to talk to me, but now you just kinda whisk me away, you know what I mean?"

[Laughter] But it's not on us, so.

[00:49:54.22]

Michelle L.: Right.

[00:49:56.10]

Jackie M.: So, kinda let 'em know, "Hey, it's a great day, but I gotta get your order to you. I'll see ya when you come back."

[00:50:03.23]

Michelle L.: Right. Come inside next time.

[00:50:08.22]

Jackie M.: Yeah. Pretty much.

[00:50:09.02]

Michelle L.: Now, you said a red light will go off. Is it like y'all have lights on the walls, or . . . ?

[00:50:18.13]

Jackie M.: We've actually got a screen, and we have a green light and a red light. As long as you're staying in the green, you're good. When the light turns red, that means you've taken up too much time, either with the order on the headset or with the order at the

window. That's why they tell us now, a lot of times if you have—like if they want fries without salt or if they want a specialty item, you know, grilled chicken, we cook that to order. So, a lot of the times, we don't want 'em sittin' at the window, waitin' on the sandwich to cook, which takes about two minutes. But that's two minutes of time that's—suppose the car behind 'em just have a drink. Well, let's just pull them down and get the one behind 'em out with a drink, and then we can take it out. Not a big problem. But you know, they like to keep that time in the green, under a minute and a half. So, we work hard to do that.

[00:51:29.13]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:51:30.23]

Jackie M.: We do.

[00:51:32.18]

Michelle L.: Do y'all have a lotta regulars?

[00:51:36.29]

Jackie M.: We do. We do.

[00:51:39.03]

Michelle L.: Do they work kinda—

[00:51:43.06]

Jackie M.: Yeah, they live in and around this area. We see quite a few customers every day, almost.

[00:51:48.18]

Michelle L.: Wow.

[00:51:50.25]

Jackie M.: Yeah. If they don't come in and get nothin' but a drink. A lot of times, they'll come in just to say hi. And that's a good thing, because you really don't know the impression that you make on certain people. You know? You're just doing your job, you know what I mean? You're not out to really impress anybody, but hey, it's the way that you speak to 'em or the way that you interact with them. But they come back, and you really don't know unless they tell you. They be like, "Girl, you don't know. You really made my day the other day. I was down in the dumps." I'm like, "For real? I didn't pick up on that." You know, "I didn't notice that." But they were like, "Girl, I had so much goin' on and you came in, and you were just your normal self. You just made me smile. You made me laugh." I'm like, "Really? I wasn't tellin' jokes, but hey, whatever works." So, that really, really, really . . . that really, really sets apart, just like from normal guests that'll be drivin' through. I've even had some customers that, passin' through, goin' out of town, and they will tell me, "I came in this place." They knew about the tea that we sell in the stores, but they never knew about the actual restaurant. You know, of course, we have the little

pictures and the sayings about the Milo's way and how it began and stuff like that. And they're like, "I came in this place and never knew that Milo's actually had a restaurant, that they actually sold the burgers. We knew about the tea, but your experience when I came," say, " You were one of the best customer service representatives that I had interacted with." Because a lot of places, they'll let you go, "May I take your order?" It's just . . . no personality, basically; no feelings or anything. You know, I come in, I want to know how you're doin'. Are you all right today? Then, "May I take your order?" And I do that to every one of my guests that come up to that register. I do that to every one of my guests. And that's the way that I want to be treated. I went in to a restaurant—I won't call their name—and some young people were workin' there and everything. "Hey!"

[00:54:33.05]

Unidentified male: Can I say hey to this movie star?

[00:54:33.10]

Michelle L.: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

[Pause in recording]

[00:54:37.24]

Jackie M.: But, yeah, as I was saying, when I went into a restaurant—I won't call their name—and it was some young people at the register, and we've been kinda in a mood here to where we speak to our guests, time they walk in the door. I'm used to that. I've been with

the company now for twenty-one years, so they like—I walk in the door, and it's like I was invisible. You know, nobody said hey or welcome to the place, so I'm lookin' kinda crazy. I'm like, "What kinda people are these here?" Then, when I get up to the register, I don't get a nice, warm greeting that I give out—which I don't know why I was expecting that, 'cause I was in a different place. But I was. It's just like, "Well, may I take your order?" I thought about it; I said, "Well, no. I changed my mind. Thanks, but no thanks." 'Cause I didn't like the way that I was—you know. I'm comin' in, I'm spendin' my hard-earned money. Money doesn't come easy; I really work for every coin that I get, and then this is the service that I'm gonna pay for? I don't want it. I walked out. Yeah, I was outta there. I really wanted where I went, but I said, "I'll catch 'em another day. I'll catch 'em another time." That time, it wasn't a good time.

