



**Dan Mathus**  
**Chops Lobster Bar - Atlanta, Georgia**  
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November 7, 2019  
Location: Chops, Atlanta, Georgia  
Interviewer: Henri Hollis  
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski  
Length: One hour and eleven minutes  
Project: Career Servers

[*BEGIN INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:02.11]

**Henri H.:** All right. The date is Thursday, November 7, 2019. It is about 2:45 in the afternoon.

This is Henri Hollis interviewing Dan Mathus. Dan, could you say and spell your name for me?

[00:00:22.13]

**Dan M.:** Dan Mathus, M-a-t-h-u-s.

[00:00:26.16]

**Henri H.:** Cool. Thanks so much. So, let's start at the beginning: when were you born?

[00:00:32.11]

**Dan M.:** July 17, 1971.

[00:00:35.10]

**Henri H.:** Very nice. Where were you born—

[00:00:38.27]

**Dan M.:** Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

[00:00:41.07]

**Henri H.:** Cool. Was cooking an important part of growing up, or was food an important part of your raising?

[00:00:54.14]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. My parents probably weren't really attached to it—my grandmother was. She's from Italian descent. So, we would kind of, we'd go over to her house, and kinda just eat all day. [Laughter] With the whole meal. You'd eat, you'd stop, and then you'd eat again, then you'd stop kinda whole thing. At our house growing up, it wasn't, but I kinda always enjoyed it in those terms.

[00:01:22.02]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm. Do you have siblings? What's kinda your family background?

[00:01:25.09]

**Dan M.:** I have one brother.

[00:01:27.23]

**Henri H.:** Same. So, how did you get into the restaurant industry? Did it start early on?

[00:01:34.15]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, well, it started at . . . nineteen, nineteen, twenty. Well, I guess eighteen. I started in college, and then, after leaving college, I actually played golf professionally.

[00:01:55.06]

**Henri H.:** Oh.

[00:01:55.06]

**Dan M.:** So, this kind of allowed me the opportunity to practice during the day if I wasn't playing, if I wasn't playing—especially, plus, a lot of restaurants, the wintertime's busier than the summertime, so I had the ability then to have some flexibility to travel and play more in the summertime, then kind of come back to it and it started that way.

[00:02:15.07]

**Henri H.:** Gotcha. So, I assume you went to college to play golf?

[00:02:20.15]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:02:20.15]

**Henri H.:** Where'd you go to school?

[00:02:21.25]

**Dan M.:** Lehigh. It's up in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

[00:02:27.15]

**Henri H.:** Cool, cool. You must have a lot of experience with country club food, huh?

[00:02:32.16]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, yeah. A lot of different country clubs like that, yeah.

[00:02:36.04]

**Henri H.:** I think of Chops as, like, the ultimate of your . . . the country club food in its ultimate form.

[00:02:48.01]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. It's the power dinner, the power lunch at the country club, but . . . even I don't wanna say commercialized for that, but just having to survive on its own. Where a country club, the members are always there.

[00:03:01.13]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm, yeah. Did you wait through tables through college? Yeah—you said that.

[00:03:07.19]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, I did. On and off. Some semesters I wouldn't, but the summers and things like that, I did.

[00:03:14.23]

**Henri H.:** Do you still play a lot of golf?

[00:03:14.29]

**Dan M.:** I do. For the most part, I do. Yeah, I mean, I've had some injuries, but outside of that, yeah.

[00:03:23.24]

**Henri H.:** Gotcha. What was your first food service job?

[00:03:29.02]

**Dan M.:** My first was at a Bennigan's up in northern Virginia, Tysons Corner. God, it was . . . had to have been . . . 1990? [19]89ish, [19]90, in that type of time frame. And I started waiting tables, I ended up cooking there for a while, too, because they had a position open and I just kinda liked to do that. Yeah, so that was the first.

[00:04:04.00]

**Henri H.:** Do you still cook much?

[00:04:07.04]

**Dan M.:** At home. We have the big family dinners, and gatherings; going to the beach with the family. Over the holidays, definitely.

[00:04:19.26]

**Henri H.:** How did you make your way to Atlanta and get started with Chops?

[00:04:24.22]

**Dan M.:** I met . . . well, I met my wife-to-be, but my wife. I was always moving South after I left school for golf, living in the D.C. area. She had family here in Atlanta, her brother at the time, and so she wanted to come down. It kinda was a good place as we were early on in our relationship to come down together. So, we ended up just movin' to Atlanta back in [19]92, I guess it was. Yeah.

[00:04:59.05]

**Henri H.:** When you started, were you still splitting time between golf and serving?

[00:05:02.04]

**Dan M.:** Yes. Yeah, I did for a good period. I ended up playing golf with a manager from here, and I was workin' over at Grady's, over off North Druid Hills. He finally was like, one day, "Dude, just come over here and apply for a job." I wasn't sure, 'cause they were really flexible with my schedule and I was travelling three months of the summer, I would be pretty much gone. He was like, "I will work with you. We're pretty short-staffed." So, I came over, and then we kind of worked out well. We do really good business year-round here, but the summertime's for being a steakhouse, it's a lot of— during the week—it's a lot of business dinners, and you know, on weekends, it's a big time for celebrations. Especially around the holidays. So, you would ramp up your staff then, and then in the summertimes, it'll be a little bit leaner. So, it gave me a lot more flexibility when I was travelling like that.

[00:06:02.16]

**Henri H.:** How long have you been more serving more full-time?

[00:06:09.11]

**Dan M.:** Oh, the last ten, twelve years now. I mean, I'll still play in an occasional tournament here and there, but I'm not leavin' for three, four, five months at a time or anything like that.

[00:06:26.14]

**Henri H.:** Right, right. Were you making money playing golf, or . . . ?

[00:06:28.04]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, I was. Some years were better than others. Other years, probably, I wasn't clearing more than I was spending, but it was some good years, some bad years, give or take in that sense.

[00:06:43.15]

**Henri H.:** I went to Georgia Tech and I had some good friends from the golf team, so I kinda followed some of those guys.

[00:06:50.04]

**Dan M.:** Oh, really? Like who?

[00:06:51.16]

**Henri H.:** Like probably the most successful now is Cameron Tringale, but I was much closer friends with Paul Haley.

[00:07:00.09]

**Dan M.:** Okay.

[00:07:01.20]

**Henri H.:** He made it to the P.G.A. for a little while, but then he, I think he couldn't keep his card. I'm not sure how hard he's still pursuing it, but I think he is.

[00:07:14.24]

**Dan M.:** Right.

[00:07:16.05]

**Henri H.:** He moved out to Dallas, so I don't see him much anymore.

[00:07:19.14]

**Dan M.:** Yeah.

[00:07:20.27]

**Henri H.:** But yeah, that's . . . a tough career for a lot of people and some people, end up spending a lot than they . . .

