



Brian Boyle
Buckhead Diner - Atlanta, Georgia

November 4, 2019
Location: Buckhead Diner, Atlanta, Georgia
Interviewer: Henri Hollis
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
Length: Thirty-one minutes
Project: Career Servers

[*BEGIN INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:08.09]

Henri H.: Check, check. All right. It is November 4—Monday, November 4—at about 4:55 p.m.

And I am slating the tape for this Career Servers Project.

[Break in recording]

[00:00:32.03]

Henri H.: Okie-dokie. Do you mind giving me your full name and spelling of—

[00:00:39.12]

Brian B.: Steven Brian Boyle, S-t-e-v-e-n, Brian B-r-i-a-n, Boyle B-o-y-l-e.

[00:00:48.21]

Henri H.: Thank you so much. All right, let's start where it all began. Date of birth?

[00:00:52.21]

Brian B.: March 10, 1966.

[00:00:54.06]

Henri H.: So, where were you born?

[00:00:58.02]

Brian B.: Richmond, Virginia.

[00:01:01.07]

Henri H.: And raised there?

[00:01:01.08]

Brian B.: Four years in Richmond, Virginia. Then I moved to my family's hometown of Crewe, Virginia, which: picture Opie in Mayberry, small, about three thousand people; little railroad town an hour southwest of Richmond. I was there from four to fifteen, then moved back to Richmond for about a year and half, and then moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Finished high school, went to Wake Forest for four years, and then onward my career waiting tables—after four years of Wake Forest with a B.A. in speech communication.

[00:01:32.02]

Henri H.: Ah, very nice.

[00:01:34.17]

Brian B.: Yeah.

[00:01:34.27]

Henri H.: Are you an only child or do you have siblings?

[00:01:37.08]

Brian B.: I'm the middle of four children. I have an older brother who's seven years older than I am, a sister who's five years older than I am, and I had a younger brother who was two years younger than I was.

[00:01:45.19]

Henri H.: Gotcha, gotcha. So, I guess let's get into, how did you get into serving?

[00:01:53.23]

Brian B.: I worked at McDonald's in high school in Richmond and in Winston-Salem. Then I went to Wake Forest and figured that working at McDonald's, even though it was in the food industry and I enjoyed it, was not going to work during college. So, I worked there for the first six months of college, and then I started working in a restaurant, which was Darryl's, and they were a chain back in the day in that area. Each one was a different year, and they had different places in them, like you would be waiting tables in a opera box, an elevator, a trolley car, a taxi cab—God forbid—from England, stuff like that. So, I did that throughout college, and then I graduated from college and I tried the 8-5 thing and didn't care for it at all. So, I had been working at Darryl's, like I said. I called friends of mine who were working at a slightly upper-scale restaurant than Darryl's was, and asked 'em if I could come work with them there—I worked with them at Darryl's—they said, "Sure, come on!" So, I dropped the 8-5 job as quickly as I could and went to that. So, I've been waiting tables ever since.

[00:03:04.20]

Henri H.: I'm with you there on the 8-5 thing. Not my cup of tea.

[00:03:09.02]

Brian B.: Oh, no. It was heinous. I did the 8-5 thing and then I felt guilty for not using my college education officially, so I was doing an internship with Sara Lee and their corporate video department. I would give them, like, 9-12 every day and then go wait tables to earn my money. Then that job turned into an 8-5 job for a split minute, maybe a half a year or something, and then I was like, "Eh." They'd hired somebody else to do that position, and so I was like, "Okay." So, I went back to waiting tables full-time. I enjoy the work; it's great. I love the hours, going to bed at 2:30 in the morning and getting up at 10:30 in the morning is optimal for me.

[00:03:50.07]

Henri H.: It's funny. A lot of people, I think, don't pay attention to that part of their life; they just assume, just try to fit their life into—

[00:03:58.09]

Brian B.: Oh, no. They say you live longer if you—they say if you're a nighttime person and you stay up at night and don't get up until late, you live longer if you follow your natural biorhythms instead of trying to force yourself into something that you're not made for. So, not a morning person. I worked at Darryl's all through college; that was about three years. Then I worked at New Market Grill for four years—three years in Winston-Salem,

and then we opened up a restaurant in Charlotte, North Carolina, and I was head waiter and head trainer there for four years. Then I moved here in [19]95, March, and I've been here since. They asked me if I was interested in being—with my experience, "Oh, would you like to be a manager?" I was like, "No, I don't want to be a manager." 'Cause I like the freedom of being able to go and do as I want to do, you know. 'Cause when you're a waiter, they could replace you easily with another waiter; they've got a pool of twenty-some to choose from. But if you're a manager, then you have to work out all the—and besides, I make more money, hopefully, working a lot less hours, I make more money than assistant managers and general managers. Oof, who wants that headache? [Laughter] So, I'm happy where I am.

