



Darryl Smalls
Charleston, South Carolina

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Interviewer: Annemarie Anderson
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Project: Career Servers

Annemarie Anderson: Today is Tuesday, September 10th, 2019. This is Annemarie Anderson recording for the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm in Charleston, South Carolina, at Halls Chophouse with Mr. Darryl Smalls.

Mr. Smalls, would you go ahead and introduce yourself for the recorder? Tell us your name and tell us what you do.

[0:00:20.2]

Darryl Smalls: My name is Darryl Smalls. I'm a waiter, bartender at Halls Chophouse. I've been here since 2009. I've been in food and beverage for a total of thirty-nine years, November will be forty years coming, and I started in 1979 at Marianne's Restaurant. I was sixteen years old, in high school, planning on after graduating join the Marines, which I met my boss who's French. She owned a French restaurant called Marianne's, of course. Got in the business and enjoyed it. Planned on after graduating, I was going to join the Marines, again, but I didn't make it that far, because I was talked out of it, and enjoyed what I was doing, learning about wine and fine food, fine dining, and the rest is history.

[0:01:28.6]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great.

[0:01:30.1]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, yes, yes.

[0:01:31.2]

Annemarie Anderson: So before I ask you several questions about that and we get into your career, could you tell me a little bit about growing up? First of all, could you give us your birth date for the record? And then tell us a little bit about the Charleston of your youth.

[0:01:46.1]

Darryl Smalls: I was born July 9th, 1964, in Charleston, downtown. My mother's from here. My dad's from downtown as well. As a youth, I played sports, was in the Boy Scouts for a short period of time until I discovered football and got a love for that and baseball.

Upon getting my first job, was in food and beverage at the age of sixteen, I realized that it was meeting different people and enjoying people and enjoying food, and learned about wine after I was twenty-one years old. I started reading about wines. One of my favorite books was *Windows of the World*, and it taught me about French grapes and Appalachians and the taste and how wine was made. So that was when I got to be very interested in that. That's all I know for the front part of it.

[0:02:56.9]

Annemarie Anderson: That's fine.

[0:02:57.5]

Darryl Smalls: Go ahead.

[0:02:58.8]

Annemarie Anderson: Well, tell me a little bit about—I guess let’s talk about getting your first job. Tell me a little bit about how you got the job at Marianne’s.

[0:03:07.7]

Darryl Smalls: A friend of mine named Lionel Scott was going out for an interview at her restaurant. I said, “If you find a job, I want a job, too.” So he got hired over at Marianne’s, and he asked me if I could accompany him on the following day. So I went in there, and they had just moved into this new building of on Meeting Street, 234 Meeting Street. I walked in there, and there’s boxes everywhere and there’s people everywhere, and everybody’s getting set up. I’m like, “Oh, my gosh. Is this the first day?”

And he’s like, “Yeah, this is the first day. So I want you to meet my boss, the owner,” which was a gentleman by the name of Serge Claire. He’s a little short Frenchman that I couldn’t understand because he spoke French and English, and he talked pretty fast. So it kind of got me a little—I was a little confused for a second because he was talking to me, and I was like I couldn’t get past the accent and, you know, if he was upset or was he happy or whatever it was.

So after that, he’s telling me to do things and asked me what I want, and I was like I didn’t know how to answer, but just shook my head, saying, “Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.” Then he sat me down at the end of the night and asked me what my age was and, you know, what did I want to do in my future, and I wasn’t sure, but I knew I was going to

join the military. And he told me that I could do well in this business as long as I stayed with him, and I did. So that was the start of it.

[0:04:59.3]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great. And that was in 1979?

[0:05:01.0]

Darryl Smalls: 1979, yes, ma'am.

[0:05:02.0]

Annemarie Anderson: Okay. Well, tell me a little bit about Marianne's. Could you describe the restaurant for us?

[0:05:06.3]

Darryl Smalls: It was a French restaurant, French cuisine, bistro, and we did things, everything, a lot of things tableside. Entrée-wise, we did Dover Sole, Chateaubriand, rack of lamb, and for desserts we did Bananas Fosters, Cherries Jubilee, and another one was Baked Alaska. So all these dishes for desserts, it was flames involved. So I was a pyro growing up as a kid, loved flames, so I'm like, "Well, I think I'm going to like this a lot." And I was sixteen, as I say, but the waiters were a lot older than I were, so I learned how to make Bananas Fosters, which is one of my favorite desserts to make, and I got hooked on doing it. So every time they needed it done, I'm like, "I'll do it for you. Let me do it for you." And I would make big giant flames at the table. We had tin ceilings, but they

taught me how to do it where no one would get hurt, the ingredients that was involved, and as time progressed, I got really, really good about it. So then I learned how to make Crepes Suzette, and that was one of my favorite desserts to make, too, because we made our crepes right there at the table.

Then we got into wine. I saw these waiters talking about wines at the tables. I'm like, well, I didn't think you have to learn about it. I figured you just open a bottle of wine and here you go. A gentleman gave me this book to read, which was *Windows of the World*, and it had all these different regions and grapes and different descriptions about wines. That drew my attention, so every night when I got off from work, I started reading it and reading it and reading it, and then eventually I started, when I turned twenty-one, I started going to wine tastings.

My boss, every night before I'd leave, he'd talk to me, and he would tell me about different wines, and I'm like, "Well, I can't drink right now because I'm just sixteen years old."

He's like, "Well, once you turn twenty-one, I'll show you. We'll show you. I'll teach you how to drink wine and enjoy it."

"I don't know why, because I'm not going to be here that long."

He's like, "Yes, you will."

And I'm like, "Okay. Whatever." And I guess he was right, because I stayed there. For thirteen years I worked there.

[0:07:49.6]

Annemarie Anderson: Wow.

[0:07:50.5]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[0:07:51.4]

Annemarie Anderson: Well, tell me a little bit about—well, what was your first position at Marianne's?

[0:07:54.4]

Darryl Smalls: I was a busboy. I bussed the tables, and when I was bussing tables, he was like, "Darryl, everybody's watching you. Everybody enjoys you when you come in." He goes, "When you come to work, you work hard. But the guests are watching you." And he was right, because every now and then, someone at the tables would pull me over and, like, talk to me and ask me questions, and I would bus the tables and carry the trays back to the kitchen, and they're like, "You're really good. You ought to wait on tables." I'm like, "No," and I was really bashful at the time, so I'm like I didn't know how to take that, because in my mindset, I was like, "This is for a short period of time." But, lo and behold, it was people that were impressed by what I was doing and brought me out of my shell pretty much.