[00:07:32.08]

**Dan M.:** Oh, yeah. You definitely can, yeah.

[00:07:36.08]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. That's cool that you could kind of get so much flexibility while pursuing something that is definitely a passion-type job, a lot of people would kill to be able to do.

[00:07:49.05]

**Dan M.:** Oh, yeah.

[00:07:51.10]

**Unknown:** What's up?

[00:07:51.10]

**Dan M.:** We're doin' an interview. Can ya beat it? [Laughter] Thanks.

[00:08:05.07]

**Henri H.:** So . . . I guess it sounds like you're kind of always balancing serving, golf, and . . .

[00:08:12.23]

**Dan M.:** Initially, yes, definitely.

[00:08:16.07]

**Henri H.:** And so, serving was just kind of . . . is it something that you're passionate about now or had a passion grow for it, or has it always been kind of a career of convenience, I guess?

[00:08:27.12]

**Dan M.:** I think part of it was a career of convenience, and there's another part of it that's . . . I mean, there's a passion for it, 'cause you're not gonna be able to do it—and especially you're not gonna be able to do it well—if you don't care, and there's some kind of joy you find out of it. There's always frustration, I think, in anything you do to a certain level, but . . . yeah, I think as much as I've gravitated—as much as it was a thing of convenience, I should say, I definitely gravitated towards it. On the backside of it, just . . . 'cause yeah, you find some joy and pleasure doin' it, too. I mean, I've met a ton of people through here, people—friends, have become friends, even acquaintances through here. In a weird sense, this type of restaurant ends up becoming a celebration place, you know, you want to call it. So, you kinda—families that come in here, and you're celebrating every birthday, every anniversary with them, and we have call parties where they request you and they come back and they sit with you. I've had friends of ours that have grown up from—their kids were five, six, and now I'm seein' them go off to college and we're celebrating all those things. So, there's a pretty cool aspect with that, to the whole thing.

[00:10:05.17]

**Henri H.:** That kind of leads into what's sort of the most rewarding part of the job? A lot of people say good relationships that you make are up there.

[00:10:13.06]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. That is. Flexibility in schedule is definitely up there. So, yeah, the relationships would probably definitely be the most.

[00:10:27.02]

**Henri H.:** How about most challenging, now that you've been doing it as long as you have? What do you find is challenging these days?

[00:10:35.11]

**Dan M.:** Ah . . . challenging. Well, one of the aspects of challenging is—aspect of it is . . . I don't know, the . . .you can always piss somebody off or have a problem that blows up. I've learned things, you kinda get ahead of things and you do that, but you're always on your feet. The person that can never be pleased or very difficult to be pleased, I should say—and you do a ton of things to stay ahead of it, and you do a ton of things to get past it, and sometimes, unfortunately, this business makes mistakes like every other business, whether it be food not cooked perfectly—even though 99% of it is, goes to the one person that it creates a problem with. So, it's just dealin' with those fires, probably, it is the most . . . I think, yeah.

[00:11:42.05]

**Henri H.:** Is there anything that you learned early on that you've carried with you over your career?

[00:11:53.22]

**Dan M.:** Um . . . you know, the one thing here, we kind of—not preach, but an aspect is—it's fine to make the mistake, it's how you handle the mistake that really will define you or define a situation. You probably had more situations here, I have a lot of them, where we'll have a problem, whether it be a steak that wasn't cooked right or something go wrong with the table, whatever aspect it is. But how you handle it probably matters more than the problem, a lot of the times, at the front end, that if you correct it before they quote unquote walk out the door, you can sometimes create your most loyal customers in those terms. Because they see how you worked through the bad times, because most people understand that there'll be kind of a bump on the road no matter what it is. I mean, I learned that early on, where first time you're thinkin'—especially comin' to a restaurant like this, I'm like, "Oh, I might make a mistake, it's gonna be a disaster." You're gonna get in trouble; this is gonna be a blow up, become a huge fire, and then you realize, "All right. Let's just fix it and make the guests happy." Kinda roll, then take care of itself, it really does. That's probably one of the first things I learned. That's a little bit different than I thought walking in here.

[00:13:18.25]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. How much latitude do you guys get to fix things, like, say, somebody complains that their steak is overcooked or something like that? Or maybe it's undercooked, and they . . . what can . . .

[00:13:32.02]

**Dan M.:** I have a tremendous amount of latitude. I've been here since [19]96, I started in October of [19]96. I probably have more than a lot of other people do, however, even the guy that's just in the door a week, a day, a year, whatever, you have a lot of latitude. Kevin, he's the general manager here, and he even says—we have line-ups at times—he's like, "If you don't think you're gettin' the right answer—" Meanin', the guest isn't getting taken care of what they need— "Work yourself up the food chain; talk to me." Sometimes it doesn't always work out that way, but I have a lot of latitude, whether it be . . . we have procedures as in if the one steak's done you try to take it, if it's two people, you try to take all the food back so you can kind of re-present the whole thing. So, you have things like that. Even if they're not that happy, make the suggestion, do you buy both steaks, do you bring 'em out dessert? I had a table not long ago that had a real long cook time. We had an issue with the kitchen and everything kinda just slowed down. The managers were runnin' around pretty hectic, too, tryin' to put out a lot of fires. It was a difficult night. We had this table who's a good customer, and they finished their bottle of wine, but they're waitin' on their steaks to have that wine with the steaks—and it was a pretty expensive bottle. I stopped with Kevin and Kevin's like, "Just do whatever you need to do." I mean, I had the ability to buy them a wine, and that wine—they were very appreciative, 'cause

they picked it out, they knew how much it was. They understood that we cared for their business in those terms, so we're given pretty good latitude like that, yeah.

[00:15:19.03]

**Henri H.:** Yeah, that's nice to have that freedom. 'Cause I think . . . you know, less well-run restaurants, a lot of times they don't give people the power to fix—

[00:15:30.14]

**Dan M.:** Oh, yeah. Without question. I mean, I've had plenty—I'm probably the worst person to go to a restaurant with. Oh, yeah. My wife—I've gotten better but my wife's always like, "Just chill out a little bit." I do, I just kinda . . . you see all the little things that I guess quote unquote mistakes, I don't know if they're truly mistakes, but the way things are done. You're like, "Oh, that drives me crazy. That drives me crazy. That drives me crazy." The worst thing to me is when you work in a restaurant, is you know when somebody's walking out of there unhappy. You also know when they're walking out and they're happy. Sometimes, unfortunately, just no matter what you do, they're still gonna just walk out miserable. The moment has overtaken them in those terms. But a lot of times, they can be fixed. They may not be completely pleased, but they're not angry or upset. It's just a terrible feeling when somebody leaves and they're like—they came out here to spend really good money to celebrate whatever, or just have a good evening with your wife or friends, family, whatever it might be, and we didn't even accomplish that. So, that kinda—sucks to let that happen. So, with this place, with the ability to fix a lot of those things, it makes it nice. It makes the job a little bit easier in those terms. I think it

does make the restaurant—I mean, without question—run better. And give a better, you know, word of mouth is kinda one of the biggest things here, that we hear people—we have friends from a town up in Tennessee, and I swear, the whole town comes down whenever anybody comes from Atlanta. If they're from Cleveland, Tennessee, they'll be like, "Oh, you have to go to Chops." I have so many people come from Cleveland just because we have a few people here and they just love to talk up this place.

