

**BECKY KING  
WINK's DINER  
Selmer, Tennessee**

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Date: March 2, 2106  
Location: Wink's Diner, Selmer, TN  
Interviewer: Sara Wood  
Transcription: Shelley Chance  
Length: Thirty-eight minutes  
Project: A Hamburger by Any Other Name

START INTERVIEW

00:00:00

Becky King: From Wink’s of course [*Laughs*]

00:00:03

Sara Wood: Did you make it yourself?

00:00:05

BK: Sure; Charlene makes the biscuits and I do the meet when I come in. That’s what I do; I start with the bacon and sausage and get--start getting ready, yes.

00:00:15

SW: Okay; all right. This is what I usually do. I know it’s a little weird. I kind of kneel down a little bit.

00:00:26

BK: Okay.

00:00:27

SW: So I’m going to just start--I’m going to start rolling.

00:00:31

BK: Okay.

00:00:33

SW: Okay; okay Miss Becky will you just start by saying hello and introducing yourself and telling me who you are and where we are right now?

00:00:43

BK: Okay. Hello; my name is Becky King. I’m at--we’re at Wink’s Diner in Selmer, Tennessee.

00:00:50

SW: Perfect.

00:00:50

BK: Okay.

00:00:50

SW: And for the record, will you tell me your birth date?

00:00:52

BK: My birthday is May 6, 1961. I don’t care to tell you what year I’m born; a lot of people do, but I don’t care to.

00:01:01

SW: Can you start by telling me how you got started working at Wink’s here and what year it was?

00:01:06

BK: Uh let me see. It’s been sixteen years ago, which was what year? I don’t even know. Maybe 1999, I believe; yes, it was 1999 or ’98, which one I think. Actually I knew Randy, Wink and Charlene’s son. I went to school with both of them but Randy and I were really good friends and he--he was in--at the time he was running the restaurant. And he asked me if I wanted a job, and I said, you know, at the time I needed one, so I said sure. So I came in and I’ve just been kind of adopted and I’ve been here ever since. Wink and Charlene are like mama and daddy to me and I’m kind of--oh, I tell them all the time I’m the daughter they never had. So this is pretty much what we’ve done, you know.

00:01:48

SW: And for people who don’t know Wink and Charlene, will you--will you introduce them by their full names and tell me a little bit about them?

00:01:56

BK: Okay; Wink and Charlene--actually Wink’s name is Stanley Watkins and then his wife is Charlene Watkins. They originally--Wink is from Corinth, Mississippi and Charlene is from Guys, Tennessee. They got married I think in 1958 or ’59 and Wink has worked at several big factories. He was like the supervisor or the plant manager or something like that at ITT in Corinth and he’s worked several places. And in 1984 or ’85 he bought this restaurant.

00:02:25

And he you know--and a few years later, Charlene was working at Wurlitzer I think in Corinth and a couple years or two or three years later she--he got her to quit to come and help him because the business was so good at that time. He actually needed more help. So that’s how they got into this. And they’ve been here up until September 1<sup>st</sup> of last year and that’s when I took over. And Charlene had gotten--she had been taking care of Randy who had cancer for like two years before she--they retired, and after Randy passed away a little over a year or later than that she took a fall down the stairs at home. And during this time while she was in the hospital they discovered she has--had leukemia. So they decided to go ahead and retire.

00:03:10

Charlene is--you know they’re both right at eighty years old and they--I think they’ve done really well working like they have. Wink would come in at 4:30 and work all day; both of them would you know. But she--thank God she’s in remission and she found out yesterday. She is in remission and we’re all just so grateful. But they have been here; they’ve done a really good

business and they asked me did I want to do it when they decided to retire and I said yes because I’ve been here for so long and the last two or three years I’ve actually helped them run this place. I knew about the ordering and the banking and you know--and stuff like that. And so when they asked me would I be interested I told them yes, I would.

00:03:48

And so you know I want to make them proud of me because like I say they are like mama and daddy to me. And I--the business has done really well so far for me as--as like for them, so that’s how we got into this.

00:04:02

SW: And Becky can you tell me a little bit about--you said that you know you were talking about this throughout the day how Wink and Charlene are like family to you; can you explain that a little bit more?

00:04:12

BK: Okay; well I told you that when I first came to work here, you know me being friends with Randy and Stanley, their--their sons, we--we all grew up together and we went to school together and then when I came here they just more or less adopted me. And they--you know I--I just--I really respected them enough to--I want them, you know to show them that I’m doing good and that they can be proud of me.

00:04:32

But they--when my granddaughter was born, she lived with me for a long time, the first few years of her life. And she would come down here with me you know because I didn’t have anybody else to keep her. So she practically grew up in this place as well. You know so--and she thinks of them as her mother and grandpa you know that she’s spent a lot of time at their house

and so we’re just like one big family. You know Caroline [Bridges] like I told you, they’re--you know Caroline and Randy were together and they have a son together. So it’s just like we were all family you know and it’s just kind of a--. Nobody else really ever worked with us but just us since I’ve been working here and it’s just like you know--like I say it’s more like a family restaurant to me. And that’s the way you know it--it’s always been.