[00:05:08.28]

Henri H.: Yeah. Was food an important part of your life when you were growing up?

[00:05:14.19]

Brian B.: Not really, 'cause my mom had four—three—well, four kids. She was one of those moms who went to every football game for my older brother, every basketball game for my older sister, every baseball game for my younger brother, and my performance once a year—I was the easy kid on stage. [Laughter] We always had hot meals and everything, but the only seafood I had growing up was tuna fish and fish sticks. She didn't waste her time making something we weren't going to eat. So, since then, I've experienced thirty-some years of different cuisine and seafoods, and so now I know a lot more about them and like them, but growing up, that was not a big part. We're talking about Salisbury

steak dinners and chicken and dumplings and stuff like that, that she could go to all these sports activities and still have a hot meal on the table.

[00:06:03.00]

Henri H.: Right, right.

[00:06:05.08]

Brian B.: Now, real quick, grandparents, that's a different story. Now, my grandmother on Sundays was an exquisite cook, and then my grandmother on the farm was more country-fried, from-scratch cooking, and so they were both excellent cooks in their own way. Yeah, that's when you really got the good food, 'cause my grandmother was—not the farm one, but the other one—my maternal grandmother was a Sunday School Baptist, Sunday School teacher, so she was one of those Southern women who was, on Saturdays, she would prepare the Sunday lunch. So, it would be two meats, like barbecue, chicken salad, always two meats, no matter what it was. And pot roast, whatever, and fried chicken. She'd have two meats, always two or three vegetables, mashed potatoes every Sunday, bread and butter, rolls, two desserts to choose from and all that. And also, I owe a lot to her as far as entertaining goes. She was the type of grandmother—she would prepare the meal on Saturday, go teach her Sunday School class, go to church, and then come and heat everything up—unless it was the fried chicken, was the only thing you had to do at the last minute, and the mashed potatoes. Then she would make sure that everyone at the table had everything they wanted to eat and drink, so there's the waiter kind of thing coming out, so everybody had everything they wanted to eat and drink. She

would stand behind somebody's chair and oversee the meal. Then, after everybody had been served their choice of dessert and coffee, she would sit down and eat her meal. So, when I was little, it was like—they said I didn't eat enough to keep a bird alive, 'cause I was so picky or whatever. Then, by the time I'm in college, I'm eating three helpings of everything. So, my third helping, I got to sit with her and eat my third helping with her. She and I had dessert together. That's maybe where the serving thing came from.

[00:07:52.25]

Henri H.: Yeah. So, you saw both your sets of grandparents often enough to where you got a little bit . . . I guess that was a big part of your food memories from them?

[00:08:02.21]

Brian B.: Yeah. I was lucky. Because we moved to my hometown, my parents' and grandparents' hometown when I was four, that I was with them from four to fifteen, so I got to see them often. And I was my Nanny, my mother's mother's favorite child, of course, 'cause I loved her more. The more sugar you pour on them, the more sugar they pour on you, so. She was my favorite person; I was her favorite person, so I got to see plenty of them, yeah, growing up.

[00:08:25.28]

Henri H.: Very nice. You said you did one performance a year. Were you in theater?

[00:08:30.12]

Brian B.: Yeah. I was in theater. Gay waiters, you can imagine, turning out—yeah, I was into theater back then. So, I went to Wake Forest and I'm like, "Oh, shit, I've got to start studying." You know? 'Cause public school, you're like, skating through. Time for those outside activities. Then when you go to school—during college, I was an office assistant for the business school two mornings a week, Tuesday and Thursday, and then Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, I was working at a young men's clothing store called Chess King back in the day of the mall. Then I was working during college itself, three nights a week. I would usually work Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday nights, and then during the summer, I would work full-time at the restaurant. So, you're working three jobs during college, so there's not going to be any performing then. You're just trying to get through all of those mandatory science and math classes that you have to take that you're never going to use again in your life.