[00:17:19.00]

**Henri H.:** Do they ask for you?

[00:17:21.17]

**Dan M.:** A lot of them do, definitely, a lot of 'em do.

[00:17:24.22]

**Henri H.:** How have things . . . I mean, over the course of your whole career but also specifically here, changed since you started?

[00:17:35.29]

**Dan M.:** How have things?

[00:17:37.16]

**Henri H.:** Yeah, I guess have you noticed differences in diners, noticed differences in food trends or . . .

[00:17:48.01]

**Dan M.:** Oh, yeah.

[00:17:48.01]

**Henri H.:** Or other servers or . . . just kind of the restaurant culture?

[00:17:51.09]

**Dan M.:** Well, here at this restaurant, we try to do classic food very well. So, we do these steaks.

Traditional steakhouse that's been around back days in Chicago and stuff like that. So, we probably don't have—and our seafood's great, too. The family that owns here also owns the Atlanta Fish Market, so we have excellent seafood. But we probably don't go with the trends of the food as much. I mean, it's a great steak, but it's just a steak on a plate. Then we have side dishes and things. Technology, I think, has changed a ton. One, just online reviews, whereas before it was—when I first started, it was always, "Just don't get that bad letter." Just don't get the letter, people leave. Nobody really ever called—I mean, a few people would call or write good letters, but nine times out of ten, and you think of your own dining experience, it's gonna be more of a complaint than even if you had a fabulous time. So, now with the internet and everybody being kind of a food critic or wanting to express themselves, one, you do get a lot more positive feedback. It kinda gives you a sense, and for us, it helped us hit with things—oh, these people keep saying that they like this aspect of what we're doing now, and you kind of can work upon that. Where if the same complaint kinda comes across where it's not just the disaster table, it's

like little things here. Kinda before the whole craft beer rush came on, we got a little bit ahead of that, and then we would get a lot of these reviews at the same time when the internet was kinda coming up, "Oh, they have a great craft beer selection." If you look for different things, and then you can kinda see positives, and you have a much better, I think, touch of where your guest is for the one part of it, definitely.

[00:19:59.17]

**Henri H.:** That's interesting, 'cause usually you only hear complaints about online reviews, for the most part, as opposed to hearing about . . .

[00:20:06.26]

**Dan M.:** You read of 'em, and I will say, some of 'em—as a matter of fact, my wife and I were reading a review about a totally different industry this morning, and I was like, "This person's just a kook." I said, and I deal with them a lot, I read through them a lot. I was like, "They didn't—" It had to do with a dog salon that my wife was taking, going to have them taken to. I was like, "These people weren't even there." It was one thing after another. "Yeah, I'm just takin' that one out." So, you do get reviews that aren't real realistic, but you do get valid ones, too. I mean, if you're getting a review, three or four bad reviews a week: "Their bathrooms don't seem clean." Or whatever they might be, things that are incidental that you don't really realize it, and the things is, you're going in there once every hour and you're like, hey, clean it up and think it looks great, but it's really dirty for the other fifty-eight minutes, it's something that you should probably attack to make better. So, I think it helps in those terms. But yeah, you definitely do get

the crazy or the over-the-top ones that are really nondescript and you really don't understand.

[00:21:23.11]

**Henri H.:** Anything pet-related always brings out the crazies, too.

[00:21:26.09]

**Dan M.:** Yes, it does. Yeah, there's a few things like that.

[00:21:29.20]

**Henri H.:** Do you ever get shout-outs in online reviews? You must, right?

[00:21:34.17]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, you definitely do.

[00:21:39.01]

**Henri H.:** One thing that struck me around a lot of restaurants is how — which you're backing up right now — is how close they pay attention to their online reviews. They'll read them at line-up and stuff like that.

[00:21:55.16]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. It's the repetitive ones. It's the ones, you know, the good or the bad. It could be the good or bad server, it could be the good or bad atmosphere. It can be the valet gets

bad—we have a traffic problem here in Atlanta, like most places do, and there are times that the valet's not operating right. We might get two or three, and then you might have to revamp how the best you can solve these different things, but yeah.

[00:22:24.21]

**Henri H.:** In terms of technology, do you guys deal with people taking photos in—

[00:22:33.08]

**Dan M.:** Big time, big time.

[00:22:33.08]

**Henri H.:** Do you ever have to ask people to settle down with it, or how do you guys accommodate that?

[00:22:41.25]

**Dan M.:** The big one's the big food photo. You know, everybody's gotta take a picture of their plate. We don't really address it too much, as long as it's non-offensive. Then we've had recently the bigger, like, birthday parties or celebrations, in those terms, where people have brought in photographers. And we have to have a conversation with them as to—as much as it is your celebration, you're not renting out, you're part of a dining room as a whole. So, be respectful of the other guests. Then, especially with the Hollywood industry doin' a lot more, we tend to get some celebrities that come through here. We just

. . . we don't allow people really to come up to the table. We just kinda try to politely move them on from snapping pictures like that, as far as that part of it goes.

[00:23:43.28]

**Henri H.:** Walk me through your, I guess, typical work day.

[00:23:49.00]

**Dan M.:** All right. I arrive, typically around 4ish. I'll pull the builds, so whatever section I'm in, we'll pull a build. So, we work on a team system here. I have a back waiter who does all the back work, so he does the set-up, whether it be cutting butter, preparing the bread station, preparing the beverage station or the sauces with the linens and things like that. I will go through the builds, see how the dining room's gonna get set up—

[00:24:27.24]

**Henri H.:** What do you mean by builds?

[00:24:28.26]