00:05:15

SW: Yeah. And will you tell me your granddaughter’s name for the record?

00:05:18

BK: Kali.

00:05:18

SW: Kali?

00:05:20

BK: Kali is her name; uh-huh.

00:05:21

SW: Okay and can you also introduce Caroline and her last name and tell me how she’s related?

I know you said that she--

00:05:29

BK: Okay; right. Caroline, her name is Caroline Bridges. She is the--like I said, she’s--their grandson Colt is--is her--it’s Colt’s mother. And she’s worked here--she came to work here like three or four years before I did. So she’s been kind of--we’re kind of like fixtures around here. That’s what I think. You know we’ve been here so long. So when I took over she still continued to work but she’s not able to do very much anymore at one time, so she comes in from

like five o'clock in the morning and she leaves at eight. So but like I say we're just all a big family.

00:05:59

She didn't have any brothers and sisters and so my mother--we kind of adopted her as my sister, so we've all--like I said, we're just all like one big family. You don't have to be blood related to be family you know. So that's how it's done in the South; you know that. [Laughs] I guess you've learned that from just being around as long as you have, right?

00:06:16

SW: That's why I stayed here.

00:06:18

BK: Yes; it's--it's really nice.

00:06:21

SW: And I'm also wondering, can you tell me your parents' names for the record?

00:06:24

BK: My--my mother was Linda Roberts and my dad was Bill Dillon. They're both passed away. I miss them so much but--yeah.

00:06:33

SW: Were you an only child?

00:06:35

BK: No; I have a sister and a brother. My sister's name is Vicky and my brother's name is Jimmy. My brother's son, my nephew Jacob Dillon, he works for me on Saturday. My niece Allison did work but she goes to law school at Ole Miss [University of Mississippi] and now Jacob works--if they're not in school on Friday he comes in through lunch and helps me on

Friday and he helps me all day on Saturday. And he’s really a big help for me you know and I enjoy having him around.

00:06:59

SW: Yeah; now do you know who the Watkins bought this place from--?

00:07:04

BK: Uh, I do but I can't think of that lady's name now. I can't think of her name now for nothing, but I wish I could but I can get back with you on that one.

00:07:15

SW: Was she the first person to own this restaurant?

00:07:17

BK: No; I think she was like the second or third. I know there was a McDaniels lady that owned it at one time, so--but there has been like three or four different owners of this restaurant, but I think Wink has had it longer than anyone else has.

00:07:29

SW: Uh-hm; I mean you--you know you said essentially it's like your parents. I mean did they--did Charlene or--or Wink tell you about what it was like to go from you know working more industrial type jobs and manufacturing to running a restaurant? Did they tell you about the learning curve in that?

00:07:47

BK: Yes; it was a big difference. You know a big difference for Wink because he's always been in charge but when he came here it was a big--you know a big learning thing for him. He learned as he went and then when Charlene came in she kind of picked up, you know and being a woman, you know how--you know kind of like you're running the kitchen. But yeah;



they--they picked up and learn as they did. They made their own meat, where everybody else buys theirs, Wink and Charlene, they--they worked with this recipe. They got--Wink has grew up in Corinth around the slugburgers and C.F. Gray I think is the man’s name that--actually he would not give Wink the recipe but he was selling him stuff to make it with and he just told Wink, “You just keep trying. You’re getting there,”--until finally one day, he came up here and he ate one of the burgers and he told Wink, “I think you’ve got it. This is as close to the original slugburger that you’ll get.”

00:08:33

So that was it and ever since then the recipe has been the same. And it came from just he and Charlene working at it, different--every time they would make it, they would add and change or whatever to where they finally got it like they wanted it. And so when I took over he gave me the recipe and no one else knows this recipe but just a slight few, which I’m honored to you know--. But I was--I had been here long enough to--I was helping you know do a few things and wouldn’t actually say the whole process, but I would help get stuff together you know. And I know he has--you know with the soy grits, he orders those and you know so we took over--when I took over it was just pretty much wham, bam, one went out and I stayed, you know just--.

00:09:14

SW: Now you were telling me earlier that they used to be called cerealburgers. Can you talk a little bit about that?

00:09:18

BK: They’re--they’re called cerealburgers because they’re made with a-defatted soy grit and of course grits is considered a cereal. A lot of people call them greaseburgers, they call them

doughburgers; we get them cerealburgers, slugburgers and you know you said you know the story behind the slug burger and why it was called that?

00:09:34

SW: Can you tell that story?

00:09:34

BK: I will. Well Wink is really--I miss him; we went to the--they have a Slugburger Festival in Corinth every year around July. And we--well he told us the story and I’ve looked it up on the internet and it actually comes from when they call it slugburger it was created during the Depression. And they cost a nickel and they called the nickel a slug. That’s how they got to be called slugburgers, which was quite popular I understand--a little before my time but they--I understand it was quite popular back during that time.