[0:08:45.8]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure.

[0:08:47.1]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[0:08:47.8]

Annemarie Anderson: And could you spell your boss's name for me, just so I can have it for the record?

[0:08:51.5]

Darryl Smalls: It's S-e-r-g-e, Serge; Claire, C-l-a-i-r-e. Serge Claire.

[0:09:00.5]

Annemarie Anderson: Great, great. And tell me a little bit about—you're talking about some of these—some servers, and your boss, Mr. Claire, trying to teach you and educate you about food and wine. Could you, I guess, go into a little more detail and tell me a little bit about some of the servers who kind of mentored you or taught you?

[0:09:20.1]

Darryl Smalls: Okay. A lot of the servers that mentored me, one person was a gentleman by the name of Bill Thompson [phonetic], Lawton McIntosh [phonetic], and Ben Cheetham [phonetic]. These guys, Ben went to Newberry, Laughton McIntosh went to Newberry as well, but Lawton is from Anderson, South Carolina. He was one of my mentors, because he trained me how to wait on tables and pretty much—then Bill Thompson, he's from Anderson but he went to The Citadel. So a lot of these guys are

college guys that graduated and worked in food and beverage, and every night they would tell me, “Save your money. Save your money. Save your money. Save your money. You’re going to do well in this business. You’re going to do well.”

Then on my days off, they would come pick me up and we’d go to the beach and we spent a lot of time together. And I said, “These guys are really nice people. I mean, I enjoy being around them.” And at the same time, they taught me a lot about how to greet tables, how to respect myself as well as others, and they turned out to be good friends, too, very good friends of mine.

Moving forward as the years passed, as a matter of fact, before the year was out, before it was even a year, two or three months into bussing tables, my boss asked me to wait on tables. I’m like, “I cannot go talk to those people. I can’t do it, just no way possible.”

So another month passed, and I was offered the job again, but this time, my boss told the manager, “If he doesn’t accept it, fire him.”

And the message got to me, and I was offered the job again. They said, “By the way, if you don’t accept it, Serge said they could fire you.”

I went, “He’s going to fire me?”

And, like, they said, “Yeah.”

So I’m like, “Okay, I’ll try it.”

My first night on the floor, I went to the table, and I was like, “This is fun. I could do this.” And ever since, I mean, I’m still doing it. I love it. It’s fun. It’s like traveling without even leaving my hometown, because I’ve met wonderful people from across the United States, Europe. My boss’s wife was Swedish. Her name was Christine Claire, and her and I had a rapport to where, you know, I’d spend a lot of time at their house on my

days off or driving them home. She wanted to send me to Sweden to work at a hotel, in a Sheraton in Sweden.

And her husband's like, "No, no. Do not go to Sweden, do not, because you would never come back."

I'm like, "Really?" So I said, "What's in Sweden?" And we got to talking about it.

They brought one of their friend's daughter down for the summer, and I was in charge of watching her and training her to wait on tables. I was afraid of it, because I didn't know if I knew what I was doing or if I was doing it right, and turned out to be I was training everybody coming in through the restaurant. So I got to be a big part of the family.

And, lo and behold, thirteen years later, I was there and managing the restaurant and bartending and going to wine tastings, going to wine dinners, and I started selling not bottles of wine at the tables, I was selling *cases* of wine to people. I would describe the wine, I would describe the menu, and people decided to say, "You know, why don't you do our menu for us?" And I started, I would do the menu for the tables.

Then I learned about champagne and the scotches and bourbons and, I mean, it just kept going on, kept going. Every day was like something new. And even up to now, I'm still learning the different things, because, as you know, everything changes, your clientele, I mean, the atmosphere, the place that I go. I just fell in love with it.

[0:14:24.6]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely. Tell me a little bit about you—I mean, you keep kind of touching on educating yourself about both food and wine and other types of alcohol.

But could you talk or go into a little bit more detail about how you do that, how you educate yourself, and how you have since the beginning?

[0:14:44.6]

Darryl Smalls: Well, after accepting the fact that, you know, this is what I like to do, I got to myself a lot on my days off. I'd be at home, and I'm like, "You know, why don't you read about it, read more into it, get a bigger grasp of the people that you are working with and taking care of." So I adjusted myself. I'm like, "Enjoy it, embrace it."

And every day was like a different day for me. It was like, you know, every table was a different new concept of what you had to do and how people would stare at me and then I would stare at them, and how you view your surroundings, so how to adjust to what is at hand. And that turned out to be really great because reading people was an enjoyment for me, if this person's going to be very intense or if this person's going to be standoffish, and that turned out to be like this is like a game. It's like a fun game that you can tell when someone's upset or having a bad day, and I realized that I set the tone, that if they're having a bad day, hey, let's make it better. Let's have fun. Let's forget about what happened. And my address was, "How you doin' today?" and I'd go by that vibe, and I'm like, "Okay." I'll go back, I'll leave the table, I'm like, "Okay, get a mindset. If they had a bad day, you don't want to make it any worse. Let's put a smiling face." I enjoy smiling, like watching people smile and making people smile.

So boss would come up to me and say, "You took your table so-and-so, and they called the next day," or they sent a letter or something.

I'm like, "They did?"

He goes, “Yeah, they said you really made their evening experience.”

And I’m like, “Whoa! I did?”

And these people would come back to the restaurant and request me, so I’m like, “All right!” So, making friends.

We grew from there, and every night I would go to work, there’d be a different customer.

It’s like, “So-and-so wants you to wait on them.” I was invited out to dinner quite a few times, then I was invited to wine dinners, just around town, and it just excelled. Like, I mean, I loved it, and that’s what I got.

[0:17:54.0]

Annemarie Anderson: That’s great!

[0:17:54.2]

Darryl Smalls: Yes. Out of the whole thing is, like I said, it’s a unique job, it really is, and some people just take it as coming to work, but it’s more than that. It’s making friends and making people smile, and that’s what I do, and that’s what I enjoy doing still. And not even only at work, other places that I go, grocery store or anywhere, I’ll just enjoy making people’s day. That’s what I learned. That’s what I’m here for. I was wondering, like, “Am I doing what I’m supposed to be doing, what God put me on this Earth to do?” And I’m thinking that’s what it is, just being around people and just making them laugh.

[0:18:45.7]

Annemarie Anderson: That’s great. Well, tell me a little bit, too, because—so at Marianne’s, did you both serve and bartend there?

