

FULL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Treber McGuirt, cook and maintenance staff

KAPPA ALPHA FRATERNITY

June 20, 2005

Location: Kappa Alpha House, Front Porch

University of Mississippi

Oxford, Mississippi

Interviewer: Mary Beth Lasseter

*Treber McGuirt met me for the interview on the porch of the Kappa Alpha Fraternity house. We sat on the front porch rocking chairs for the duration of the interview. At times, outdoor noises may be heard: passing cars, chirping birds, and the rocking of our chairs. These are mentioned here rather than cited throughout the transcribed interview.*

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MBL: Hello. Today is Monday, June 20, 2005, and this is Mary Beth Lasseter with the Southern Foodways Alliance on the porch of the KA house on the Ole Miss campus interviewing Trebor McGuirt. How are you today?

TM: I'm doing alright. How are you?

MBL: I'm doing well. Treber, can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Your full name for the record, and spell it?

TM: Well, my first name is Treber—well, people pronounce it Trevor, Travis—I've been called all kind of names—but the name is T-R-E-B-E-R Treber McGuirt. I've been with the KA house four years and I kind of help the guys out a little bit and do a little cleaning or whatever needs to be done.

MBL: Where are you from originally?

TM: I'm originally from Oxford. I stay on West Spring Hill. I have one five year old kid and I'm divorced right now and kinda settling down but I've been with the guys at the KA house four years, this is my fourth year.

MBL: How did you get involved with the KAs?

TM: Well I was out of work one day and I went to a job service agency that sent me out here. That was, like I said, a few years ago. I've been here four years so I've worked here ever since then.

MBL: And do you primarily work in the kitchen?

TM: Uh, Basically I'm kind of like an all over guy. I help in the kitchen. I clean up upstairs. I help serve or just whatever that they need to be done.

MBL: How many people work in the kitchen here at the KA house?

TM: It's four of us.

MBL: And what is a typical day like?

TM: Uh, well Thursday, Thursdays are real easy. We have paper plates and paper forks and through the week we have like a buffet style and have them like come through the line and get it or most of the time we'll serve them out of platters and stuff like that. And, uh, their favorite meals are pork chops and chicken and, uh, poppy seed chicken. That's what they go for. Sometimes you cook 14 pans or sometimes you cook 12 pans but just on a Thursday just like a hamburger and French fries and we use paper plates and we get out kind of early. Get off and on Fridays we have leftovers.

MBL: So how many students are you serving at a typical meal?

TM: I would say at least 165 boys. Yeah, at dinner. Lunch doesn't—they don't really come out for lunch but they do dinner at like 165.

MBL: Now do you serve 3 meals a day?

TM: Yes, we do. We serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

MBL: And do you do that 7 days a week or no?

TM: No, we just do it five days a week. We're off on Saturdays and Sunday. Just Monday through Friday.

MBL: Had you ever worked in food service before working with the KAs?

TM: No, I hadn't worked in food service with the KAs but I worked in food service at Oxford Elementary school. I also cooked and served the kids over there so I've basically been in food service like 4 or 5 years.

MBL: How did you decide to go into food service?

TM: Well, I started watching people in the kitchen and, uh, kind of helping them out and kind of getting them through some things and I always wanted to do more than wash dishes and so I just kind of observed and basically learned what to do. The guys they make a lot of meals and stuff like that and I really love [inaudible] cleaning up and kind of help them out around here.

MBL: Do you plan the menus here?

TM: No, I don't plan them or nothing like that. But what we do is we sit down and discuss with the house mother what are they eat, what do they eat the most and stuff like that and we order like that and basically come together on it but she kind of plans the menu.

[046]

MBL: What sorts of foods do you serve?

TM: We serve, uh, lasagna, uh, chicken spaghetti, chicken, poppy seed chicken, string beans, corn. We mostly try to do a vegetable along with the meal but their favorite meals are chicken tenders and green peas and potatoes. That's what we have on Mondays.

MBL: Okay. Is that what you're cooking now and you're taking a break to talk to me, or no?

TM: Oh, we're off for the summer. In the summer I just kind of come in, clean the bathrooms, and help them out. Yep, we're out 'til August. No dinner like that or nothing. We'll serve in August when they come back.

MBL: Okay. So what do the other three kitchen staff that you work with—do they come in over the summers?

TM: No, they're drawing unemployment. It's like that. So I just come in for a few hours a day and kind of help out during the summers.

MBL: Okay. Do you—do you think there's a difference between the kind of cooking at the KA house and say what you would do at a restaurant.

TM: Well, it's basically the same because you're cooking for a variety of people. What you really want to do is cook enough where you can have leftovers on Friday, like that.

MBL: Now who taught you to cook?

TM: Well, I started off at a bakery in Atlanta doing cakes and stuff kind helping out like that.

MBL: What bakery was that?

TM: That was called [inaudible]. So I started off baking and decorating cakes. It was a real good bakery.

MBL: And did you learn that on the job or had you gone to classes?

TM: Well, I took a few pointers from people and stuff like that and I learned to experiment at home—experiment at home personally. And got good at home. [inaudible]

MBL: Now do you get to bake when you work here, as well, or?

TM: No, I'm not the baker. I'm not the baker. I just kind of help out. WE have a baker here, though. He's not in right now. He's out of town for the summer. His name is Willie. He's our baker.

MBL: So the kitchen staff here—does each person have a specific responsibility?

TM: Yeah, we have a head cook here. She cooks, and stuff like that for them. Like we plan the menu and just kind of help her out a little bit and kind of fill in when she's not here or something like that. Her name is Patricia Ann Brown.

MBL: Okay. And then, um, if you cook here in the day do you go home and cook for your family in the evening?