[00:56:07.19]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[00:56:09.05]

Jackie M.: Yeah. So I was like, "Golly, they might need to come and get some Milo's trainin'."

[Laughter] I am so serious, 'cause baby, y'all, what y'all doin' ain't happenin'. No. Unh-uh. I've got a really good, dear friend of mine; he and I go out to eat quite often. He knows that I love my food hot. I don't like cold food. And he knows that I will send it back. He says, "Baby, why, do you really trust sending your food back?" I said, "Well, I never really thought about it. I just like my food hot. If it's not the way I want it, I'mma send it back, give 'em a chance to get it right." He said, "Now, you know, they serve folks, they

do certain things to your food." I went, "Uh oh. Never thought about it that way, but you are right." So, this past Sunday, we celebrated my dad's seventy-fifth birthday. His birthday was actually Monday on the twenty-fourth, and we went to this place called the Perfect Note. Beautiful restaurant, nice. They have a live band. I was so impressed, I mean, 'cause that was my first time there. My food came out cold. Uh oh. And I just had 'em take it all back, and they say, "Well, you want me to make it right?" I said, "No." 'Cause I thought about what my friend had said, don't send it back 'cause you don't know what they'll do to it. I said, "Well, no, just take it off the menu." 'Cause I'm listenin' to what he's talkin' about. I'm like, "No, I don't want anything." I had to wait until after the celebration was over—'course, I was nibblin' off his plate, but I waited until after the celebration was over and went and got somethin' somewhere else.

[00:58:16.05]

Michelle L.: Oh, no.

[00:58:18.23]

Jackie M.: I'm just a stickler about my food comin' out. That's just the way I am. But he was like, "So, you're not gonna eat?" I said, "I would've if it was hot. If it had'a came out hot, I woulda ate it, but it didn't. And because of what you've already put in my ear, now it's stuck in my head. I don't want it back." Just hey, they tried everything in their power. They said, "Well, we'll fix it all over." But it was a big group of us and half of the table hadn't got served yet, so I knew if I sent mine back, I would be all the way at the end of the line. I didn't want to do it. I just said, "No, just take it off the ticket." I drunk my little

water and nibbled off my friend's plate, and went and got something to eat after we left. I'm like, "Man, I cannot do cold food." But I was fine up until he put that bug in my ear about what they'll do. I'm like, "Man, you should've never told me that." [Laughter] I would've been alright, havin' them remake it or zap it in the microwave, whatever they had to do. I'm like, ugh. Now . . . hey, just take it off the ticket. He said, "I cannot believe you." I said, "Well, I can't believe you put that in my head, but you did." So, that was that. But yeah, when I have certain people, you walk in, they can't have salt. They want some French fries or fresh chicken, I try to go all out and make sure they get what they ask for. To me, it's not a problem, 'cause I do understand. You want your food hot and fresh; me, too. If you don't mind waiting, I'll be glad to do it for you. If I have to drop it myself. But we have some, "I'm not makin' that over," whatever. Well, why not? It's part of your job. I don't see why you wouldn't. I mean, you wouldn't want anybody to do you like that. So. Workin' in the restaurant'll give you a whole insight into what goes on in and around different places that you go and eat. It does.

[01:00:44.09]

Michelle L.: Yeah. So, what's a typical day like for you here? Just kind of when do you get here, start to finish?

[01:00:53.23]

Jackie M.: I get here at six in the morning. My shift is usually six to three, six to 3:30. Pretty much set. And I like those hours, 'cause my daughter, she works at night, so it kinda works out since we only have one car. But I come in in the mornings. I set up the dining

room. A lot of times, night shift'll have the chairs on the tables. First thing I do is put the chairs back down, and then I set up the drink station and my napkins, my condiment station. I set that up. Then, I go to the back and I start on lunch prep. I slice lemons, I peel onions, cut 'em, chop 'em. I have to wash . . . regular lettuce in ice, wash it, rinse it, cut it, split it down the middle. We have—which is so funny. We have a biscuit cutter now that we make that little circular lettuce out of. We have it a certain way, so we do the biscuit cutter with the lettuce, and it really turns out great. Because once you put that lettuce in that ice, it kind of gives it a hard chill, and it's crunchy. So, I like that.

[01:02:30.15]

Michelle L.: Um-hm.