[0:18:54.8]

Darryl Smalls: I started as a busboy and then I waited on tables and then managed, and then I moved out of management into bartending, and that was another different level there because that’s when I was dealing with more intense clientele, because, as you know, serving alcohol, it changes people’s moods. And come to find out, I was setting the pace on that, because, like I said, going back again, some people come in a bad mood, some people a little frustrated, some people a little stressed, and a lot of people turn to that, the alcohol, as a release or a getaway. Not only serving it, but talking to people about—like I had a gentleman come sit at the bar one night, and he kind of was staring at the bar, down at the bar, and I saw him from a distance before I approached him, and I’m like, “Maybe he’s not having a good day.” So I was a little busy at the time, but I went and said hello to him, and I said, “How you doin’?”

He’s like, he says, “I’m doin’ all right. I’m okay.” And he ordered a Scotch on the Rocks. I remember what it was, it was Dewar’s on the Rocks. I took care of everybody else and decided to go back to him and, like, just leaned up against the bar and said, “Let’s talk about it.”

And he held his head up and his eyes kind of opened up wide, he was like, “Are you talking to me?”

I said, “Yes, sir.” I said, “Let’s talk about it.” I said, “How’s your day? Can I help?”

And he was going through something at the time. I bought him a drink. I said, “This one’s on me.” I said, “My name’s Darryl. Are you from the Lowcountry?” and this and that, and just making him feel a little comfortable. And he smiled, and we talked. He was there for like an hour, and we talked.

And he came back. Like two days later, he came back, and he shook my hand and said, “Thank you very much.” He goes, “I was going through a divorce at the time,” and it was just something that suddenly happened, took place with him, and he just didn’t know—he needed a friend, someone to talk to. And he kept coming back. That was an electrifying moment for me because I’m, like, I made an impact on someone.

But I felt the power that I had, you know, that just came over me. People have issues and it’s like no one knows what kind of day anyone’s having until—you know, we make fun of people, we overlook people, we sometimes just don’t even care about folks when just the little things that you do could make someone’s day. And I pass that on to everybody else. I say, “You know, everybody needs a little smile or pat on the back or a hug.” You never know. I mean, I think that I’m that person, and there’s a lot of people, a lot more people like that, but they haven’t brought it on themselves. But it’s just a wide spectrum in this business that I learned, that you come across people. Even I’ve learned when you’re having a bad day, sometime people don’t want to hear it. In this business, you can’t bring it to work because as much as you read people, people read you, too, and we need each other. Food and beverage is a big part of making some experience an awesome one, or just the little things, and that’s what I like about it.

[0:23:15.1]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great.

[0:23:17.5]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[0:23:18.0]

Annemarie Anderson: That's wonderful. That's really powerful illustration of that, the story about the man with the Scotch on the rocks.

[0:23:25.0]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah, it's Scotch on the rocks, Dewar's on the rocks, it was. I drink Scotch now for that reason. It's one of my winter drinks. But I made that guy's night.

[0:23:40.8]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great. Well, tell me a little bit—you've talked a lot about the intensity of the change between being a server and being a bartender, but could you tell me a little bit about the learning curve of, like, being behind a bar? Because it's a really physical as well as kind of like mentally and emotionally, like, it's a lot of work, if that makes sense.

[0:24:03.2]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah.

[0:24:03.8]

Annemarie Anderson: Could you talk a little bit about that?

[0:24:05.6]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, I can say being a waiter and moving behind a bar, it's baby steps. I found out once I got behind a bar, I controlled a lot of—it was a powerful job. It could be a dangerous job. It's always fun, but I realized that I was selling something that could matter to being happy or being tragic. And meeting these different people and meeting their different emotions, I learned that, you know what, you care about what you do, you care about yourself, you care about people that you meet. What you're serving could get you in a lot of trouble or get them in a lot of trouble, so I learned to control what I do and what I was doing. Like I've seen people come in there that they probably had more than they should have. I seen people come in there with others, like on a date, and for some reason it went the wrong way. One person would leave. If it was a couple, one person would leave in frustration. Another person sits at the bar, continues to drink. But then that's when I would intervene and say, "Look, are you going to be okay? Do you have a way home, or is there anything I could do?"

Some people could be aggressive, and a lot of people would break down in tears. But I can show that moment, and knowing when to and when not to serve people and caring for them. I've driven people home from work. I'll put them in a cab, or just watching people and learning that you care about what you do and it's not just a money thing. Money was never the forefront of it. It's just the enjoyment what I do and how I do it.

I went through a moment in my life when I see that people use alcohol as a release, and I think that could be really bad in so many ways, and I wish that a lot of bartenders feel the same way. It's like you look at the person, not to say, "He's having a great time. Give him another drink. Give him another drink." That's not the way you do it. It's like you've got to make sure that they get home safely. As much as they're having a good time, it could really go bad in a very fast moment. So you take the job seriously and, at the same time, enjoy what you do, but you are responsible for that person that you're serving. Even if it comes down to, like, food-wise, like you don't want to throw a bunch of food in front of someone just to get your bill high, or gouge someone.

But going back to the liquor, it's like continuously serving someone and not caring, just thinking that the bill's big, more money, that's not the concept. You're looking at it the wrong way, and if you think that you're doing yourself good, you're hurting yourself and a lot of people. I don't think you're a responsible person when you do something like that. We're all here to have a great time, but at the same time, we have to be safe and we have to do our job as the establishment. DUI is a big thing. It's expensive. But I think the bartenders are more liable when you continue to serve someone that doesn't need to be. I mean, it's dangerous, and that's why, like I say, I've stuck in this business, because I control that destiny for everybody, and when I see someone, even if I'm not serving them, that's intoxicated, I go out of my way to, even though I don't even know them, that they're safe. That makes me happy and that makes them happy, maybe not at the moment, but it comes back full circle in what I do.

[0:29:34.3]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure. That’s really thoughtful. And so what year did you start bartending?

[0:29:40.5]

Darryl Smalls: I started bartending in 1982.

[0:29:46.3]

Annemarie Anderson: Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about—so who taught you how to bartend? Who’d you learn that from?

[0:29:56.6]

Darryl Smalls: A young lady by the name Georgia Roddy [phonetic], she’s from New York. She’s a realtor now, but she taught me how to bartend. Mainly, when I was a busboy, every time I’d bring glasses to the bar, I’d ask the bartender, “What’s that drink? What’s this drink? What’s that drink?” or I’d just watch them.

When I got out of management, my boss would say, “What do you want to do? What are you going to do? You’re not a manager anymore.”

I’m like, “I want to bartend.”

And he says, “Okay.”