**Dan M.:** So, if it's . . . most all of our tables are four-tops. We have a few deuces, but most of 'em are four, but a lot of 'em can be built for six, eight, up to twelve, depending on what section you're in. So, depending on the time and whether they're gonna be set before the first turn or second turn, so I have to set up the whole station for the first turn. So, we have chips that we put on for, let's say, the twelve-top or the ten-top, and I'll have to pull those out, set up with the settings, go through my entire station, polish everything. Make

sure that all the tables are set for the right numbers of people. Salt and pepper shakers, dust, wipe down chair rails. Ice buckets. Just make the station as a whole—on the weekends when we're given a little bit more flexibility, one because we're not open for lunch, because sometimes you can be walking in kinda juggling tables still in the dining room while setting up for dinner. But during the weekends to be a little bit more extensive of a cleaning, but during the week, it's kinda, you know, wiping down the dust and doing those type of things. We'll then have a line up at about 5 o'clock. We open for 5:30. We'll go over reviews, points of service, new menu items, issues within the kitchen, front of the house, back of the house. At those meetings, it literally could be anything. Dinner then starts at 5:30, depending on the night. We'll typically be filled by 7, no matter what, 6:30/7. Saturdays a little bit quicker than the most, 'cause everybody's kinda out for the day, weekends, a little bit later. You just work through your last tables. Obviously, we have to wait till everybody's finished. There's a paperwork process of filin' away with the credit card tips, getting checked out. The back person typically does all the work but the front person has a few things to do of shutting down the restaurant, kind of a flow path so that the closers will eventually shut everything down. Then you just wait for your last table to leave and head home.

[00:27:01.04]

**Henri H.:** What time do you think you usually get off?

[00:27:04.01]

**Dan M.:** During the week, 9:30 to 11:30. I mean, there's no—weekends, you could probably add an hour, hour and a half to that. Holidays, you could probably add another hour on top of that, just Christmastime will definitely be later. There is no rhyme or reason to it. We have gone, during the week, gone to more of a staggered end time, so it gives you—I think part of that's going back to the technology, where you have it with the computer. You can kind of see. You'll have certain teams come in as openers, and other teams come in as closers, and you can seat accordingly so that they'll take the front portion, everybody works during the busy portion and then the closers'll take the back portion. So, there's a active way of doing it in those terms. But it literally just depends when your last table leaves.

[00:28:18.09]

**Henri H.:** Is that a challenge, or is that . . . you kinda have your life set up around odd hours?

[00:28:27.19]

**Dan M.:** It can be—there's a point of challenge. December, it's definitely a challenge, because there's not enough hours in the day leading up to Christmas, the holidays. But yeah, there's a challenge to it. I mean, I have three kids. My wife travels with work now. My kids are older, so in a sense, I get 'em—my youngest gets home from school, my other two are in college. And I kinda get them set up. My son, even though he's in college, he stays at home. Then I'll come home in the evenings, too. There's challenges, but you get used to it. I mean, it's like everything. There's pros and cons to it. I mean, I look at my wife's schedule, who is typically—before she was even travelling, she was 9 to 5. She'd

have frustrations and problems with it, and I would do the same thing too, having it in evenings, but you just make it work in those terms.

[00:29:34.08]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm. So, you still work a lot of weekends?

[00:29:37.23]

**Dan M.:** No.

[00:29:39.24]

**Henri H.:** Oh, you don't?

[00:29:41.12]

**Dan M.:** I don't. I'm typically, at this point, Monday thru Friday. I think it's only been about a year and a half. I had been Tuesday thru Saturday, and when my wife started travelling, I decided to go Monday thru Friday, one so that we'd have a little bit better time together, 'cause she's gone, like, Monday thru Thursday type of thing—which varies, but . . . it was just time for that.

[00:30:11.29]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. How many hours a week do you usually work?

[00:30:14.17]

**Dan M.:** Um . . . thirty or so. I mean, twenty-five to thirty-five. December, January probably doesn't count in those.

[00:30:30.23]

**Henri H.:** Yeah.

[00:30:32.04]

**Dan M.:** But you think, I mean, I get in here at 4 and I'm walking out of here 10ish, early in the week, then a little bit later. So, about that much, yeah.

[00:30:46.08]

**Henri H.:** Yeah.

[00:30:47.23]

**Dan M.:** Fridays a little bit longer, get here a little bit earlier and you're not gettin' outta here till closer to midnight.

[00:30:55.02]

**Henri H.:** And you never have to work lunches?

[00:30:57.27]

**Dan M.:** During December, I do. We have a lot of banquets, and if needed, I do. But no, I don't, at this point. I did it . . . I don't know, five, seven years I guess I did. Started out here, it

was always two lunches, five dinner shifts. I did that for the first bit, and then that kinda went to one and then none.

[00:31:24.06]

**Henri H.:** How is your working with a group like Buckhead Life, do you get benefits and stuff?  
Do you get vacation?

[00:31:34.22]

**Dan M.:** No. I don't get vacation. There's . . . health insurance provided. I don't, personally, do any of that, I do it through my wife's company. So, I'm really not—I stand there when they make the announcements for it and they discuss it, and I just kinda quietly zone out and not listen to it.

[00:32:02.26]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. [Laughter]

[00:32:02.29]

**Dan M.:** I am not the person to answer that question.

[00:32:06.14]

**Henri H.:** No, I was really just asking about the vacation aspect—

[00:32:10.13]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, we did used to get vacation. Then, when the healthcare plan came in and then the hours cut back, then it wasn't, I guess, required. So, in those terms, we don't now.

[00:32:26.13]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. It is kind of the same for me as a freelancer, because I have all that stuff with my wife, insurance and all that stuff, and then vacations, it's like, if you're not working, you're not—

[00:32:40.05]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. And I shouldn't say I don't get 'em, 'cause I do get 'em, they're just—yeah, it's not a paid benefit.

[00:32:44.26]

**Henri H.:** A paid vacation.

[00:32:44.26]

**Dan M.:** Paid, yeah. Like we went to Hilton Head this summer with the family and I just took the week. So, yes.

[00:32:52.22]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. But it's nice to have that flexibility still.

[00:32:55.14]

**Dan M.:** Oh, yeah. Without question.

[00:32:57.25]

**Henri H.:** Your employer's gonna—if you're paid a salary, they're gonna spread it over fifty weeks of pay or fifty-two weeks, anyway.

[00:33:06.19]

**Dan M.:** Right. I will say, the one thing about this job, and it's probably one thing that . . . I mean, with all aspects of it, but one of the bigger benefits to this job is flexibility. I mean, I know I've been here a while, but if I have to take time off, you put it in the book. You obviously plan for it. If there's an emergency, like my father-in-law passed over the holidays last year, that was kinda spur of the moment. But as far as when it comes to taking time off or doing this, playing a tournament over here this weekend, that way I kinda put it in the book and plan for it. You're able to do it; you're not countin' vacation days, you're not worryin' about the other things. Then you kinda work the other shifts when needed in those terms.

[00:33:59.04]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm, um-hm. What is your relationship like with the kitchen?

[00:34:08.09]

**Dan M.:** Good. You always have your moments. I mean, you do. To be honest with you, the chef that we have now and the staff we have now . . . a lot of it comes from Kevin, who's

the general manager, has made it a much more . . . civil relationship. Than times of past. The chef has his points, and he definitely will express them, but I've worked with other chefs that tend to yell and scream. Every time something goes wrong, it's the front of house's fault, even though it could be both or it could be the back. Right now, we're in a good place in those terms.