[00:09:21.14]

Henri H.: So, you really—did you have to work your way through college?

[00:09:24.07]

Brian B.: My dad took out some loans, and he passed away right after I graduated, so some of them got paid off. They were insured; somebody had to pay off afterwards. I had to make my own spending money. But my parents pretty much took care of—we were in Winston-Salem and it's a Wake Forest school, was in Winston-Salem, so you got a discount back then from being from the state itself. And I was, like, fourth in my class in high school. I was the top male, and there was three girls ahead of me. I'd say there was

at least two or three hundred people in our senior class. So, I did get a small scholarship to begin with, which would have turned out to be more beneficial had we kept applying for it, but it was so small to begin with that we didn't bother. Then my daddy's trucking company went under, and so if we had kept reapplying for that one scholarship, they would have paid more later on, but we failed to do that, so.

[00:10:12.15]

Henri H.: Gotcha, gotcha.

[00:10:16.00]

Brian B.: Yeah.

[00:10:16.00]

Henri H.: So, tell me a little bit about what you like about serving.

[00:10:21.17]

Brian B.: I like the entertaining aspect, of being entertaining to people. I can use my gift of gab that I inherited from my mom, and I love the hours, 'cause it's usually about thirty hours a week. And, like I said, I can sleep in until 10:30 unless I'm workin' lunch. After twenty-four and a half years, the only lunch shift I work is Saturday lunch, so I'm usually Monday thru Thursday nights, Saturday lunch, and no doubles. No Fridays. And I'll pick up Sunday nights if I've been out of town the weekend before and missed a Saturday lunch shift or somethin' like that. The hours are probably the best part of the whole job,

but also less stress, because you don't take it home with you. The lack of responsibility. It's not like—you're not sitting 8-5 in a, well, you're in an outfit, unfortunately, a tie and all that, so you can't say you're getting away from that aspect, but it's no B.S. You come in, you give somebody what they want. You tell 'em what to get; if they don't listen, it's their problem. Then I do get to perform at my tables, so that's getting out of me in that manner. They're really not interested in listening to my clientele and what their—like sometimes you'll have a man at the table who thinks he's gonna be the funny one, and I'm like, "Mm, no. I'm the funny one here. Just shut up and sit there and eat and watch the show." Then I have a lot of repeat customers who ask for me in particular, and they're always asking about, how's my mom, how many cats does she have right now—which is about fourteen or fifteen, thank God, oh, my God—she's in Virginia getting older, and so that's becoming a whole new experience. Trying to deal with handling all of her stuff at seventy-nine from three states away. Everyone's like, "Why don't you bring her down here?" I'm like, "'Cause she's got fifteen dogs, a bird, and a cat, and a paid for house," so it's like, "Hello?" For the time being, she's staying where she is. People are always coming in, asking for me, and then asking about the stuff that I've told them about. Also, I go to autograph conventions and meet celebrities, so this frees up my schedule to do that at the drop of a hat, to go do it if I want to. Then, I show my clientele my pictures from my meetings. Like last weekend, it was going up to New Jersey for an autograph show and meeting Hayley Mills for the first time, who was a famous Walt Disney actress back in the day, of live action films, and her sister, Juliet Mills and Elvira, Mistress of the Dark was there. Shirley Jones from the Partridge Family, who I've met several times

already before. That's what I enjoy. Between telling my clients about my mom and her animals and my celebrity-chasing down, stalking, we get a lot of fun out of that.

[00:12:49.16]

Henri H.: There's a lot of celebrities that come through here, too, right?

[00:12:50.11]

Brian B.: Yeah. We have a pretty good number of them. They film so much more in Atlanta than they used to, and we're well-known as the Buckhead Diner in Buckhead. So, we get our fair share.

[00:13:02.14]

Henri H.: Do they film, often, here?

[00:13:05.17]

Brian B.: They film in the area, yes, and then you've got the Walking Dead and what was it—the Vampire Diaries used to shoot in towns outside of Atlanta. A lot of them don't come in regular, but they do shoot a lot of movies here now.