And I went behind the bar, no training at all, just went back there, and [snaps fingers].

The drinks weren’t as fancy as now. It’s like we have Dirty Martinis now, you have Peach Sangria, all this stuff. It was just a simple Scotch and Water, Gin and Tonic, and the Martinis were just gin, it wasn’t vodka, as we know it today, and you had your Tom

Collins and Sidecars. The book that I learned from was *Mr. Boston*. It was a little red book that I'd read all the time.

But I found that, you know, this is fun. This is fun mixing different drinks and making things. I mean, when someone comes to the bar, I'm like, "What do you want to drink?" And they wouldn't know because—mainly the ladies. I'm like, "Let me make something fun for you." And Lemon Drop was one of my favorite drinks to make, because it was made with fresh squeezed lemon, and anything made with fresh was delicious, and I made people smile. So I'm like, "Wow. Okay. We're going to move it up then." So every day I would learn to make a different drink, and I built a clientele behind the bar.

One day I was off from work, and I came back the next day, and my boss and the waiters are like, "These people came looking for you, and they sat at the bar and they said you made this drink, you made that drink." Every drink that I would make, I didn't have a measurement. I would just go with my own instincts and found I had to learn how to do measurements. And I was like, "Ah, gosh," because people wanted to know how you make this and how you make that, so it got to be more detailed than just, like, just doing it off my own.

So that was another level, because I'm like, "Okay. Teach me how to make this drink." And, all right, and then I felt, you know what, they like me, people like me, so I'm, like, I started training other bartenders.

But it was a downfall with that, I mean, when's my days off, my boss would call me in, and I'd have to come in because I had certain guests that come in, and then the bartenders were like, "Well, we need you to be behind the bar more often." So it turned out I was

working seven days a week, but it was fun, a lot of fun, but then fatigue set in and I found out that I wasn't spending time giving myself any time. I was just wearing myself out. So then I had to get to myself and figure my schedule, because I was extending myself out way too much. When I would get to myself on those days I would have off, I felt kind of lonely because I'm like I got my rest, went to the gym, and I'm like, "I want to go back to work."

I went to my boss, I said, "Look."

He goes, "Well, you got two days a week off now, so you pick what days you want off."

I'm like, "Okay. Cool." I said, "But can I get back on like what I usually do, like seven days?"

And he's like, "No."

Then my mom got involved, because I would come home and as soon as I'd sit down, I would fall asleep. But then I started dreaming about my work or what I forgot to do the night before, in my dreams, and I realized that I was wrapped up into it really good, and I enjoyed it. So it energized me. So I got my two days off. After getting two days off, like, I couldn't wait to get back to work. I'm like, "I want to be around these people."

Then I started bartending at this place called Vickery's, and they had a contest in town, and it was the best bartender. I started in Vickery's in 1993, and it was a Cuban-style restaurant out of Atlanta. I think it was on Crescent Avenue that they opened the first Vickery's. I met this group that moved to Charleston, and they were friends with the guys Mark and Jerry, Mark Cumins and Jerry Scheer. They owned T-Bonz in Charleston. So these guys were friends with Jim Stalker, and Jim Stalker was the main owner for Vickery's.

I started bartending there after I left Marianne's in 1993. I realized my clientele followed me to Vickery's from Marianne's. And my boss came up to me, he said—he called everybody “Coco.” He said, “Coco, you left my place and now the business is gone over to where you are.”

I'm like, “I think so.” But he wasn't happy about it. But I'm like, “I think they are.”

Well, every night I went to work at Vickery's, the bar would fill up. Well, they had this contest for best bartender, and I didn't think anything of it. We had a lot of bars in Charleston, so I'm, like, you know, I didn't throw my name in the hat. But people started voting. We had a newspaper called the *Upward Herald* at the time, and it started there. So everybody, clientele, would vote on best bartenders around Charleston.

Well, I got this phone call. Coming to work one day, I got this phone call, and the phone call was a young lady from the newspaper *Upward Herald*. She said, “Mr. Smalls, this is—” I forget her name. “I'm calling from *Upward Herald*. You've been voted Best Bartender in Charleston. Would you like to talk with us?”

I was still so surprised about it, I'm like I didn't know what to say because I was driving and I was talking on the phone. And I got to work, and they told me, said, “Well, this young lady's here to talk to you.”

I met her, and she said, “Well, not only that they voted for you, but they said you would make sure that you'd get home safely, you were always happy, you always made people feel good.”

I'm like, “Really?”

So I ran home and I told my mom about it. I said, “Mom, guess what happened!” And I was in the newspaper, and I was, like, *so* happy about that and surprised. The following year, they did it again. I won four times in a row.

[0:37:33.3]

Annemarie Anderson: That’s great!

[0:37:35.1]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah. Then I got these awards and everything and [unclear]. And I felt really established at that point. I was like, “This is a business. This is where I’m at.” Just when you don’t know that people are watching you, they are. They are. You’re not just a body in a space. I mean, you make an impact on what—I was making an impact on what I was doing. But it wasn’t like work to me. It was like fun, and I enjoyed it, and I’m still enjoying it. I’d like to tell everybody, whoever hears this, that whatever you do, make the best of it, and if you’re not happy with it, find your happy, because getting up out of bed and getting a shower and getting dressed to go to work is more than that. You’re presenting yourself to a lot of people in different emotions, and in anything you do, you got to take it serious. But the most important thing, enjoy it, and if you’re not enjoying it, don’t do it.

[0:38:56.0]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely. So how long—you started Vickery’s in 1993, and how long were you there?

[0:39:02.9]

Darryl Smalls: I was there until 2009, worked there for seventeen years.

[0:39:06.6]

Annemarie Anderson: what did you do there besides bartend, or is that all you did?

[0:39:10.5]

Darryl Smalls: I bartended. That was my main job, just bartending.

[0:39:13.5]

Annemarie Anderson: And what kind of a restaurant was Vickery's? Could you talk a little bit about that?

[0:39:18.0]

Darryl Smalls: It was a Cuban-style restaurant, fun atmosphere. We sold Cuban sandwiches, Jerk Chicken, Mojo Wings. What else we had over there? It's just fun food. It was like plantains, but more so Cuban-style food. But we had a big giant bar, and everybody sat at the bar. On Sundays, we'd do Sunday brunch, and it was just a great time. One of our biggest events we had was a Halloween party, which was one of the biggest things in Charleston, and we would serve—it would be at one point, we had 1,200 people in there.

[0:40:08.9]

Annemarie Anderson: Wow.