[00:34:54.10]

**Henri H.:** Do you think there's been a mellowing of kitchen culture over the course of your career? Or do you think it just depends on—

[00:35:00.15]

**Dan M.:** I do. I do, I mean, at least it has definitely been here. Talking to other people that I know, and I think maybe it's because you see it through all industries, where you just can't be a dictator. I think before, the chefs tended to be dictators and just kinda, people would be willing to talk it out. So, I think culturally, our personalities have changed as we don't respond as well to that. There's obviously still levels of authority, don't get me wrong, but I don't think the hostility . . . is as . . . rampant as it was before, definitely.

[00:35:46.26]

**Henri H.:** Do you guys have an all-male wait staff?

[00:35:49.10]

**Dan M.:** We don't. We actually never have, but for whatever reason, the staff has been predominantly all-male. I don't know if it's moving—'cause we move a lot of tables, 'cause we do a lot of builds, I don't know if it's that, I don't know if it's the whole persona with the uniform because we're wearing brown jackets that kinda very drab, male-looking jackets type of thing. The Lobster Bar has a little bit more, a newer one, they're all white. Those present their own problems. But they're a little bit more . . . fashionable, I guess, in those terms. But no, we've never actually had the—when I first started here for a while there, I thought we did. But then Jan was like, "No, we just don't get that many women applying in those terms." And too, there's a certain level of . . . you needed to have a certain level of experience, so I don't know if it goes to that. I don't know. But no, we probably have more now than we have most of the time.

[00:37:06.06]

**Henri H.:** So, there are women on staff currently?

[00:37:07.22]

**Dan M.:** Yes, yeah. Yeah.

[00:37:10.23]

**Henri H.:** I've heard at steakhouses, it can just be a much more physically demanding serving job—

[00:37:17.21]

**Dan M.:** I think there might be some of it.

[00:37:19.16]

**Henri H.:** Heavier plates, you know.

[00:37:21.19]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, I don't. There is. We don't have trays. So, when you carry food, you're expected to carry four plates by your hand at a time. So, you're gonna have two in your hand, one on your forearm stacked, and then one by your hand, I don't know if that does it. Moving of the tables, I don't—or just even, I don't know. Yeah.

[00:37:49.29]

**Henri H.:** Just curious.

[00:37:51.25]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, but we do. I mean, yeah.

[00:37:54.06]

**Henri H.:** How do you . . . I know that a lot of this falls onto the restaurant and this happens a lot in line-up and stuff, but how do you keep up with your wine knowledge? 'Cause that's something that's always changing. You definitely have customers here who know a lot about wine.

[00:38:16.18]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. We're definitely encouraged to do our own research. This was years ago, I started mine with—I had a customer who came in who wanted to know, he wanted to order some French wine. He left me a great tip after takin' care of him the first time and then he said he'd be back. So, I pulled up, like, a review on each of the high-end French wines that we had. So, I printed 'em out for him and I gave 'em to him there, and I remember him being blown away by that. It became a big-time call party of mine, and then it kinda opened my eyes up to it a little bit, 'cause there's the whole wine culture that comes to it. So, I was much more open. But the restaurant helps itself by, one, we bring in our distributors, and a lot of times they're pushing a product and they want you to taste a new item. Like Kevin does a good job, though, too, is if it's a Napa Valley cab, he's gonna say—he'll kinda interject and say, "What are you tasting from here?" He'll kinda walk you through the whole differing characteristics of it. Typically when they do taste you, they'll taste you on three or four wines, anyway. If they're the different reds or even if they're the different whites, we walk through it in those terms. So, we utilize, definitely utilize the liquor distributors and the wine reps with that. Same with the beers and the spirits, in those terms.

[00:40:02.04]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm. Do the beers and spirits turn over very often? I feel like there's probably not quite as much inventory fluctuation, I guess . . .

[00:40:11.24]

**Dan M.:** Not any—it fluctuates more now than it did way back when. I mean, for the first little bit, it was your import beers would be the Heineken and the Guinness. I don't even know if we . . . well, our import beer is really nonexistent because we've just gone all craft beers. It's really all Georgia beer, mostly, outside of the mainstays, the Budweisers and the few Miller products and I guess we have Stella. 95% of it is just local Georgia beer, 'cause we can pretty much give a lot of the taste palates of what you'd be looking for elsewhere that way. The big thing now is, like, the craft cocktails. Everyone wants—you know, when I first started here, you walk up to a table and they'd be, "What are you drinking?" You might say, "Oh, I'm a vodka tonic." I'd say, "I'm gonna have a bourbon and whatever, a glass of red wine."

[00:41:17.03]

**Henri H.:** Scotch and soda.

[00:41:17.03]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, everybody had their drink. You didn't really fluctuate from their drinks. Now, I've noticed much more so—"You have a drink menu?" We never had one. We have had one for the last few years. First, it wasn't even really—it was just kind of an afterthought. Now, everybody has to read through every drink before they know what they're gonna order, and they want to experience new things. It's kinda cool in those terms, one way. The other part of it too is like, you just kinda, you're surprised by how much it's taken off. So, I think you see a little bit more flexibility on that side of it with the different

cocktails. Then, whatever alcohol they use in the cocktails they kinda follows suit. A lot of them, they're just usin' the same alcohol in different ways.

[00:42:07.19]

**Henri H.:** Stuff available that they already have.

[00:42:08.03]

**Dan M.:** Yeah.

[00:42:09.16]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. Do you ever get asked for something that you're like, I don't know what that is.

What do you say?

[00:42:18.23]

**Dan M.:** Not typically. I know I have. You'll get asked for some real, like, aperitif from Europe occasionally that you're like—and most of them I've heard of, so it's like, I'm pretty comfortable: "Yeah, we don't offer that." Or, "We offer this," which would be similar to that. Unfortunately, sometimes, there really isn't anything similar. But we have a pretty worldly selection of . . . I mean, the ability, you can probably get close to whatever wine you're lookin' for, the beer selection, most of it's from the state of Georgia, but we try to touch on all the different flavors or different styles of them. The same thing with the alcohol.

[00:43:10.12]

**Henri H.:** Right, right. I just think of Tom Cruise in Cocktail and when they ask for a Cuba Libre. He's, like, looking it up in the cocktail book.

[00:43:20.13]

**Dan M.:** Well, you definitely get that now, 'cause everybody has their own cocktail—I mean not everybody, but a lot of people have. Occasionally, we'll use Google for certain ones. Typically, you have 'em for the most part.