[00:13:20.15]

Henri H.: I meant, do they use for production here or setting—

[00:13:22.09]

Brian B.: Oh, no, in the—in here? They've shot an American Express commercial here and they did something with . . . who is the chef that does the Bam thing?

[00:13:31.28]

Henri H.: Guy Fieri? Emeril?

[00:13:35.07]

Brian B.: Emeril Lagasse came in and did a Super Bowl thing one time that they shot here. But otherwise, they've never shut down for a movie that I remember, except for that one American Express commercial that day.

[00:13:44.05]

Henri H.: Gotcha. It's kind of surprising, 'cause this has such a distinctive . . .

[00:13:49.24]

Brian B.: Yeah. Usually, if they want a diner, they want something that's not as glitzy, though. This is the world's finest upscale diner, supposedly. They're gonna want something that looks like Flo would be popping out chewing gum with a beehive or something, so they would like the Majestic Diner up on Ponce or something like that instead.

[00:14:05.09]

Henri H.: Gotcha, yeah. What is it about this specific restaurant that's kept you here for so long?

[00:14:10.19]

Brian B.: Well, I had a female friend from college that I had visited when I lived in Charlotte, when I came down here, and she lived near the airport. I came down several times to scope out the area. This was, used to be open every night till midnight, so when we were on this side of town and we just happened to come here to eat—at least once—and I knew that the food quality was good, but it wasn't an expensive place to eat. So, more for the food quality and the fact that it was, you know, the price was good, so when I came here, I certainly wanted to have a job lined up before I moved here, unlike my roommate at the time. 'Cause the guy I moved down here with was head waiter—head bartender—at the restaurant that I was head waiter at. So, we had also both come from Winston-Salem to open the restaurant in Charlotte. I said, "Now, listen, if you want to move to Atlanta, get your shit together, because I'm moving at the end of the year." So, he came down without a job lined up. "Oh, I'll get something." I applied at four different places; I applied at Bones, but they said they would be glad to have me, and they said they'd be glad to have me but that I would have to be a busboy for six months before I could get onto the waitstaff. I was pushing twenty-eight; I was gettin' ready to turn twenty-eight or twenty-nine at the time, so I said, "Nah, I don't think I want to be a busboy." Then I went to the Fish Market; they didn't get back to me, thank God, because it's all that climbing up and down, and I was like, I didn't need to be doing all that anyway. I can barely walk on this flat floor at my age. Then I went to the Cheesecake Factory, and their menu was about two inches thick. I was like, "What's the deal with the menus? Every other page is a local advertisement for a business." "Oh, that way, we get our menus printed for free." I was like, I don't want to work for a company that has to worry about who's paying for

their menus printing, so I was like, "Eh." So, I came here, and I've been very happy ever since.

[00:15:57.02]

Henri H.: Nice. Do you have a good relationship with the kitchen?

[00:16:01.23]

Brian B.: Mm, yeah. For the most part. I don't put up with too much bullshit from them, and they don't put up with too much bullshit from me. I get along great with everybody but the chefs, and sometimes you'll get great ones, and sometimes you'll get ones that have got a lot of attitude.

[00:16:12.22]

Henri H.: Right.

[00:16:13.17]

Brian B.: Yeah. After twenty-four and a half years, and you've been here longer than everybody else and you have to tell them, "No, that's not how it's done." I learned the hard way one time, it's like you praise in public but you fix them in private. Yeah, you can get in trouble for telling somebody that's got a supposedly higher rank than you do in the food chain that they're doing it incorrectly or they're not getting it done, period.

[00:16:37.03]

Henri H.: Right, right.

[00:16:37.03]

Brian B.: That'll get you a three-day suspension back in the day. [Laughter]

[00:16:42.10]

Henri H.: How many chefs, do you think, have you seen here?

[00:16:44.17]

Brian B.: I was thinking. About general managers, I've had at least seven in my twenty-four and a half years. So, chefs, I would say at least that many—of head chefs. Then sous chefs; oh, my God. There's, like, three or four of those working at a time. So, I've seen gobs of them come through. But as far as my fellow employees, I get along fine. Used to be, in the beginning, you would be chummy and hang out with them and go out after work and stuff, but when you're fifty-three years old and they're all not, it's like, "I'll pass." So, I'm not chummy-chummy with them as far as hanging out after work and stuff goes, but yeah, pretty much at my age in life, after being Queen Bee for this long, you're like, "Honey, I was here before you, during you, and unfortunately, I'll be here long after you." [Laughter] So it's like, "Don't mess with me."