[01:02:32.04]

Jackie M.: And I take pride in whatever work that I do. Wash tomatoes, we slice tomatoes. We prep sauce bottles for the grill, and we prep the ketchup and the mayonnaise, because we have the thick-style burgers that doesn't have the Milo's sauce on it. So, we put ketchup and mayonnaise on it. And once I do that, we cook those nice, delicious pies with that powdered sugar. Oh, man, the best. Some mornings, there's a bad morning and we mix up the apple and the lemon. Not intentionally. [Laughter] But we actually had a young lady that did that this morning. I had a couple'a guests come up through lunch, and they were like, "I got a lemon. I asked for a lemon pie. Got a lemon box. But I had apple in my box." I'm like, "Uh oh. That does happen." Yeah, 'cause the apple and lemon pies, they're shaped the same. So, unless you split 'em open, you don't really know what they are. But

somebody wasn't payin' attention this mornin', so. [Laughter] They kinda had a surprise in their box. But this is a great place to work. I love workin' at Milo's. You know. 'Cause the friends that you meet and the people that you work with, they're friendly—most of 'em. They're friendly. They make you feel welcome, and then the customers, even around Christmastime, just unexpected. We'll have some customers come in and give us gifts.

[01:04:29.19]

Michelle L.: Oh.

[01:04:31.11]

Jackie M.: That really, really, really touches my heart. I'm like, "Really? You didn't have to do that." "Listen, girl, you have been—every time we come here, anything we ask for, you go out of your way to get it. So, this is just somethin' that I want to show you as appreciation." And I had one lady tell me one time, "Don't block my blessin'. If I want to give you something, you take it." I'm like, "Yes ma'am. Yes, ma'am. I will not block your blessing." She said, "I'm giving you this and do not turn it down." "Yes, ma'am." I'm not hard-headed. So, it's all right. But I was really touched last week. One of our managers, I was feelin' kinda, kinda down, and . . . I was havin' a rough mornin', so he said . . . "You know what?" Actually, I was missing my mother, and it was her death anniversary. So, it just really wasn't a good morning. And he told me, he said, "You know what? Before the end of the day, you are going to be a blessing to somebody." I was like, "Well, you know. Okay." I was still doin' my thing, you know. And lo and behold, it was lunchtime. Let me pause for just a second.

[01:06:25.03]

Michelle L.: Yes, absolutely.

[Pause in recording]

[01:06:28.11]

Jackie M.: And so, he said, "Before the day is over with, you're gonna be a blessing." So, it kinda went over my head. I'm like, "Well, yeah." You know. And right in the middle of lunch, I had three people come up to the register. They were . . . some older guests. It was a man and two women. Well, the two ladies, they were blind. And so . . . they were askin' me, they said, "What kinda burgers do you sell?" I went through the whole menu, told 'em every burger, you know. They asked me, "Well, do you have mushrooms and Swiss cheese?" I said, "Well, no, ma'am. We don't have mushrooms. We do have American cheese." I said, "We do have . . ." I said, "We do have a burger where we don't put the sauce on it." I told her what comes on the burger, just the whole realm. She said, "Well," she said, "Well, do you all have onion rings?" I said, "No, ma'am, but we do have a new broccoli slaw." And so, we just pushed that out. It's pretty good; I tasted it, it's pretty good. So, she was askin' me about the drink products. She said—I said, "Well, we have Coke products and sweet, unsweet, and Splenda tea, and fruit punch and lemonade." Just the whole realm. So, they placed their order, and she told me what she wanted. I took it down. And we were busy, so I knew what each of the ladies wanted and exactly how they wanted it. So, I asked my manager, "Well, will you hold down the register when their

order came up?" I said, "I need you to hold down the register for a second," I said, "Because I want to deliver their orders to 'em instead of callin' out their numbers." And in fact, they were sittin' at that booth over to the left of us, over . . . When I brought their food to the table, you know, 'cause she wanted unsweet tea and she wanted a lot of lemons and I set it up for her, just as she asked. The other lady said, "Well, I'll just take mine regular." You know. So, I put their hands over their cups, and that lady, she told me, she said, "You know what." She said, "I just have to tell you that you are such a blessing to my sister and I." She said, "Because a lot of places that we go . . . people just want to brush us off. We ask about the menu and they don't want to tell us." She said, she asked me what my name was, and I told her, you know, that my name was Jackie. She said, "Jackie," she said, "You have been so patient with my sister and I." She said, "I want to thank you so much." She said, "You don't understand how a lot of places that we go, we don't get this." She said, "People just want to rush us off and brush us off and say, 'Well, just order something.'" Or whatever. And I thought, how cruel and mean is that? If they were blind, they would want somebody to have patience and take time out with them. And it just made me think . . . of how great of a job that my mama did in raising me. And the fact that she's gone . . . and she instilled that in me made me feel so good. I mean, you know, I was just like—man. My manager must've saw this coming, because I had no clue. I didn't have a clue.

[01:11:04.08]

Michelle L.: Aww.