[00:43:38.26]

**Henri H.:** Do you have any favorite . . . quips or waiter jokes that you hit tables with relatively often, or do you try to . . .

[00:43:50.27]

**Dan M.:** No, I'm not that guy with the jokes. No. I try to keep it pretty professional. I mean, you have to read it right. Then you'll be personable, too. I am probably the guy that just, I'll say whatever comes to my mind, so I don't have to fall back. Occasionally, I'll just say whatever. Then I went, "Oh, is this the right place for that?" But yeah.

[00:44:20.01]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. I feel like this is one of the most underappreciated talents of a good server, but also one—it's kind of subtle and ambiguous, but how do you determine whether a table is one that wants to be touched a lot or one that wants to be mostly left alone?

[00:44:49.04]

**Dan M.:** The interaction amongst the other people at the table, a lot of time. If they're conversing, they're not looking up. They'll give you their drinks. I mean, if we were having a conversation and they'll be like, "I'll have . . . I'll have a Tropicalia beer." Or whatever, and then I'm back to talking to you or whatnot. Or every time I walk to the table, you and I are both staring up at the waiter, I think that those are the tells. You kinda sense it pretty quickly, early on. I don't pride myself, but I take great care into making sure I kinda read that, because I think that's one of the most important aspects of taking care of a table, is, you don't want to be the guy that's trying to entertain them when they're doing something. And you also don't want to be professional service, which might be 100% perfect, and then they're gonna walk out of here pissed off because, "He's the most un-personal server I've ever had in my entire life." There's not one thing they could ever say that was wrong. You see it early on, and kinda modify it.

[00:46:07.17]

**Henri H.:** Get a sense of it quickly.

[00:46:07.17]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. The one-two is always when the menus are closed and you kinda go over there, kind of, "Are you ready to order?" And I do feel like the one that helps put ease to it, they're like, "No, no, we're here to—" I was like, "I saw the menus closed, I am just makin' sure you're not waitin' on me. You let me know what you need." And put some of

the ease a little bit in those terms, there are little things like that you can kinda do, that seems to help. 'Cause you don't really know. You don't want them sittin' there, can't read their mind, you're doin' the best you can. And they're sittin' there saying, "God, will he come take my order?" And you're meanwhile thinkin', "Looks like they're in full-on conversation." So, little things like that, that I try to be up-front about it. If there's any question, and it makes it a little bit easier on those things.

[00:46:59.20]

**Henri H.:** Have you gotten any really unusual or fun or interesting requests from customers over the years? Like somebody doing a proposal or something like that that you had to help with?

[00:47:15.16]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, I'm sure. . . We've had a good number of proposals. It's . . . most of 'em are the glass of champagne or helping move the table and celebrate in those terms.

[00:47:36.23]

**Henri H.:** What do you mean, move the table?

[00:47:38.05]

**Dan M.:** Well, if he wants to get down on his knee, a lot of our banquets and booths slide. Not the booths, but the banquets do. So, what we'll do is, we'll mention, "We can kinda move the table and open it up so you can get down on your knee and get right there in front of

your date, your hopefully fiancée, I guess." And getting your knee and do it that way. So, there's been some of those that definitely . . . man, I probably should have a better answer for this one.

[00:48:10.03]

**Henri H.:** I just think, I feel like people can make assumptions sometimes, like people do with the photographer. "Oh, we're buying all this food here." So, we can have a photographer but it's like you're in the middle of a dining room, I feel like sometimes you can ask a server to help you with something or help you make something come off that puts a lot of pressure on the server. So, I was wondering . . .

[00:48:35.29]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. Some of the times, too, you're like, they'll ask you things, and you're like, "The moment that you decide to do this, I may not be here." There has to be a better plan than you're askin' me for or than you think it just magically is going to happen. So, yeah, there's definitely sometimes, whether it be the birthdays or with the balloons and different things like that you get sometimes. You're like, "Yeah, you have to keep 'em a little bit off to the side." But yes, yeah. Nothin' really jumps at me, unfortunately.

[00:49:18.24]

**Henri H.:** That's all right. So, one thing that we've been asking everybody for this project is, do you see a—do you define service and hospitality differently? And how do you see each of those aspects of your job, service versus hospitality?

[00:49:42.09]

**Dan M.:** They're totally different. We do, that's the way—service is dottin' your i's and crossin' your t's when it comes to doin' the right fork, the right knife, taking the order. The whole list of things. I mean, we have shoppers that come through here. So, we get secret shoppers that come through, and we get graded on this, I don't know, eight-, ten-page list of things. It's points listed off, so you have the whole service aspect of it, and food timing aspect. And all those things go to service, and they are completely service, but the hospitality is . . . really, the only thing in the shopper report, did you have a good time? That takes care of a lot of the hospitality, but you can't really put your finger on it. It's putting somebody at ease; it's realizing that they want to move at a certain pace and you move their food at a certain pace. You know, you make them feel comfortable. If you are bringing your daughter for her birthday, then does she walk out of here . . . glowing? It's how you would want yourself to be treated, or you wish you would be always treated that way. That's the hospitality side to it. There's definitely, I think what I said earlier was, if the table wants more hospitality, wants more—not casual service, but much more personal service, I guess, if you don't give them that but you do all the service right, I guarantee you, you're gonna get a complaint. They're gonna walk away disappointed, and you're gonna be like, "What?" Some people don't understand that, but it's just the little things like that.

[00:51:41.07]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. You can't just be a robot.

[00:51:45.10]

**Dan M.:** Right.

[00:51:45.12]

**Henri H.:** What are some of the most important lessons that you've learned through your career?

Anything, maybe, that you take from your job into your personal life?

[00:52:03.07]

**Dan M.:** Um . . . the whole hospitality point. And part of that goes to, not that you didn't have it before, but bein' that your livelihood, in a sense, is based upon it, is treating people with the respect and the kindness that they feel and appreciate. I think that—not that you didn't realize it before, but you become more aware of it. The other thing, too, from early on was, you're gonna make mistakes. You're gonna make mistakes in this job. I've forgotten drinks. I have forgotten meals. I've messed up Lord knows what. I could tell ya, over the course of all these years, but a lot of it, it's how you fix it on the back end. Not that you're lookin' to make mistakes, but they happen. Sometimes, it may not even be your mistake. You didn't hear them order another drink, but they didn't get their drink. They don't care that, but it's how you handle it, it's how you fix it on the back end. I think you realize that all mistakes are gonna be happening. Especially in a place that has all the employees that you have here, that you're relying on—even though I'm, in a sense, the face of the table, and I'm the only one that's gonna get the praise and the disappointment directed my way. It could be from the S.A. with your server assistant, the busboy, or your back waiter or

the kitchen doesn't live up to it, and it could be something that you do, but . . . or their expectations are . . . if you can fix that, and at the end of the day, it's not that moment; it's the whole experience that they're having. And if you can fix that, then it's been a success, to a certain extent. Not that you don't try to perform better later, but yeah.