[00:17:30.08]

Henri H.: Yeah. So, you are the longest tenured employee?

[00:17:35.06]

Brian B.: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've been here longer than everybody else.

[00:17:38.04]

Henri H.: Gotcha. How do you keep up with the menu changes and keep educated about—

[00:17:48.03]

Brian B.: The good thing about this restaurant is that they only allow you to change so much because you've got the clientele that have been coming for thirty-three years this fall, and so, they don't want to see a great deal of change. So, once in a while, you'll have a chef that wants to do something, but they're only going to be able to get to do so much as what the owner will let you do. So, once in a while, the owner will approve of an entree that's not all that and a bag of chips, and I just steer my clientele away from it if I don't like it. 'Cause I'm the one who's going to have to answer it. But then again, sometimes people love stuff that I don't love. I don't know how that happens, but it does. [Laughter]

[00:18:25.14]

Henri H.: One thing we've been asking everybody for this project is for kind of your personal definition of service versus hospitality, and differentiating between the two.

[00:18:38.24]

Brian B.: It's a fine line.

[00:18:38.24]

Henri H.: Yeah.

[00:18:40.04]

Brian B.: I mean, service is just the basics; you make sure they've got everything they want, and if you're good like me, then you make sure they have it before they know they need it. So, that's service, is, they get exactly what they ask for. These days, with all the gluten free and the allergies and all that shit, it's supposedly life or death, so you have to be even more particular about service. Hospitality is making them feel welcome, and the entertaining part that I'm so good at. I mean, I'm good at both, but hospitality is the big thing. I mean, something can get screwed up in the kitchen, not your fault if they overcook a steak or something, but if they love you, they'll keep coming back even if they've screwed up their order last time they came in here.

[00:19:24.08]

Henri H.: Right. So, you develop relationships with some of your clients, some of your regulars.

[00:19:30.18]

Brian B.: Oh, yeah. Clientele before co-workers. Clientele are more important, because they're the ones putting money in my pocket, number one. Number two, some of them have become my best friends, like my best friend lives a block behind the restaurant; he and his wife have come in for twenty years, plus. So, when I found out I had cancer in 2001, and the whole year of 2001 was going through treatments, they were there for me. My

fellow workers were there for me. At one point, I missed some work, so they worked shifts and collected the money for me, so that was great at the time for them to do that kind of thing.

[00:20:04.07]

Henri H.: Wow.

[00:20:05.23]

Brian B.: Yeah. It was family. They become your family to a point. But like I said, I was also hanging out with them, all that stuff and everything. So, they respect me for my age and my tenure, but the clientele are what really make it fun to come to work. Because I know that—some nights, if you have a bunch of regulars, you're like, "Oh, gosh. This is smooth sailing, baby." So, it's nice. Then, also, sometimes if the restaurant's slow and you've got a bunch of regulars coming in, so it's like you're making money and other people aren't because they do . . . they do, what do you call it, a rotation of tables, everybody tries to get sat the same amount of tables. But if the business is not coming in the door, which thankfully is not too bad of a problem most of the year, but sometimes you have drag parts or whatever, so I'm getting sat, period, no matter what, hopefully.

[00:20:56.05]

Henri H.: Right, right. What are the most challenging and rewarding parts of the job? We've kind of talked about this a little bit here.

[00:21:07.07]

Brian B.: Yeah. The rewarding part is job stability, because I know that since I've got so many years under my belt that they're not going to screw me so badly. And the set schedule, or getting the schedule off I need, so especially as, like I said, my mom is getting older. I need to sometimes make last-minute trips to go see her or a long weekend every month to go see her and everything. They're cool with that. So, the best part is working with you schedule-wise. The worst part, most trying part, is people that think they know more than you do and they don't.

[00:21:40.16]

Henri H.: People stealing the spotlight? [Laughter]

[00:21:43.22]

Brian B.: They're not allowed to do that. They don't get that done. No, you get different personalities over the years or whatever, just certain people you're not gonna get along with, period. But like I said, I was there before you, during you, and I'll be here long after you're gone, so it doesn't really bother me that much.