00:10:02

They do have a little bit of meat in them but it’s you know not very much but it’s like--.

00:10:09

SW: Did you grow up eating them?

00:10:09

BK: I did but when I was growing up my grandfather would carry us across the street over there. There was a bus and Miss Maxine Rowden that’s who run it then, she was the one that my grandpa went to across the street. I don’t remember this one being here but they said it was. And there was a shoeshine place right here in the alley and the man--the little man would shine shoes.

00:10:28

I don’t remember that. Like I said, I was very little you know. But I do remember going across the street ‘cause I would tell my grandmother that my grandpa carried us to see his girlfriend. And that--I remember the slugburgers, but we got to come--I grew up at Pocahontas around Big Hill Pond and it was a treat for us to come to Selmer because back--you know out there it’s nothing but woods and there was one little store and it was just a treat for us to come to town with grandpa or Saturday. So it’s just a--yeah.

00:10:54

SW: And what were your grandparents’ names?

00:10:55

BK: Purny and Lucille Roberts.

00:10:56

SW: Purny

00:10:57

BK: Purny, uh-huh.

00:10:59

SW: And so you said the woman who had the bus, Maxine Rowden.

00:11:02

BK: Rowden; uh-huh.

00:11:04

SW: So she would make them on the bus?

00:11:05

BK: She had a restaurant set up in that bus. She had--I don't know if they still--the built around that bus but they probably moved it and just built a new building there or moved it in. But it was actually like a little school bus. And that's what it was, you know that they--she had that little restaurant set up over there. And it was like one little counter and most everybody got theirs to go. But they didn't sit in there, it was like a get and go place. You know but I do remember that.

00:11:29

SW: Were most--were people mostly eating the type of--like the type of slugburger around here was that more common than say like a beefburger?

00:11:36

BK: Yes because of the prices of it, you know and everything. My mother would tell me stories about coming to town and where the museum is that used to be a movie theater and she said they would get a burger, a Coke, and you know for a quarter. And there was something else, but she told me about coming to the movies and you know that was a treat for them on Saturday. But you could get you know--people talk about buying them \$1 a dozen or a dime a-piece, you know and all that which now they're \$1 a-piece. But I've heard a lot of stories about the slug burgers and coming to town and going to the movies and eating a burger and the drinks and--just for a little of nothing you know.

00:12:12

SW: I have a few more questions for you; is that okay?

00:12:14

BK: Okay; yes, ma'am. I have--yes.

00:12:18

SW: [*Checking the equipment*] Just making sure everything is still rolling.

00:12:18

BK: Okay.

00:12:20

SW: Sometimes I push buttons. And it looks like it’s rolling but it’s not.

00:12:23

So when David [*Referring to Randy Watkins*] approached you about coming to work here, I mean what were you doing or what--?

00:12:28

BK: Who, Randy?

00:12:28

SW: Or Randy, I’m sorry!

00:12:30

BK: I wasn’t doing anything. I had been working around Pocahontas and dairy bars and that’s what I’ve done most of my life is restaurants. And Randy--Randy and I like I said we grew up together; we were friends and my husband at that time, they were friends. And when Randy took over, he just you know he was--you know we spent a lot of time together and he said, “You need to bring--come on down there and work for me and bring--you know bring it on down there.” So I thought *okay*, you know. So I came on and like I said, and then Charlene and Wink was coming in and then different ones. And when Randy decided he didn’t work here anymore, he didn’t want to, Charlene and Wink took it back over. So I just--they kept me here. So I--you

know I’m fast, that’s what they tell me. That’s why they liked me was ‘cause I was fast at what I could do.

00:13:11

SW: Did you--did you learn a different kind of speed once you were working with them because--and I want to ask you about that between you and Carlotta [Murrell], but I’m wondering in terms of your speed, they--they knew you were fast, but did you do--do you think you got faster from being around or--?

00:13:25

BK: I do because I know--you know we--we worked good together. There was everybody had a certain job to do and I think I got faster because at a certain time I would try to help do everybody’s you know and I’m--that’s just the way it is. You know I just don’t think you can do it fast enough I can help you. *[Laughs]* That--you know that’s just the way I am.

00:13:43

SW: Uh-hm; now did Randy stop working because he was sick or did he just decide to--?

00:13:47

BK: Well he--he went to two other jobs. He did construction jobs a lot and he was also a big, big time duck hunter. He did guide; he was a guide in Arkansas around Des Arc, Arkansas. He did that for a long time also. And so when he--Caroline run it for a while for him when he would go off on the hunting trips, you know and I worked--like I said, I worked with them for a while. And then it got to where he didn’t want to do it anymore. So he just gave it back to his mom and dad. And then he found out he had cancer. So that’s when he just--he wasn’t able to do anything anymore.

00:14:18

SW: How did things change for you when you started working here for the Watkins?