[00:53:56.26]

**Henri H.:** Right. Yeah, I think probably one of the challenges of a lot of these fine dining restaurants that this project has been more centered around because that's where people actually work for a long time, is just dealing with people who have such high expectations. If you drop the kind of money that you have to at a lot of these fine dining restaurants, you feel entitled to a certain experience. I think that that has probably been one of the challenges that many people talk about, is people have these extremely high expectations, so how do you top that?

[00:54:49.23]

**Dan M.:** Right.

[00:54:51.12]

**Henri H.:** What's the other thing . . . that we haven't covered yet. Do you run into people on the golf course very often that are like, "Were you my server at Chops?"

[00:55:10.06]

**Dan M.:** I have run into people that I've waited that it's been—yes, it's been . . . I was at the mall at Christmastime with my kids. This had to have been, like, twelve years ago, and this lady stops me in my tracks. And I'm pretty good with faces, bein' in this job, I—now, granted, she was like in sweatshorts and a sweatshirt and her hair wasn't done. I'm sure, a lot of times you come here and you've been dolled up. She knew my name, she knew my partner's name, and started wantin' to meet my whole family. I was just like, dumbfounded with that. But yeah, I have. I've met people at the golf course that I have. The mall one, to me—I mean, even if I did see a waiter that I dealt with, I don't even know if I would have picked him up that quickly. I mean, it was like walking past each other with a thousand people around us at Christmastime up at the Mall of Georgia up in Buford. I was like, "Are you kiddin' me?" Then I also had an article about, kinda like this, people have been in business for a while that Zagat did. Apparently, a lot of people read Zagat, because I got stopped a couple of times. "You're the guy from Zagat thing."

[00:56:43.28]

**Henri H.:** That's cool.

[00:56:43.28]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. So, I was surprised. That surprised me. A few other times initially were in here where people would stop me and—I wouldn't even be at their table, but then it happened a couple times outside of here. Kinda surprised me a little bit.

[00:57:03.02]

**Henri H.:** Have you guys done much—been a location for any films or anything in recent years?

[00:57:09.25]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. Here? We've done a decent bit. There was a Billy Bob Thornton movie . . . oh, we've done a bunch of T.V. shows. But the Kevin Bacon, Billy Bob Thornton . . . it was about the [19]50s model or actress. They're on the wall in the thing, but we've done a bunch of that. I was in a Ken Nugent commercial, they did the Ken Nugent commercial here where he did a big dinner and then they filmed something for one of his commercials that I supposedly was in. I never actually saw that, but yeah, we've done a good bit of films here.

[00:58:06.06]

**Henri H.:** I'm kinda curious about, 'cause this is something I've heard a lot around Atlanta, is there's so many more celebrities come in than there are issues that you have to deal with sometimes, that people try to snap pictures or come up to the table and bothering them and stuff like that, do you have to do—like, what are some special considerations when you know that you have somebody coming in? Or if you get surprised by somebody, like they're—

[00:58:37.06]

**Dan M.:** Clint Eastwood surprises us a lot.

[00:58:38.01]

**Henri H.:** Really?

[00:58:38.01]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. Ten plus times. Not like it's every day, don't get me wrong, but—

[00:58:45.10]

**Henri H.:** Ten times is a lot.

[00:58:45.28]

**Dan M.:** Right, really. I think he's done a couple films in here. His most recent one about  
smugglin' the drugs—

[00:58:54.22]

**Henri H.:** Um-hm, *The Mule*.

[00:58:59.05]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, *The Mule*, that's right. He came in a lot. I don't think it was filmed, none of it was  
filmed here, I'm not saying that. But he came in a lot, and he was fantastic with people.  
He'd go to the bar and hang out and people would come up and, I mean, he's iconic. He  
embraced it in those terms. We have other people where—and as long as you let us know,  
we have corners of these restaurants that are much more secluded. We do that—this room  
here alone has, we've kinda moved people in here and had it for smaller dinners like that.  
We're pretty accommodating, as long as you let us know.

[00:59:41.23]

**Henri H.:** That's what I'm curious about, because usually to book a private dining room you're paying extra or paying a drink minimum or something like that. Just kind of curious how much—when you have a volume of celebrities coming through, that's . . .

[01:00:00.19]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. And this doesn't get used for that much. If it was, I know a couple times where we had a—in this room—we had a party earlier and they had a celebrity who wanted to come in here with three or four people, and then they kinda just, instead of having the dinner out there in the dining room, they moved them here. And it was more impromptu than it was, they were just bookin' it for the night. But we've had, upstairs at Chops, Table One's real popular for it. It's a cubby against the two windows, but sits in the back corner there, and it's a nice table. I know Matthew McConaughey and Lance Armstrong ate there one night. They kinda sat back and did their own thing. Most of our clientele aren't—if you're in a bar, I want to say it's a free-for-all, but you're in a bar, too.

[01:00:50.22]

**Henri H.:** Yeah, you're sitting at the bar.

[01:00:50.22]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. You're sitting at a table, most of our clientele, occasionally you don't, but most of our clientele will respect the situation. It's a lot more like, "Oh, you're goin' to the bathroom? Here we go, this is when it's gonna become the issue."

[01:01:08.18]

**Henri H.:** Right. One thing that I am kinda curious about is, with Chops and Lobster Bar, there's . . . it's an unusual restaurant situation where you have two distinct restaurants but they also share a lot. Do they share a kitchen?

[01:01:28.15]

**Dan M.:** No. So, what happened was, Chops opened in [19]89. Then this, the Lobster Bar here, I'm gonna mess up the name. It used to be a different restaurant. It was, like, Frogs or something like that. Then they vacated the spot. Leading up to the Olympics back in [19]96, they decided to open up the Lobster Bar and expand Chops, expand the restaurant in those terms. So, that opened up, the Lobster Bar opened up in [19]96. When it originally opened up, there was two distinct menus: you'd have your Chops menu and you'd have your Lobster Bar menu. They had primarily the same steaks. There was definitely more of a seafood flair on the menu down in the Lobster Bar, where it was a much more traditional steakhouse upstairs at Chops. Well, and we had the same executive chef, but we have two different kitchens. So, we had two different sous chefs that would operate each kitchen, in a sense. They would be interchangeable, but for the most part, you kinda fall into routines with the same executive chef. Then, slowly, we began to realize that . . . people that sit at Chops but then want to see the menu from the

Lobster Bar and vice versa. Then, it became . . . it became, I don't want to say problematic, it became silly to have two different. Let's just take the best of each; they're all the same steaks, but bring a little bit more of the seafood up to Chops and just make it where you can get to both, so the kitchen has the ability and that expertise to cook all the meals the same way. Because you're not gonna have it cooked down here and run upstairs, because by the time you take an elevator up and do all that, the food's not the same. It's supposed to be coming out of the kitchen, it's designed for the dining room. So, it's kind of morphed into that. Then, in the last few years, they've expanded down to South Florida with the same, similar concept. What they've done, they started in Boca. They did a Chops Lobster Bar. I haven't actually been down there, but my understanding is that, on one side of the dining room, it's all on the main floor—you have the Chops dark wood decor, and on the other side, you have the white-tiled Lobster Bar decor, but it's all on the same level. Here, this property is a little-bit different, seven years apart. Then, they've expanded now to Lobster Bar Sea Grill, Chops Lobster Bar Sea Grill, to other markets, where they've kind of tweaked it again. Yeah, this is—as we like to kind of say, it's really one restaurant with two different dining rooms.