[00:22:00.17]

Henri H.: Can you kind of run me through your typical day?

[00:22:05.13]

Brian B.: My typical day is: get up at 10:30—these days, check on my mom as much as possible during the day as I can to get up at 10:30—I have breakfast, check my computer, email accounts and all that stuff, try to go the gym about noon, get done there by 1ish, come home, go to shower, shave, eat my lunch, take my nap from 3 to 4:15 every day or 4:10, and get my butt ready for work, which everything is pretty much done except for slipping into the actual outfit itself, and then drive to work. I feed feral cats, also, so I have to stop and check on their food, whether I'm going to the gym or if I'm going to work, and then after work. It takes about an hour on my way home to feed all those feral cats. Grace, just get somebody else to get it. Megan will take it. Thank you, baby. Yeah, so, I feed approximately—right now, I'm feeding about almost a dozen cats outside the three cats I have at home. So, yeah. Two of my friends are like, “Oh, there are kittens”—within thirty-six hours, two different friends contacted me about kittens behind the Ansley Mall. I was like, "What are y'all doing about it?" It's like, "Nothing. We expect you to do everything, really." Is what they're saying. So, I stop and feed them on the way home. So, I'm a little old cat lady.

[00:23:22.16]

Henri H.: Have you ever done the thing to trap 'em and get 'em fixed?

[00:23:26.05]

Brian B.: Oh, yeah. We do trap, neuter, and return, that way we don't have forty-five instead of twelve. So, I'm out there at night now, most recently calling, "Her, kitty, kitty!" At the top of my lungs and getting them all fed. Then I go home and actually, usually, I get off at,

like, 10. So, for a couple hours I'll go to my best friend's house behind the restaurant who used to be a customer, now he's my best friend, and hang out with him, 'cause his wife has a dermatology practice down in Florida, so they don't see each other during the week. Sounds like the perfect relationship to me. So, we watch T.V. or binge watch movies and stuff. Then I go do that 12 to 1, feeding the cats. I'm usually watching T.V. and unwinding and going to bed at about 2:30, 3. So, I get my eight hours plus my nap in the afternoon.

[00:24:08.02]

Henri H.: Yeah, very nice.

[00:24:08.02]

Brian B.: Cool. All about the sleep, baby.

[00:24:11.24]

Henri H.: Yeah. Did you have any mentors or anybody that really, I guess, taught you the important things about serving?

[00:24:26.13]

Brian B.: No. I just watched the Harvey Girls growing up, which is a Judy Garland movie about the trains moving out west, and they were—"The trains must be fed. The trains must be fed." Everything in that movie was so particular, down to the uniforms were impeccable, the food was great and lots for your money, big bang for your buck, which is always

important. So, I say that I learned that through that movie, and just in general, watching T.V. and knowing how to act and what to do and all that. As far as personal mentors or anything like that, no.

[00:24:55.28]

Henri H.: How is wearing a uniform?

[00:24:58.03]

Brian B.: It's all right. You're not messin' up your own clothes, at least, so... The tie is uncomfortable. We used to wear serving jackets, but they made this now, so if you can keep it clean, I tried to get them to do a black vest instead. They said, "Oh, no this looks so good on the Latinos." I'm like, "Yeah, but I don't have a Latino's complexion." So, they went with a white, which is hard to keep clean. But it's more form-fitting than the serving jacket was. I don't mind a uniform. You're on your feet all the time, though, and I'm getting to an age where you're starting to feel that. So, my mom has a lot of leg, hip, back issues because she was taking care of my handicapped brother for twenty-six years. When you're messing with a grown man, it takes wear and tear on your body. So, she, at seventy-nine can barely get around. Plus, she's starting to have a little bit of dementia. So, I'm like, "Oh, great. This is what I have to look forward to." When I've got my knee braces on at work and you're wearing your shoes. Several years ago, they—at 2001, like right around 9/11—they revamped the restaurant and closed it for two weeks to do refurbishing. Not remodeling, but refurbishing. And they changed the carpet and made it

a cheaper, flatter carpet, which is worse on your feet. So, it's less padding underneath than it was before that. So, that kind of thing is taking its toll on me.

[00:26:16.09]

Henri H.: Are your shoes part of the uniform, or you get to choose your own shoes?