00:14:23

BK: Oh I loved it. They--they--it was just you know it was like being at home around you know my family and it was just you know I liked it a lot. I’ve worked in--like I said, I’ve worked in a lot of restaurants and it was stressful but this was like you know being around family and it was easier and it was you know--they made sure everything was taken care of and you know--I really liked working for them. I’ve enjoyed it all the years. And they took my granddaughters, they just--they just took us right in like we were one of theirs. That’s just how they are.

00:14:52

SW: You don’t find that too many places.

00:14:54

BK: You don’t. You don’t find that too many places at all. It’s--in fact, when you work for a lot of people it’s just about a job. With them it wasn’t like that. You know I went to--they would have cookouts or something and they were always telling me, you know, “Come on to the house and we’re going to go do this and do that,” and they would take my granddaughter to birthday parties. They would come and get her and take her different places and she spent a lot of time with them when she lived with me. They were a big help as far as me helping taking care of her, they helped me do the same thing.

00:15:21

SW: Uh-hm; now she’s out in Arizona?

00:15:23

BK: She’s in Arkansas.

00:15:25

SW: Arkansas.

00:15:24

BK: She lives in B B, Arkansas, uh-hm and my niece lives in Arizona; uh-huh. The one I told you about taking--getting--sending the slugburgers to.

00:15:31

SW: Will you tell me that story again for the tape that you--?

00:15:34

BK: About my niece?

00:15:36

SW: Uh-huh.

00:15:37

BK: She lives in Phoenix, Arizona and her name is Brenna. It’s my sister’s daughter. She loves slugburgers and when I took over, she--she said, “I know I can get slug burgers now, right?” I said, “Well, sure.”

00:15:47

And she has--her--her husband Ernesto has a friend that drives for Auto Zone and he was going that way. And so we got together and we decided that we could do this. And I got the burgers and we had them frozen and ready to go so when he came by for them he had a styrofoam cooler and we put them in there and he packed them in ice. And it--they went to Arizona in the front seat of an Auto Zone truck. And she met him or they--they met him when he got there and oh, she was just tickled to death that she got her burgers, you know between her Aunt Becky and Auto Zone they were delivered to her. So she was a happy girl. It’s going to be



just a matter of time before she’s asking for more. [Laughs] We’ll catch that truck going back through there again.

00:16:27

SW: Becky I know this is like a hard question to answer and everyone has their own answer for it, but I’m wondering, you know someone like me, I grew up in Michigan and I feel like they tried to sneak beef into everything we were eating--beef everything. So slugburgers are--or cerealburgers are kind of this new--this new thing for me in the last couple years since being here. Why do you think they’ve lasted so long? I mean you know it’s like you said, you were talking around the Depression Era, why do you think they’ve stayed around this long, like they’re still really popular?

00:16:56

BK: They’re--they’re really good. You know they--they’re really good and they’re something that’s different for everybody, you know and they say that anything with soy is supposed to be healthy for you. Even though they’re deep-fried in the grease you know which is part of the southern food group, you know they--I think that’s one of the reasons why they’re just--they’re really good and people you know enjoy them around here.

00:17:13

If you go around as far as past Henderson [Tennessee] they go, “Ewww; what is that?” you know, but you got to try them. You can’t say--I’m the type of person, don’t say ewww until you try something. You can’t say ewww until--‘cause you don’t know. But a lot of people if you try them, like you did; you know if you try them you’ll like them. You’ll hear slug and you know you’re thinking the little slimy thing but that’s--you know that’s nothing to do with that. That’s because they cost a nickel you know.

00:17:40

SW: Do you get people who like people who--obviously you know most of the customers you know are from here and you recognize them, so when you get someone here that you don't recognize do you feel the need to tell them what's in it or do you just let them--?

00:17:54

BK: Well a lot of times, people--they come in with people that's--that know about them and they'll say this is their first time eating a slugburger. And they'll--they'll ask you questions and you know if they don't, I don't really say anything unless they just ask. And then I'll say "Well, what do you think?" And then you know we'll start talking about why they call them slugburgers and the origination you know and all that. And I always tell them about the Slug Burger Festival. Everybody needs to go to that one time. You need to go to that. Have you ever been to one?

00:18:18

SW: I went this past summer.

00:18:20

BK: Did you really?

00:18:21

SW: It was so hot.

00:18:22

BK: Yes; it's hot but it's really fun isn't it? We went just to make sure they was doing it right. You know Wink's--we think Wink's is the greatest one in the world of course you know but there's several places that do that in Corinth and it was really fun. We had a good time. My granddaughter loved it, so--.

00:18:35

SW: So you said that Wink was--he’s from Corinth [Mississippi]?

00:18:39

BK: Right.

00:18:39

SW: So I mean and--so he sort of knew of the recipe because he grew up in this tradition?

00:18:44

BK: Right; uh-huh. Well he really didn’t know the recipe but he had--you know just from getting it and kind of you know from that--the man selling him the [soy] grits and he kind of you know took it upon his self to try to figure it out and help Charlene. And they kind of just worked at it for a while until they got it just right. And you ate one today. They’re really good aren't they?