[0:40:10.0]

Darryl Smalls: One of our Halloween parties, you know, Halloween contests. But I never dressed for Halloween, because as kids, like, we didn't do it. It's so funny that my partner and I went out looking for costumes, and I'm like, "I never dressed for Halloween when I was a kid. I don't want to do it now."

He's like, "Well, we got to do this because this is what we do."

And I'm like, "Okay, I'll give it a whirl."

We went to one of the event stores to get our costumes, and he went and put on a pink tutu in the back. I went looking for him. His wife was back there, and everybody's laughing. I walk back there, and this guy's like 245 pounds, and he's in a pink tutu. I went to the floor laughing so hard. I'm like, "I'm not wearing that. There's no way possible!"

He goes, "We got to do it. We got to do it."

Well, guess what. I put it on, and it was the most fun I've ever had in my life. It's like I don't understand how women wear tutus or leotards, because it's *hard*. [Laughter] I wore it for nine hours, and I don't think I'll do that again.

But Vickery's was a fun, fun place. Everybody in Charleston came there. It was a staple. But, still, I got to meet more people, and more people kept coming, and the bar would be five deep. You know, when you went to a bar, everybody's standing wanting to be served, wanting to be served, and then I saw how my job made a big impact on what I did

because I would never go to the person that was raising their hands. I looked for the person that was quiet, staring, and looked and just stared and was patient.

There was a gentleman that came in from Atlanta, and I got to know him very shortly. He was drinking Dewar's. So I said to him, "What can I get you?"

He said, "I'll have a Dewar's on the rocks." And I remember him, but he made an impact on me for some reason. I don't know why.

About two or three months later, this gentleman walked in. I knew he was from Atlanta. He walked in. When he walked in, he sat at the bar, and I saw him from this before he sat down. I waved at him, and led him to the spot that was open at the bar, and I put a Dewar's on the rocks in front of him. And he stared at me, went, "You remembered my drink."

I said, "Yeah."

He handed me, like, a fifty. He says, "That's amazing." He goes, "I live in Atlanta. I go to the same place all the time. Bartenders don't do this to me." He says, "Thank you very much."

Well, a month later—his name was Steve. A month later, month and a half later, he had some friends come in from Atlanta with him, and he introduced me to them. And I'm like, "Wow!"

He goes, "Well, I told them about you, that you remembered my drink." And I met his friends, and his friends tell me that, "He can't stop talking about this. He said the bar was five deep, it was packed, and you saw him come in, and you put a drink in front of him." Most people don't have that—I mean, I'm like, "I don't know why. I just remembered what he had." And from there on, I start remembering people, what they drank, and that

turned out to be another level. I'm like, "All right!" You know? But I said, "He gave me fifty dollars. He didn't have to give me fifty dollars."

He goes, "You have no idea how you made his night."

I still smile about that, because I try to do it every time I come to work. I mean, someone come in, "Mr. Brown, how you doin'?" or "Miss Kim, how you doin'?" It makes people—it makes their day. We all want to feel important and special.

[0:44:21.2]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure. Definitely. Well, so you left Vickery's in 2009?

[0:44:26.9]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[0:44:27.7]

Annemarie Anderson: Okay. And you came here?

[0:44:29.6]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah. This place here I'm at now, at Halls, I would drive by it every day when I was working at Vickery's on my way to work, and I, like, stared at it. For some reason, when I'd get prior to Halls, I'd stare in that direction, but never thought that I'd be working here.

So I was doing car service to make extra money, driving people to the airport, from the airport to the hotel, and that kind of stuff, and was dressed in a suit and was driving a

Navigator, Lincoln Navigator. Loved it. I'm like, "Oh, this is so cool!" Because my car was like a little Honda. So getting dressed in a suit and meeting people coming from the airport or coming from Kiawah [Island], that was an adventure for me, but it was extra money.

One day I decided—I mean, we were going through a recession during that time, 2008, and my boss, Jim Stalker, came over to Halls and talked to Mr. Hall, Mr. Bill Hall, and said that he had an employee that he thinks that he should hire. I had no idea of this.

So one day I pulled over and came into Halls. I walked in there. Tommy Hall was here, and he was talking to me. He says, "Darryl, so what you want to do?"

I said, "I'm interested in working here." I'm like, "I see this place every day on my way to work. I'm interested." I'm like, "What do y'all do?"

He goes, "Well, it's a steakhouse." Then he asked me, he sat me down by the piano—I remember like it was yesterday—he said, "Darryl, what's hospitality to you?"

And I kept staring up at the interior, and they were playing Motown, and I was like, "I like this." I said, "You mind if I look upstairs?"

He says, "Sure." So Tommy Hall gave me a tour of the restaurant, and we went upstairs. We sat in the booths, and he took me in the back. He took me through the kitchen. When I walked in the kitchen, it's like I knew everybody's in the kitchen, and there's people in there that I knew. People said, "Hey, Darryl! Hey, Darryl!" And they're telling him, "He works at Vickery's. He works at Vickery's."

And Tommy said, "Okay, if you know what Ron drinks, I'll hire you." Ron was this Puerto Rican guy.

I said, “Ron drinks— he used to work at Charleston Place. He drinks Bacardi and Diet Coke.”

And Tommy says, “Is that true?”

He goes, “Yeah, that’s my favorite drink!”

He goes, “You’re hired!”

Then we walked through the kitchen and we walked out of the kitchen and I met

Tommy’s dad, Bill Hall, and I said, “You the owner of this place?”

He goes, “I am.”

I said, “You have a nice place here.”

And after I left, I got a phone call the next day. Well, after I left, I went down to Chai’s, a bar down the street, and I was going to apply there, because I didn’t know if I was going to get hired here. And while I was getting interviewed by the manager, my phone rang and it was Tommy Hall. It was like ten, fifteen minutes after I left, and he asked me if I can come interview on the next day. I went, “Wow! Really?” And nine years later, I’m still here.

[0:48:14.7]

Annemarie Anderson: That’s great!

[0:48:15.8]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah.

[0:48:16.4]

Annemarie Anderson: So here do you both serve and bartend?

[0:48:19.0]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[0:48:20.2]

Annemarie Anderson: Okay.

[0:48:20.7]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am. I started working here, and I've met some—I was getting trained and while I was getting trained, people that knew me kept coming in, the clientele kept coming in, and my boss was like, "How you know all these people in Charleston?" I said, "Oh, my gosh, I've known these guys since I was sixteen years old, and they're coming here now."

So the business started growing, and I started getting request parties, and people kept calling for me, and it just spiraled and just kept going and getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I'm, like, getting ready for work, was like, "I can't wait to get to work!"