[00:26:17.28]

Brian B.: You pick your own shoes, but they have to be solid black. And they have gotten laxer over the years. Like when I started in [19]95, no earring, no excessive jewelry for men. We had to have button-downs then, and now you can't have a button-down white dress shirt. They supply the ties and the vest, and it had to be—in the past—it had to be black tuxedo pants and black dress shoes, but now, people can wear clogs or black tennis shoes. As long as it's black shoes and solid black pants, they can get away with it. Not jeans, but it's all-black pants. So, that sort of thing has gotten laxer of the twenty-four and a half years that I've been here. But I don't mind the uniform at all, really, because that way you don't have to mess up your own clothes. And everybody's wearing the same thing, so.

[00:27:07.04]

Henri H.: Yeah. You don't have to choose an outfit every day.

[00:27:08.27]

Brian B.: No. Yeah, yeah.

[00:27:13.08]

Henri H.: What is the story with the pin?

[00:27:16.03]

Brian B.: The pin, I think it was supposed to make us look reminiscent of porters, like on the Orient Express. And the serving jacket, in the past, really did make it look more like that, I think, to a point. So, to the best of my knowledge, the pins were a shout out to that. But we got the Pontiac end blooms on the light fixtures; these light fixtures are thirty-three years old. You know, it's like a train car motif and art deco, to a point. Some years ago, one kid was climbing up and messing with one of these light fixtures. I was like, I told the table, "If you value your child's life, you better get him to stop doin' that." But really I'm thinkin', "You can have more kids, but I'll never get another light fixture like that again, because that business is long out of business."

[00:27:58.12]

Henri H.: Yeah, yeah. Well, let's see. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that's important about your or important about your career that's—

[00:28:11.07]

Brian B.: No. We talked about me chasin' down movie stars. I've met Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers and been to Phyllis Diller's home—you don't know who these people are, but they're old—

[00:28:19.07]

Henri H.: I know who Joan Rivers is.

[00:28:19.07]

Brian B.: Okay. Well, I met Joan Rivers three times. Betty White I've met twice. So, the job allows me to go chase those dreams down or whatever, and then I have stories to tell my clientele and they're all like, "Who have you met lately?" Duh duh duh. That's a big thing. The hours are probably the most important thing, I would say, and the freedom to get away. Been here long before, during, and after most people, so I'm not worried about coworkers as far as getting along with them—I mean, I do, for the most part, but it's not gonna drive me crazy if I don't for a while. I like the quality of food, the bang for the buck. That's the important thing, 'cause you've got to be proud of what you're serving. Like I said, once in a while they'll have a dud, but most of the time it's fine and dandy. And it's convenient to home. I live, like, literally—11 to Piedmont for the parks, so it's one straight shot to work, no interstates or anything for that. That's the most important part.

[00:29:15.18]

Henri H.: Cool. All right, well, I think that pretty much does this.

[00:29:19.25]

Brian B.: Can't think of anything else? No intriguing secrets you need to know or anything?

[00:29:24.27]

Henri H.: I mean unless you have any . . .

[00:29:25.06]

Brian B.: [Laughter] I don't have any secrets, baby. Believe me. There are no secrets. I tell my tables everything. Once in a while, somebody will call and complain. It's like, "He was cussing. He was using naughty words."

[00:29:38.15]

Henri H.: T.M.I.

[00:29:38.16]

Brian B.: Oh, definitely. T.M.I. and all that stuff. Literally, the manager that's currently working here—the general manager—he was like, I'm told the man on the phone when he complained, he said, "The owners know exactly how Brian speaks to his tables and they are perfectly fine with it. He has a lot of people coming in to be waited on by him, they request him, and he's worked here twenty-four and a half years." So it's like, do you want something free? Because otherwise, this conversation's over. That was nice that he had my back, as far as that goes. So, yeah. But you're gonna get T.M.I. in my section.

[00:30:12.27]

Henri H.: Right.

[00:30:14.08]

Brian B.: And it's gonna be everything. So, once in a while, every two years you'll get a woman with a stick up her—who says, "Don't call me 'dear.'" Or something like that. I'm like, "Mm." But otherwise, don't have any problems to speak of, knock on wood. [Knocking on table]

[00:30:30.22]

Henri H.: Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate your time.

[00:30:31.29]

Brian B.: You're welcome.

[*End of interview*]