TM: Basically what we have here, if there's enough left I would take something home or I would have to prepare a meal or something like that before I could eat. Sometimes I [inaudible]. We work 9:30 to 6:30 and we take an hour break and get off at 1 and come back at 3 and start serving to serve dinner. So when you come back in in the evening times we'll set the tables back up with placemats and plates on the table for the boys so therefore we won't have too much traffic coming through the line and everybody will be sitting down.

MBL: So what is the time frame where the guys can eat?

TM: They eat at 5:30. They eat lunch—lunch starts at 11 o'clock and it goes from 11 to 1. Then we have dinner from 5:30 until 6:30. We do breakfast from 7 o'clock in the morning time until 9 and we have lady who comes in and cooks breakfast, too. Her name is [inaudible] Phillips and if she doesn't come in we'll fill in for her and do the breakfast. But basically we're on a time...[inaudible]...everything's done by time, like you know say 5:30 we've got to have a group coming in at 5:30 so they can sit down and eat and be out by 6:30.

[098]

MBL: Besides the three meals that y'all cook do y'all make available any snacks or do you keep the fridges stocked with food they can grab in the middle of the day?

TM: Right, okay. We'll have like chocolate cake, rice krispies. Mostly if something is left after we lock the kitchen we'll just sit it out on the table for them so they can just come downstairs and get it and probably make some tea at night, something for them to drink on and make sure the ice machine is filled up so therefore they have some snacks.

MBL: Now is this your only job or do you have a second job?

TM: It's my only one.

MBL: And it's full time in the fall. And is it full time in the summer as well, or—

TM: It's part time.

MBL: What is your relationship with Ole Miss? Do you spend a lot of time on campus apart from work?

TM: Yeah, basically come to the games and I do a little COBRA Security on the side sometimes if they need me or something like that but [inaudible] I do spend a lot of time at Ole Miss on my spare time. At Turner playing basketball and stuff during the summer.

MBL: Did you go to school in Oxford High School?

TM: Yeah, I went to Oxford High School and graduated in 1987.

MBL: What is your favorite part about your job?

TM: Well, I like that I get along with all the guys. I have no trouble with nobody or nothing like that. If they need something they'll come to me and kind of tell me and stuff like that. I kind of like to play a part around here, like I say, you know, helping the kids just wherever they need me at.

MBL: Do you have any favorite stories, things that have happened around here?

TM: Uh, yeah. We had one event that happened out here with one of the guys. He jumped through the roof up there [motioning upwards]. We had it repaired. They were just all upstairs and he jumped through the roof. He's doing okay now. He was out for the first semester, but now he'll come back for the second semester. But that's basically the only thing that really happened exciting. And we have KA parties and stuff like that. I come in on weekends and clean up after the parties and a few of the guys come in and kind of like help me, you know. The parties, they be nice. Real nice.

MBL: Do y'all plan the parties or cook for the parties?

TM: No, they don't—cooking or nothing like that. They just, like, you know, take all the furniture out and put it upstairs so it won't get broken or nothing like that and, you know, we kind of, you know, make sure that everybody that works here gets an armband on their arm when they come in. It's just pretty good, you know. The parties, they last from 8 to 1.

MBL: Are there any special events besides the parties that the KAs put on that you're a part of?

TM: Not that I'm a part of. But they have different members come in and stuff like that. They elect different people, you know, different officers and stuff like that. And they

have their chapter meetings on Monday night to decide what's going on, what needs to be changed, what's not getting done, or who's not doing their part or something like that. So they mostly meet on Mondays.

[140]

MBL: Do you enjoy working on campus here?

TM: I enjoy working here, yeah. It's a real good job. It doesn't pay a lot but it's okay. It's during the week so I can kind of deal with that, you know.

MBL: Do you get university benefits? Are you an employee of the university or of the fraternity?

TM: Just for this fraternity right here.

MBL: Okay. And do you have a lot of interaction with staffs from other houses?

TM: They come over and visit us. Look at how we do things. And kind of like get an idea [inaudible] and something like that.

MBL: Is this something that you think you want to do long term, or would you like maybe to go back to baking one day?

TM: I probably would like to go back to baking one day, but I'm going to stay here for awhile because I get along with the guys and they kind of like me pretty good and I like them and we don't have no problems so [inaudible]

MBL: Do you spend a lot of time with your coworkers outside of work here, or—

TM: I see them from time to time, and we'll talk and stuff like that. But as far as us really getting together—we'll see each other at the grocery store or something like that. Nobody visits nobody's house or nothing like that.

MBL: Is there one favorite recipe or favorite thing that you can share with me before we wrap up this interview? Is there something you like to cook either at home or at the KA house?

TM: I love to cook brownies with nuts in them. That's my specialty.

MBL: Okay.

TM: Everybody loves those. Of course, after...the brownie deals are set up outside because I don't like to make a mess with them. But I don't mind cleaning for them because if it wasn't for them making a mess therefore we wouldn't have a job.

MBL: So you make brownies for the guys on regular occasion?

TM: Yeah, they'll come back and say, no dessert today? Or nothing and we'll kind of come up with something.

MBL: Have you ever worked for any caterers or anything around town?

TM: I worked for City Grocery. I did catering with them. The guy's name was John. And I kind of worked for him helping him cater and like that. But to wrap it up, all and all, it's a job. Like that. They say I do a pretty good job. I work hard, try to keep everybody happy and something like that and I think that there'll be a few more guys in the house next year. We'll probably be serving like 175 this year coming up.

MBL: Okay, so they'll have more members this year?

TM: Yeah.

MBL: Okay. Well is there anything that you would like to tell me that I have neglected to ask you about?

TM: Well, no. Basically we've pretty well got everything covered.

MBL: Well thank you very much. This will wrap up our interview.

[176 tape off]