My wife's like—it was a recession, and I was married at the time. My wife's like, "Why are you going to leave Vickery's?"

I said, "Well, I want to move on to something else, and I like where I'm at," I said, "but you don't understand. I'm meeting people again that I met twenty years down the road behind me." And it was just, Miss Anderson, I mean, it's still going that way. I mean, every day's a new day for me. When I come to work, I feel great. When I leave work, I

feel great. It's been a wonderful experience in food and beverage for me, one of the best.

And when I feel down, I go to work. It brings me up because I make people smile.

I went through divorce in my life, and it was the hardest thing that *ever* hit me. It happened like six years ago. My boss said, "You're going to get through this. You're going to be fine."

My mother's like, "Darryl, it happens to the best of us, but take care of your kids and you're going to be okay."

And you know what? I read my Bible, I focused on work. It still would hit me every now and then when I would leave work, because I found out that work was my family, and when I would leave work, the separation of my wife would hit me again.

Then my mom talked to me, she said, "Darryl, read your Bible."

When I read the Bible, I read about Job, and I read Job, I'm like, "I'm not going through anything at all." I said, "I can get through this."

Ever since I read Job, my boss is like, "Look at you. You look like a brand-new person."

But I used to cry and I would cry and I would cry when I would leave work, but then I'd get back to work, I'm like, "Yay!"

I met a friend here, a young lady by the name of Bridget. She was going through a hard time at the same time I was going a hard time. Her sister, something tragically happened to her sister, and we shared our stories. When I would get to work, we'd give each other a hug, we'd talk about it. But we got so busy that it was like, you know, we were having fun, and everything was okay because I was at work and I was doing what I liked to do.

Divorce came shortly after that, after the separation, and I stayed focused on taking care of my kids. I was making money and taking care of my kids. I'm like, "I can't believe this is all falling in place," but it was because what I do and where I was.

[0:51:53.6]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely. Sorry that happened to you.

[0:51:58.4]

Darryl Smalls: Yeah, I mean, I'll tell you what. I mean, when you think everything's coming down, there's somebody's always getting it worse. Just got to keep your head about yourself and stay focused. You know, that's the triumphs of life. Sure as you smile, sure as you're going to cry.

[0:52:19.6]

Annemarie Anderson: Well, tell me a little bit, too, about—so we talked a lot about especially your kind of connection to the people you work with here, but could you talk about working relationships and friendships and the kind of community in food and beverage that kind of exists here in Charleston and kind of your place within it?

[0:52:39.7]

Darryl Smalls: Working in this industry, it's a special gift, I feel, because you never know who you're going to meet. When you come to a new place, for me, a restaurant—I got out of fine dining for about seventeen years. I started when I was sixteen, like I said,

and after thirteen years later, I stopped and went into just bartending, wondering if I could get back into it, coming to Halls after just bartending. I met the employees at Halls over here, and I got retrained. I'm like, "I'm a lot older now. Can I do this?" Every day I'd come to work, I'd meet somebody. I'd get trained by someone else or someone different. When I would meet these people, I'm, like, how friendly they were, and, I mean, the knowledge that they had, and made me more interested.

And you know what? I love meeting these people, and coming back from the Halls, from working in a French restaurant to an American-style steakhouse was like a different ballgame. The hardest part about it was the wine, because I love French wines, love it. And here at Halls, when I first started here, it was all American wines, so that was the battle there, because you know what you love and what you love is what you love. I found I had blinders on. I didn't want to learn about American wines, because I love French wines. But as, day by day, we had wine tastings, I learned more, and I'm like, "Okay, you're fighting yourself. Get a bottle of wine that you like, taste a bottle of wine you like, run with it, and then the next day, move on to something else. About a week later, move on to something else."

Then I sold—there's a bottle called Amizetta Cabernet out of Napa Valley. I remember this. And we had this wine tasting, this big jammy cabernet. I'm like, "Wow! This is good!" So I started waiting, my first time waiting on tables, I was telling the guests about this wine.

They said, "We're looking for a cabernet, but we're not used to what we're tasting," which they had a wine by the glass that was like a light cabernet. [Sirens in the background]

I said, “Well, what I like is a big jammy cabernet, and I think that would be perfect for your steaks.”

So the husband opened up the wine list, and he’s looking through it, and I’m like, “Oh, gosh.” I started getting a little nervous, because I’m like, “He’s going to ask me a question about this wine, and I’m going to be like—.” So, instead, I jumped ahead of him. I’m like, “Look, I have something you can try. It’s a bottle of Amizetta Cabernet. It’s in the Napa Valley section. I bet you’ll like it.”

He said, “We’ll try it. Bring it on.”

And I opened that bottle of wine, and he tasted it. It was seven people at the table. They had seven bottles of Amizetta. I was blown away, so blown away. I was like, “I’ve hit the peak.”

I was bartending two or three months later, it was a Sunday brunch, and two gentlemen came in. I think one of them, his last name was Brown, and he’s with another young man, and they were about to get a bottle of wine at the bar. I said, “I’ll tell you what we got. We have a bottle of cabernet that’s called Amizetta and it’s from the Napa Valley.”

Well, lo and behold, the guy I was talking to was a good friend of the winemaker for Amizetta. He told me it was right down the street from **Caymus**, in California. I went, “Oh, my god.”

He goes, “I can’t wait to tell my friend what you said.”

I’m like, “You really do know him?”

And he said, “Yes,” and he texted the guy.

He left, and they mailed me a T-shirt, and I’m like, “Wow!”

[0:57:51.3]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great.

[0:57:52.5]

Darryl Smalls: It just put everything—I mean, in this business, what I do, it keeps growing and keeps growing, and it just spreads in good ways in good directions, and I love that. Like I say, every day I come to work, something new comes about. So it's energy, feeds me energy, great energy.

[0:58:19.6]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure. What are the biggest challenges of your job?

[0:58:24.4]

Darryl Smalls: My biggest challenge is coming into work and seeing young folks that are coming in this business. A lot of them are in college. Here at Halls, a lot of us, we have families, we own houses. Communication has gone to the wayside with technology. That brings me down a lot, because we're not communicating that much. A lot of people are depressed, too, the younger folks, and we work with a lot of young folks here that go to college in Charleston.

You know, I'm used to when I see someone, always say, "Hello," or when you walk by someone, or walking towards someone, when you work with someone, "Hello." Biggest thing my mom taught me, always say hello, always say good morning, always give a smile. And I feel that our young folks are stressed and don't realize.