00:19:03

SW: Uh-hm.

00:19:03

BK: And I think they’re really better--we had several places that people would tell me that there’s a difference between ours and other places around. Ours is maybe a little thicker than a lot of people’s are and they’re a little bit bigger. But that’s the way that everybody likes them. And that’s why Wink has managed to stay in business for so long.

00:19:20

And a lot of people like them a little crunchier than others. We don’t cook them that way but if you want us to get them crunchy we can put them--we can get them as crunchy as you like or they can be as soft as you’d like, you know. That’s why we don’t overcook them, so we can

do it your way. A lot of people I was telling you earlier, a lot of people like their buns dipped in the grease. That’s how they used to--everybody used to do that. But there again, well you know in the South, part of the food group is the grease, you know. That’s just the way it is. [*Laughs*]

00:19:49

SW: It tastes better.

00:19:50

BK: Yes; it does.

00:19:50

SW: And so I also wanted to ask you just can you talk about some of the things on the menu besides the burgers? What else do you guys serve?

00:19:58

BK: We serve real beefburgers and I get the ground beef fresh every day as Wink and Charlene did. And then we make them up ourselves. They’re never frozen. We have--just started making chili cheese dogs. You know they’re going over really well. And we have hotdogs and BLTs and ham and we have--you know for breakfast we do the tenderloin, the country ham. We have great gravy and biscuits. We sell a lot of them--basically just about any kind of sandwich you know that you want but we have a good--you know a big breakfast. We have hash browns and you know things like that--just about whatever you’d like, just country food I call it. It’s a country food.

00:20:36

SW: And can you tell me like how your day starts? You told me this--

00:20:40

BK: I get up at three-thirty. I’m usually--I try to be down here by 4:30. Caroline [Bridges] comes in at five but I try to get in and I want to get the--you know the money in the drawer and I get the oven turned on and I make coffee and turn the grill and the fryers on and make sure everything is starting to heat up and just get everything started. And by the time she gets here I have biscuits in the oven and I’m cooking the bacon and the sausage and the coffee is made. And usually about ten after five I’ve got the first customer coming in which everything is coming out hot and fresh.

00:21:07

So that--it’s four-thirty is early but that’s what Wink done all those years and I’m going to keep doing what he done because it seems to work. Anybody to be in business that long and it worked like it has, it--I’m going to keep doing what he done, you know.

00:21:23

SW: Is there anything that you switched around a little bit since you’ve purchased the business?

00:21:26

BK: Uh, well not really. I’ve added like the chili cheese dogs. I’ve added that and I’ve added tater tots, back to the menu. You know just basically that’s really the only thing that I’ve changed since I took over, you know so--.

00:21:40

SW: Now Becky do you get people who come in really early in the morning like five, six whenever you guys open and do people order slugburgers that way?

00:21:47

BK: Yes; you’d be surprised at the burgers I fix early. I have some people that want slugburgers with their eggs instead of sausage or bacon. They want a burger. And it’s really good. And I have people that want eggs on their sandwiches at lunchtime. They’ll eat a burger--slug burger with an egg on it. I’ve never had one of those but they--you know we do--we do fix a lot of them; yeah.

00:22:06

SW: So interesting.

00:22:08

BK: And people do want--we want slugburgers for breakfast. I have sold--we’ve sold several in the morning; you know people get them you know and just want them for breakfast. They’re really good. I have--I have ate them for breakfast. I’ve eat them on a biscuit; a slugburger on a biscuit is really good. You need to try that, too for breakfast with mustard on it of course you know. A slugburger wouldn’t be a slugburger without mustard on it.

00:22:27

SW: Can you tell me about the condiments? Like if someone just ordered it like the way you make it, what--how do you normally--what’s the style--?

00:22:33

BK: A regular slugburger comes with mustard, pickle, and onion, you know cheese if you want it, but you know a dressed one, we put mayonnaise, lettuce, and tomato, or you know whatever you like, but a regular one would be mustard, pickle, and onion.

00:22:45

SW: And I know this is hard to describe but I was just watching you and Carlotta today and it was so awesome to watch you guys and you’re so fast.

00:22:52

BK: Well, thank you. [*Laughs*]

00:22:53

SW: For somebody who can't see this and they're going to because I videotaped it, but can you talk about the rhythm you guys have going? I mean you guys are on it. I mean people are in and out of here when they get to go orders.

00:23:05

BK: Well, there's a lot of people that come in that only have thirty minutes for lunch and you know we got to get them in and get them out. Carlotta and I just kind of clicked when we come--she came to work for me. She--she's a--I've hired her as my cook and she's basically on that cook--that grill and the fryer and I'm trying to help her you know do what I need to do like dress the buns and I fix drinks and I--I do--I'm the only one in the cash register. I do that. But you know she and I work really well together I think. It just kind of clicked, but she's done this a while and I've done it a while. And I think by the--by the fact that we've known each other you know pretty much all her life I think that helps too that she's a--she does really well. You know and it just--it just clicked, but it did that same way with Charlene and Wink and I. We--we were the same way. You know we knew what we had to do and we just got it done. That's just the way that--you know you just get them in and get them out but like I say, you know that they've only got a certain amount of time to eat and go back to work.