[01:11:05.29]

Jackie M.: But for them to tell me, you know, that they want to come back, that made me feel so good. I'm doin' somethin' right. And it just goes to show, you know, you never know. Because I had no idea that I would have been a blessing to them, because I started out kind of downcast and just sorrowful, but I was intent on goin' through my day. But when she told me, she said, "Nobody has ever had that type of patience with my sister and I. We like to come out and eat. We're just blind." You know? "But other than that, nothing's wrong." I'm like, "Man." Then of course, I bawled out.

[01:11:54.17]

Michelle L.: Like we both are now. [Laughter]

[01:11:58.06]

Jackie M.: But it was just such . . . I must be doin' something right.

[01:12:04.21]

Michelle L.: Yes.

[01:12:06.04]

Jackie M.: But that really made me feel good, that I had actually touched a feelin' in those women that were blind. And I was just simply doin' my job. She asked me, hey, what do we have? I went through the whole scenario of what we have. She said, "You know, you don't find a lot of people that would take time out with you like that and have patience."

She said, "But blessings to you, and you will be blessed for that." So I'm like, "Hey, it's gotta be something." And it brought me back to a point, my daughter and I, my father was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer last year in April. My daughter and I, I gave up my home that we had lived in for fifteen years to go and move in with him to take care of him. So, he's doing great. He's lost some weight, but he's still, you know, his mind is good. He can still drive. I just thank God for that, you know, 'cause we lost Mom, and really not too long ago. So, but I knew that she would want me to do that. I don't think it has anything to do with me being the oldest daughter. It's in here. I took care of her when she was on her last legs, so it was only natural for me to step in and look out for him. He doesn't always tell me a lot of times—me and my mom, we were super close, but he doesn't always say it, now. But I'm startin' to see his appreciation for me bein' there with him and stuff like that. That does a heart good. I'm like, "Yeah, you try to be so tough, but I got you." [Laughter] He tries to be tough and all that. 'Course, he's Dad, he's always been strong to me. So, it's like when I see him weak, it's like, "Aw. You were always the one that held us up." But I'm just so thankful that he turned seventy-five and he's still drivin' and he's got his mind and everything goin'. But he really appreciates my daughter and I bein' there. I had asked him, I said, "Hey. How does it feel to live with a teenager again?" 'Cause she's nineteen. She's in college, and she works, and she likes to play her music where everybody can hear it. I'll be like, "Hey. Turn that down. You see Dad's in there tryin' to rest." She's like, "But Mom, I want to hear my music." So, I just ask about, I say, "How do you like livin' with a teenager?" He said, "Oh, it's all right. I lived with y'all when y'all were teenagers." I said, "But that's been some years ago." I said, "I'm talkin' about now. I know y'all don't want to hear all that racket now. You were younger

then, now you're older, and here she is playin' music for you like you want to hear all that noise." He said, "Not a problem." So that lets me know that he appreciates her bein' there, too.

[01:15:42.26]

Michelle L.: I'm sure.

[01:15:44.17]

Jackie M.: Even as she is. I'm like, man, it's a mess. Yeah. But you know, he is so spoiled. He is just spoiled rotten. Because when I want to go and stay at my friend's house or somethin', my daughter, she said, "Now, you know Grandpa miss you." I say, "I'm only gone for a night or two, a day. I'm comin' back." She said, "But Ma. When you go, he don't have anybody to bring him any water." I'm like, "What? He's not helpless. He can get up and go and get himself—" She's like, "Ma, but you got Grandpa spoiled." I said, "Do I really?" She said, "Yes, you do." I be like, "He's gon be alright." [Laughter] So, I tell you. But I mean, it is something.

[01:16:41.02]

Michelle L.: Yeah.

[01:16:42.12]

Jackie M.: I don't know.

[01:16:44.06]

Michelle L.: Well, is there anything we didn't cover that you wanted to talk about about your career? Is there anything you wish people knew about what you do?

[01:16:53.12]

Jackie M.: Well, no, 'cause, I mean, it is what is. I mean, it's a job. I like it. I like what I do, because I do get to interact with people. So, whether somebody understands it or not doesn't make me any difference. I like what I do. And so, you know, somebody told me years ago when I was workin' at Shoney's, this guy, he was . . . he was the dishwasher, and he said he was raised by his grandmother. He said that his grandmother told him, "Son, it doesn't matter what you do, what type of job that you have, but you try to be the best at it." He said that she told him, "If you work on the garbage truck, you be the best one on the garbage truck. Don't you leave a cigarette butt behind." That really meant something to me then. I'm like, "Grandmama's right. It doesn't matter what you do. The point is to be the very best at what you do." So, that's what I try to be.

[01:18:11.04]

Michelle L.: Well, thank you so much.

[01:18:13.27]

Jackie M.: You are welcome.

[End of interview]