You know, at a young age, where I was, I didn't have a care in the world. I was having fun, worry-free. I think that this business brings the best out of you. Even when you're upset, you come to work, you're going to meet someone, you see someone that will want to talk to you. I think when you come to work here or in food and beverage, you're displaying happiness, enjoyment to someone's experience, and when you walk around the dining room, people are watching you, and I watch people a lot, and I do my best too. If I see an employee that's not happy, I'm like, "What's going on? How you doin'?" Welcome to work. We're going to have fun tonight."

I get a surprised look on their face, and the next day they'll see me, "Hey, Mr. Darryl, how you doin'?"

I'm like, "Hey, you okay today? You fine, [unclear]?"

He goes, "Yeah, thanks for last night. I appreciate it."

I said, "No problem." I said, "Come to work. Come to work dressed, look nice. You're in a good place. We're going to make memories. Keep that in mind." And every now and then I'll even pass them a little twenty. I'm talking about service, server's assistant—we call them SAs—pass them a little twenty-dollar bill, some cash, just to make them feel important because, like I say, that goes back to you don't know how people's day have gone, even at a young age, studying, parents, friends, pets. I realized that I was only making guests happy. I can make my coworkers happy, even at the worst times, tragedy, failures, or just a new job that they don't know they're going to be accepted and make them feel welcome.

I think I'm using my tools to the best of my ability. My son started working in this business, and he said, "Dad." He was in high school, and I had him come to work here

with me. He used to work with Mr. Hall. Eleven years old, he'd be coming in on Sundays and help Mr. Hall with bottles, moving things for him upstairs and downstairs. And he said, "Dad." He went to college, he joined The Citadel, and he went to his knob year [Interviewer's note: freshman year at The Citadel], the month, that first year, and he called me about a month into being a knob, he said, "Dad."

I said, "How'd you get a phone?" The Citadel's a military college here, four-year college. And he said, "Dad, they gave us our phone back here. But, Dad, I want to ask you." He goes, "How'd you do it?"

I said, "What's that?"

He goes, "Dad, how'd you take care of us after going through divorce Mom and keeping your head, keeping our house, and keeping—. Dad, could you tell me?" He goes, "Dad, I miss you so. Thanks for disciplining me. Thank you for showing me how to be a man."

He goes, "Dad, when I see you, I'm going to give you the biggest hug."

And a week after that, he came to Halls with his uniform on, and we went out to lunch.

He said, "Dad, people know you. People love you." He goes, "I'm at The Citadel.

They're talking about Halls Chophouse," and they're saying, "There's a black man, gentleman that works there with a gold tooth, he would make you so happy every time."

I'm like, "Maxwell, are you serious?"

He goes, "Dad, people talk about you all the time."

And that was another level that took me to, that, you know, somewhere else that people recognize what you do, and this business is a beautiful thing. It really is. You take it for what it's worth, and it pays off. I never worry about making money. I always say, "If you do the job, everything else follows. Enjoy what you do."

[1:04:23.1]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure.

[1:04:25.1]

Darryl Smalls: It could easily absorb you in a bad way, but we all are adults, and we've got to make good decisions. Whatever decisions you make affects you down the road. Don't let this business consume you. Enjoy it, make the best of it, and you'll do well.

[1:04:56.9]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great.

[1:04:59.5]

Darryl Smalls: I'll tell anyone that. I told my son that. He said, "Dad, but, you know, how do you have the patience to do what you do?" I said, "It's not patience. It's what you do. It's whatever you do, do the best, make the best of it, or don't do it at all."

[1:05:19.9]

Annemarie Anderson: For sure. So your son went to Citadel, but have any of your children kind of followed your path into food and beverage?

[1:05:26.8]

Darryl Smalls: No. My younger son, he's sixteen, he's into baseball. He does travel baseball, he does high school baseball, so he's baseball year-round, so he's not. I don't see him in that.

I always recommend everyone should work food and beverage to get the appreciation of the things that you hear, the things that you see. It humbles you in so many ways. It teaches how to do things and how not to do things, and you learn a lot too. You meet a lot of people. It's a wonderful, wonderful career that I've had, honestly.

[1:06:12.2]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely. Well, how—so Charleston also is a big tourism town. How has tourism impacted your job?

[1:06:20.0]

Darryl Smalls: Well, I grew up here. Like I said, I grew up here, watched this town grow from being very quaint, which it's still quaint, but Charleston is a friendly place, very friendly place, small. Everybody knows everyone. Over the years, that's changed. I think we got voted "Best Place to Vacation," and that opened a lot of doors for a lot of northerners. The buildings, the city has grown. We've got bigger buildings, hotels, parking. It's like watching something explode, and you don't know what to do.

I called my mom one day, I said, "Mom, I can't believe how long it's taking me to go to work. It used to take me fifteen minutes to get to work. It's taking me twenty minutes to get to work, and it's ridiculous."

And my mom said, "Darryl."

I said, “Yes, ma’am.”

She said, “You know this is how you make money, right?”

And I didn’t realize it. I’m like, “Yeah, you’re right, Mom.”

She goes, “You got companies coming in. You got Boeing coming in. Falwell’s [phonetic] here. BMW.”

And I’m a part of that. Tourism, corporate growth, it’s a wonderful thing, yeah. Tourism, yes. I mean, it gets to me every now and then because I hope that the city doesn’t lose its niceness, but, the same time, we’re making new friends and people are not only visiting here, they’re moving here. So it’s a wonderful thing, it really is.

I’ve been up north once or twice, and way too fast for me. But when I come to work and I come to a table and I’m like, “Where you from?”

“New York.”

“Where you from?”

“New Jersey.”

“Where you from?”

“Philadelphia.”

I’m like, “How do you like Charleston?”

“Why is everybody so nice?”

I say, “Enjoy it. Enjoy it. It’s a good thing. Everybody’s your friend and everyone’s genuine.” It’s not a big city, but it’s a learning experience at its best, Charleston is.

[1:09:20.7]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely.

[1:09:22.8]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[1:09:23.6]

Annemarie Anderson: It's a lovely city.

[1:09:24.1]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am.

[1:09:25.4]

Annemarie Anderson: Well, tell me little bit, too—you kind of mentioned this. Since your start in 1979, how have you seen Charleston's restaurant scene and the food and beverage industry here kind of change?

[1:09:38.3]

Darryl Smalls: We didn't have as many restaurants from 1979 up until, I would say, [19]89. You had your different levels of fine dining or bistro or fancy cuisine. Charleston Grill was one the newer places at the time. Carolina's was southern dining experience that was fun. Marianne's was French. So you had different—we had German. That was in the market area, close to the market area.