[01:04:21.20]

**Henri H.:** Gotcha.

[01:04:23.14]

**Dan M.:** People don't always perceive it that way, because you take an elevator upstairs and down, but it is the same menu in both dining rooms. You're gonna get the same drink

menu to food menu to desserts, across the board. Most of the staff are interchangeable; most people work in both different.

[01:04:43.25]

**Henri H.:** Okay, that was my next question, was do you work —

[01:04:46.23]

**Dan M.:** Now, I typically work upstairs at Chops, typically, all the time. I will work in the Lobster Bar occasionally, and there are people that work just in the Lobster Bar that occasionally will work upstairs at Chops. But even with our own schedule, Sunday and Monday, the Lobster Bar's closed—except for private dining or if something really big's in town—and then you'll have staff from the Lobster Bar work up there, and there's staff that work from both places. But yeah, it's pretty interchangeable. Our line-ups are the same. All of our points of service, those different things are all typically the same.

[01:05:21.09]

**Henri H.:** Different uniforms, though.

[01:05:22.26]

**Dan M.:** Different uniforms. And that's certainly only happened within the last year.

[01:05:25.27]

**Henri H.:** Oh.

[01:05:27.09]

**Dan M.:** They were all wearing the same uniforms we were at Chops and then, when they opened up Lobster Bar Sea Grill, Chops Lobster Bar Sea Grill, they went to their uniforms down here with the white tile, with the white uniforms.

[01:05:43.00]

**Henri H.:** Gotcha, cool. Let's see, are you the longest-tenured server here?

[01:05:54.10]

**Dan M.:** Yes, yes.

[01:05:56.02]

**Henri H.:** Cool.

[01:05:57.24]

**Dan M.:** Yes.

[01:06:00.06]

**Henri H.:** Very cool.

[01:06:02.24]

**Dan M.:** Yeah.

[01:06:04.06]

**Henri H.:** I think that's all I've got for you. Is there anything interesting or unusual or anything that we didn't talk about that you would like people to know about your career?

[01:06:18.08]

**Dan M.:** No. No, I think I'm good. I don't . . . we touched on a good bit. I mean, there's a lot of fun times. Having Super Bowls here was great. With the celebrities, with the whole aspect of it. I got to meet, I got to meet in this job a lot of people that I probably wouldn't have met otherwise.

[01:06:42.23]

**Henri H.:** I bet you see a lot of well-known golf folks come in here.

[01:06:47.18]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. When the Tour Championship, I got to talk to Rory, Davis Love, Ernie Els, Tiger Woods has been through here. A few other past champions. Angel Cabrera, Jimenez, the most interesting man in the world—yeah, he came through. And he is. Walked in with an unlit cigar, hair out, not a care in the world. Pretty cool. Yeah, so, with the Tour Championship in town. Before, way back when, we used to get a lot more business with the Masters, but now it seems like it's gone to corporate planes, so people are more staying at Augusta. I know the Ritz-Carlton has the property out at Lake Oconee. So, we used to get a lot more travel out of Atlanta, 'cause they didn't have the facilities out in

Augusta. But they stay more there. We still have a busy week, with the patrons, but you don't get as many golfers. But with the Tour Championship, we get pretty—you know, when Brandt Snedeker's caddy, when Snedeker won the tour championship, I think his caddy leaved here in the St. Regis for a week straight, just enjoying that victory.

[Laughter]

[01:08:07.12]

**Henri H.:** Yeah, that's funny. Oh, man, I had another question on the tip of my tongue. But no, yeah, that's cool. That's a neat . . . a neat aspect. I mean, the Super Bowl was crazy this past year.

[01:08:32.02]

**Dan M.:** Yeah.

[01:08:32.02]

**Henri H.:** I feel like it was something that just brought—I mean, everybody's life kinda changed for that entire week. Every pattern around the city.

[01:08:46.01]

**Dan M.:** Yeah. Getting into work was a difficult process. But it was great; you turn around and you had Chris Collinsworth and the guys doin' the Super Bowl would be sittin' there at one table. Even the National Championship game, with everything that's happened, this coming year with the Final Four, that should be pretty cool.

[01:09:09.09]

**Henri H.:** I just heard they're doing a free Taylor Swift concert in Centennial with the Final Four, which I think is gonna be an absolute disaster.

[01:09:18.14]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, that'll be interesting.

[01:09:21.25]

**Henri H.:** There was a few years ago when they did a free Dave Matthews concert at Centennial for the Final Four—

[01:09:29.02]

**Dan M.:** When it was here last time?

[01:09:30.05]

**Henri H.:** It was a disaster.

[01:09:30.06]

**Dan M.:** Yeah, we had it. Well, last time for us, it made us crazy for us with the Final Four, because the Master's was the week after.

[01:09:39.29]

**Henri H.:** Oh, wow.

[01:09:42.23]

**Dan M.:** So, we had so many people that were like, "Let's go to Atlanta for the Final Four. And then let's go get some tickets to the practice round at Augusta." So, I don't think we . . . we knew the Final Four was gonna be busy, but you didn't realize the magnitude of people that would stay in town. It ended up just being a crazy, crazy weekend and into the early part of the next week.

[01:10:07.20]

**Henri H.:** Yeah. Now I remember what I was gonna ask. Is there—do you guys do a cigar bar here?

[01:10:13.25]

**Dan M.:** We have a private club.

[01:10:14.24]

**Henri H.:** Oh, okay, gotcha.

[01:10:15.14]

**Dan M.:** We have a private club. It is a cigar club. Well, it's not a cigar club; they allow cigar smoking within the club. But it is a members-only private club.

[01:10:25.00]

**Henri H.:** Gotcha. All right, well, I think that does us. Thank you so much for your time.

[01:10:33.11]

**Dan M.:** Perfect. Thank you.

[01:10:34.22]

**Henri H.:** Yeah, absolutely.

[01:10:34.22]

**Dan M.:** You have a good one.

*[End of interview]*