00:23:58

We have a lot of people from these factories and that’s what you know the one that’s sitting over there today that you seen, Mike, he’s--he works at G.E.. He has thirty minutes. A lot of times he’ll call me or text his order in but today he--you know he just came on and it didn’t take long. We try to keep a few things like a few of the beefburgers cooked up, but they stay hot. The health inspector, you know I know I’m supposed to have the hot foods at 130--or 145-degrees and above. The Health Inspector came. He just comes by and he eats with us. He tells me I have the best beef burgers in town.

00:24:29

And I get a 98 on my health score. He’s been here twice since I’ve taken over and both times I’ve got a 98. I’m very proud of that. And my boyfriend, Mike, have I told you about him? He’s such a sweetheart. He helps me a great deal--a great bunch, a big bunch. He--he doesn’t even eat onions bless his heart [*Laughs*] and he’ll cut them things and just chop them up. We have an onion chopper. You noticed the little small pieces? And he’ll--he does like fifty pounds every two weeks and just cry. “I love you,” I say, “I know you do honey,” bless his heart. [*Laughs*] But he’s--he’s really a big help.

00:25:01

We’re going to make the slugburger meat tomorrow night. He’s the one that does that for me. That’s work. You know I’ve heard Wink talk about how it’s really you know--it’s stringy and you got to get down--it goes up to your shoulders just about up to when you’re mixing that. But he’s been a big help. I don’t know what I would have done without him since I’ve taken over.



00:25:20

SW: And I know--I know the secret--the recipe is top secret but we don't--we don't ask people to give away the recipe. But can you kind of describe the process? Like, is it in a huge-- can you kind of like give us a visual of what it's like to mix all that meat up?

00:25:31

BK: Okay; there is a big tub. You know what I'm talking about like a bit tub and it's-- that's what everything is in and we put all the stuff in there together you know and you just have to mix it all up 'til it gets to the consistency that you want.

00:25:42

And you know it's--it's like I say, it's work. A woman would probably--it probably would take longer for a woman because men are stronger and that's so hard, you know as thick as it is, it's really taken--you know I've seen Mike get up on his tiptoes and Wink also, get up on their tiptoes to get down in the bottom of it to make sure all that dries out and make sure everything is mixed just right.

00:26:01

But it's really interesting to watch Mike do it. I love him [*Laughs*] and he's so sweet.

00:26:06

SW: And what's Mike's last name?

00:26:08

BK: Mike Reynolds; uh-hm.

00:26:09

SW: And how did you meet Mike?

00:26:10

BK: My friend Erin introduced us. Yes; I knew him but not really that well. But she introduced us together, you know and got us together and we went out a couple of times and we’ve just been together ever since. That was two years ago January the 31<sup>st</sup>. And he is a big help. He’s my rock. I don’t know what I would have done without him. So he’s a big help.

00:26:30

SW: I know I already asked you that earlier but I just--

00:26:33

BK: I know. It’s okay; it’s fine. *[Laughs]*

00:26:35

SW: And I just--I wanted to know a little bit about Selmer as a place. Well actually no; I want to ask you about the relationships you have with your customers here because you know people come in and you know everybody. Could you kind of describe what your relationship is like with the customers?

00:26:50

BK: A lot of people that come in here I’ve known a long time and I went to school with. Excuse me, but a lot of people that come in here I’ve known just from coming in the restaurant and you just laugh and cut up with them, you know and you get to be their friends. And that’s why I keep--what keeps them coming back, you know. And a lot of people come in here just to cut up and see what’s going to happen next ‘cause it’s always been an adventure at Wink’s. You never--when Wink was around you never knew what was going to come out of his mouth. The same way with Randy; you never knew what was going to--you know but it was--it’s always fun. It’s been fun to work for the Watkins. I’ve always--I’ve enjoyed it.

00:27:23

SW: Becky, I’m wondering if you could, talk about why--why do you think it’s important to have those kinds of connections with your customers in a town like Selmer?

00:27:31

BK: Well, Selmer is a small town and everybody knows everybody or everybody is related to everybody. And I--I just feel like you need to--you know I always say, “Hello, what are--how are you doing?” or you know something like that. And I always tell them, “Bye,” and “Have a good day,” when they leave. And I think you have to you know talk to your customers and you know let them know that you’re--that you care about them coming you know and that you’d like to see them again and people like that. I know I do. I want to be acknowledged when I walk into a place. You know, and I’d like to--you know I go by and you know I ask them are they okay and you know--a lot of people want to tell you stuff, you know. But it’s mostly--a lot of the people I went to school with or I’ve known or they’ve known mama and daddy or you know they’ve--because of Wink and Charlene you know--and I think that’s a big, you know thing for Selmer ‘cause it’s such a small town. Everybody knows everybody. So that--I think that’s one of the things. But like I said, but if you’ve noticed I do say hello to everybody that comes through the door and I say good-bye and have a good day and like I say, I like to be acknowledged when I go into a place. I think a lot of people do, you know.

00:28:30

SW: You guys are just so sweet to everyone like you make sure that nobody is--I was noticing this today. You were on the tea. Like you’re doing all these other things but nobody’s tea cup ever got empty and I feel like with people coming in sometimes that could like totally turn their whole day around.

00:28:44

BK: Right; yeah. Well I try to treat people the way I want to be treated, like if I go in a restaurant I want you know I want to be acknowledged. Like I say, I want you to know that I’m there. Don’t just sit me down somewhere and forget about me. I don’t like that. And I don’t--I don’t want them to do--you know I don’t want anybody in here to feel that way. So if I’m not doing it, Carlotta is--you know she’s doing it, you know doing it for me. And I think that’s just so--a big thing ‘cause people you know appreciate you if like you know knowing that they’re here and you know thanking them for their business and--. It makes a difference.

00:29:13

SW: Uh-hm. You talked about some of the people coming here and only have a half hour for lunch. I’m wondering if you could just quickly you know I don’t want you to go into the whole history of it but to get a sense of what the industries are around here, like where do people work these days around here?

00:29:28

BK: Okay; we used to have a lot of factories around and a lot of them have closed and moved to other places. We have G.E. We have Spectrum, Precision Assembly; we have just four or five major you know factories around here like that. And the hospital has just recently closed. We had the nursing home and two or three vets-offices. We have a lot of banks. And we have a lot of Mexican restaurants. We have some of the Mexican restaurants; they come and get slugburgers. You know a lot of--you know so that’s--that’s a good thing.

00:30:00

SW: That’s really cool.

00:30:01

BK: Yeah and the guy from Domino’s, he’s like the assistant manager, he comes in his Domino’s truck and his uniform and he eats slugburgers. We have them from Huddle House come and get them, you know so we--you know everybody eats slugburgers in Selmer, everybody.

00:30:14

SW: Could you talk a little bit about--I mean you’ve worked for the Watkins for 16 years and you recently took over. How have you seen things change economically here in Selmer?

00:30:25

BK: Well like I said, there used to be a lot of places here like ITT was out here across from the motel there. They’ve closed and it’s been several places that’s closed and went other--like overseas and different ones. But it--it’s really changed since I was growing up. It--Selmer used to be a booming town and it was always full of people especially on a Saturday. There was always a bunch of people around. And now there’s not; you know there’s not near as much people moving--or movement around that used to be. And that’s--I think that’s sad; I really do think that’s sad.

00:30:57

SW: What do you think it means to be able to still have a place like this here, I mean and your slugburgers are \$1? I mean that’s still--I mean if people are out of work or having a rough time financially I wonder if that you know--talking to Pat Knight [*from Pat’s Café*] about this yesterday just the idea that you know these--this tradition started in a time when times were tough and it still prevails.

00:31:17

BK: Right; uh-hm.

00:31:18

SW: It’s sort of like it’s still good for people ‘cause the times kind of are tough for people. I’m wondering if you could talk about--I mean, why is this place so important for people in that respect?

00:31:30

BK: Well it’s I think it’s like you said because it is--ours are still \$1. Everyone else’s is a little bit more than \$1. I think it’s because that you know the prices of it and I think Wink and Charlene have a lot to do with that because people used to love to come in and see Wink and Charlene. They’re you know like I say, Wink was a character. He is a character. I’m just going to tell you and them together were--they were just hilarious. You’d come in here and they would be--you know they--they like they were into it or something you know fussing at each other. But they really weren’t; it was just how they acted. That’s how they are. They just--that’s Wink and Charlene. You know and they’re really funny. People just laugh and you never knew what was going to come out of Wink’s mouth. You know he--he is just a character and I just--that’s why I love Wink and Charlene. You know so everybody loves Wink and Charlene. They do.

00:32:13

SW: How--do you see them very often?

00:32:16

BK: I see Wink. Wink comes more than Charlene. She you know I told you she had been diagnosed with leukemia and her immune system is down and she’s really--they tell her not to be in the public a lot. So she--I didn’t--I didn’t see her as much as I did Wink since I took over. But

she’s still--I see her every now and then and I see her maybe once a week but I see Wink two or three times a week. He comes in you know and they still come and get slug burgers and go home or they’ll come down here and eat them and you know--. It depends on how many people is still in here. I’m hoping since she’s in remission now she might get to come more often.

00:32:46

SW: Uh-hm; I have two more questions for you.

00:32:50

BK: Okay.

00:32:51

SW: And then I’ll--I’ll let you go.

00:32:52

BK: Okay; that’s fine. That’s fine. *[Laughs]*

00:32:55

SW: What is the most challenging or what is the hardest part of this job for you?

00:32:59

BK: The hardest part? Really nothing is really hard about it. It’s just you know I’m doing more hours. Where I was doing forty hours a week I’m doing sixty or seventy but like I said, I have Mike and he is a big help. He makes it so much easier on me. He tries to keep it from being too much. He doesn’t want me stressed over this, you know and because of him I’m not. It makes it seem a lot better you know. And that’s--I think Wink and Charlene knew this; that’s what they tell me all the time that he’s good for me, you know and I really appreciate him and his help for all this. I don’t think I could do it really as well as I do without him. So and I--I let him know this too; I do tell him this.

00:33:37

SW: And he--you were talking off-camera that he--he has another--?

00:33:41

BK: He has a full-time job, uh-huh. And then he has a part-time job which is just helping me take care of this café. And then there’s me. I’m--he says he tells--he told somebody the other day he had a plateful, a full-time job, a part-time job, and me. I said hey; hey. [*Laughs*] But you know he does; he is a big help here. He is a big help.

00:34:01

SW: What do you love most about being here?

00:34:03

BK: About being at the café here? That I’m at home and I know that I--you know that this is where I’ve been for so long and this is where I’m--I was meant to be. So I enjoy working here. I always have. I enjoy my customers. I just enjoy this--period, so--.

00:34:20

SW: And just so I know for--for background purposes, just to have it on you know in the transcript, you said you worked for some dairy bars. Could you name a couple of them?

00:34:30

BK: I worked for the Pocahontas Dairy Bar when I grew--. I told you I lived at--around Pocahontas when I was growing up. I worked there and I worked at Middleton, the Middleton Café. I worked at Roberts Steakhouse. When I came to--when I had my granddaughter, I’d work here in the day time and I’d work at the Steakhouse at night. I had to work two jobs to take care of her and I. And you know like I said, what I’ve done all my life. I’ve worked at Country



Kitchen for a while which they closed. But I had--you know I had a son and then I--you know he got--he got grown and then I had my granddaughter, so I’ve always had--I’ve always had somebody I had to take care of. So that’s I do.

00:35:05

SW: What’s your son’s name?

00:35:05

BK: Brandon; uh-hm.

00:35:07

SW: And I have--okay I have one more question I want to ask you Becky. I’m sorry. I just you know after working in restaurants too you’ve been doing this for so long and you’ve been taking care of people for so long, what could you say like being--being in these types of jobs has it--what has it taught you about people in general? Just I mean being around them and taking care of them is there anything that you’ve kind of learned throughout the years of being in this role with people?

00:35:34

BK: Everybody needs somebody to look up to or you know to--that’s what you know I feel like that I’ve--you know I’m doing--I’m doing something good for people and that you know and like I told you, I want to be treated--I want you know to treat you like I want you to treat me. And that’s just my--the way my mother taught us that you know and that’s the way you know I feel like I’ve--. You know I--I cut up with everybody you know and I laugh and joke but I think that’s from being around Wink and Charlene because they did that. You know Wink and Charlene don’t know--they don’t know strangers. Anybody that come in here they felt like they knew you already, like you know today I felt like I just--I just knew you from something, I guess

the text messages or something. But that’s just how I feel. You know it’s just--but I’ve always-- my mother always taught us you treat people the way you want to be treated. And you know you--you will do good. And it--it’s--that’s the truth; I believe that is the way you know it should be. Everybody should--and I think if everybody treated everybody the way they wanted to be treated, the world would be a better place. I mean seriously don’t you think that would be right?

00:36:30

SW: It would be.

00:36:32

BK: And that’s what I tell my granddaughter all the time, too. And she’ll say, “Well back in your day,”--and I’m like, “Oh my gosh.” [*Laughs*] No, no; no--

00:36:42

SW: It wasn’t that long ago.

00:36:42

BK: --that’s what I tell her. “Baby I’m not that old.”

00:36:44

SW: I’m still in the day.

00:36:45

BK: That’s what I told her. I said you know they’ve just made me a grandmother before I got old enough to be a grandmother. But I did; I was eighteen when my son was born and you know yes. My mother was thirty-five so yeah; I made her a grandmother at an early age also.

00:36:59

SW: Wow.

00:36:59

BK: And I was forty-two when I become a grandmother so I--you know they--we do it younger now. [*Laughs*] But I don’t know what I would do without my grandbaby or my son you know.

00:37:11

SW: Well Becky, I don’t have any more questions for you but is there anything else that you think is important for people to know about Wink’s or something that I should have asked you that I didn’t?

00:37:19

BK: No; I don’t. I think we just about covered everything. You know I do. If you think of anything else that you’d like to ask me, we--you know, you know how to get in touch with me and you know where I’m at.

00:37:27

SW: Yeah.

00:37:28

BK: You have my phone number and--

00:37:30

SW: And I just want to say thank you for doing this. You’ve been so generous with your time.

00:37:33

BK: Well thank you. I appreciate that. Well thank you. We appreciate that. We appreciate that. You’re very welcome.

00:37:39

SW: I’m going to turn all the cameras off now.

00:37:41

BK: Okay. [*Laughs*]

00:37:42

END INTERVIEW