Food and beverage stuck together, hung together a lot. Everybody knew everybody. In the past ten years as King Street grew up, got bigger, Halls is one of the first restaurants

that opened up, and everybody's like, "That's not going to last over here, not on King Street." Well, they opened the door. That's like King Street is the market area now. We have O-Ku, which is a sushi restaurant, Social, Uptown Social, and Macintosh is another restaurant that opened up on King Street. Jeremiah Bacon was one of the best chefs I've—I went over there and checked it out. Jeremiah Bacon, one of the best, nicest chef I ever met. Other than that, Matt Niessner, Matthew Niessner, that works here, our chef. But they lit up King Street, and it's a new venture now. The market area is touristy now, but now more locals are on King Street visit these restaurants, our restaurants. But, yeah, I watched it expand. It's gotten bigger and bigger and bigger, and to be the best, you got to do the job. You got to keep doing good things to keep the clientele, and, certainly, if you don't, you won't last. But by the blessing of God, I work at Halls, and we are on fire. We've opened seven different restaurants under Halls name, and it's done well, very well.

[1:12:37.2]

Annemarie Anderson: Definitely. Sounds like it. Could you talk a little bit, too, about the relationship that you in the dining room kind of work with and the kind of relationship that you have to have with, like, back-of-house kitchen staff to make kind of things happen?

[1:12:53.7]

Darryl Smalls: Okay. Here at Halls, going back to when I worked at Marianne's, team effort. We're a team. It's a big, big word. It plays a big role at Halls. From the back of the

house, if could take you back there, I get to work always forty-five minutes early before everyone, and my first entrance in the building is the kitchen. When you walk in there, you have these guys that have been here since 9:00 o'clock, prepping, working together, the dishwashers, the chef, the pantry, and I recognize these guys. They're working and they're prepping for the night to come. I think we overlook, as the front of the house, what they do back there, that night hadn't even started. It started at 9:00 o'clock, and the ball hits the court at 5:00 o'clock, and it's go time. We're doing three hundred to four hundred covers on a Monday night. Sunday, we do a Sunday brunch that starts at 9:30, and that's five hundred covers. So these guys in the back of the house are amazing.

We as waiters, we get together at 4:30, at 4:00 o'clock for our meeting about the menu. The chef comes and talk. I look around the room, and we have some of the best waiters that you'll ever see that makes this wheel turn. I'm proud to be part of it. I think a lot of them don't realize it, because I say, with a smile on my face, after fifteen minutes in lineup, we all hit the floor, and, Miss Anderson, it's like a well-oiled machine. It's like we all are working with each other, and it's like organized chaos at its best. Put a smile on our face, and it's genuine, it's not fake.

But at the end of the day, we do our checkout, we do our side work, and some of us will go have a cocktail somewhere else. I leave downtown, I go to a place and I sit to myself, and I'll say to myself, "Wow! What a great evening. How blessed that we are to have the business that we do and that people come to see us, see this family, the Halls family."

I give thanks to Serge Claire for breaking me out of my shell, first of all, at the French restaurant I worked at, Marianne's. And I thank Jim Stalker for Vickery's, for giving me opportunity to work there seventeen years bartending. My venture, Halls is my third

restaurant, and when I met this family, they had a statement to make, and they're still making a statement that hospitality, it's what we do. When you're feeling down, come and see us, or you're feeling like all is lost, come and see us. We'll give you a hug, feed you, get you home safe.

[1:16:52.7]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great!

[1:16:54.2]

Darryl Smalls: Yes.

[1:16:54.9]

Annemarie Anderson: I only have a couple more questions for you. But I think we've danced around this, and you kind of obliquely talked about this, but I'm kind of interested in the concepts of service and hospitality. Could you give your definitions for both, the definition for service and the definition for hospitality, and how you see those two as similar or different?

[1:17:15.3]

Darryl Smalls: Okay. Hospitality is the—how could I put this? To me, is catering to others' needs in an atmosphere that requires a lot of service, things that people will like, and “No” is not the answer. What could we do for you? That's my view of hospitality. Your other question was?

[1:17:56.7]

Annemarie Anderson: What was your definition of service?

[1:18:00.5]

Darryl Smalls: Service is over and above, going beyond the call of duty, servicing that person that wants even the smallest thing. I'll do it. What can I do for you? "Yes" is the answer. What is the question? With a great smile and being genuine when you do it.

[1:18:31.1]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great.

[1:18:33.7]

Darryl Smalls: I hope I answered it.

[1:18:34.1]

Annemarie Anderson: Yeah, yeah. I just—it's been so interesting to see, you know, the ways that people who I've talked to, you know, how their answers have been similar or different from one another. So it's pretty interesting. And kind of my last big—and this is one of the bigger thinking questions as well, but, I mean, what are the biggest lessons you've learned since your start?

[1:18:57.1]

Darryl Smalls: I think I hit a little bit of that on how this business could be lucrative or could be detrimental to you. The downfall of it is making money and spending money and partying a lot. It's the bad side of it, making bad decisions because you make a lot of money and you're entertaining every night. So I can see myself when I—when you're tired from the night before, you come to work on a Friday night, and everybody's having a great time, everybody's dressed up, and you're hosting a party, and you get caught up into it. So you're like, "Oh, they're having a great time."

When you get off from work, you fall into it, and you're like—or sometimes you have the next day off, so you took that night to indulge a lot more than you should. Then you find yourself in DUI, in drugs, all the bad things that happen after 12:00 o'clock.

The good side of it is, I get off from work, I'll get to myself and I'll have a glass of wine. Who did I make smile tonight? Whose night did I impact? I really enjoy working with my employees, and we did a great job tonight. We're going to do it again tomorrow night. Those are good things. Then, like I said, the bad things and overindulging, not making good decisions. But for the most part, you value what your job, respect yourself.

Tomorrow's another day, you come back to work with the same energy.

[1:21:25.7]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great. Well, I don't have any more questions for you. Is there anything that we've not talked about that you'd like to add or share?

[1:21:35.8]

Darryl Smalls: I want to ask you how long y'all been doing this research.

[1:21:44.5]

Annemarie Anderson: Yeah. Well, I started this project—we started this with my colleague Justin Nystrom in the beginning of this year, so 2019. But we've done other projects on bartenders in Louisville, in New Orleans, so we've been doing work similar since the early 2000s.

[1:22:03.1]

Darryl Smalls: Yes, ma'am. I used to watch shows, and they'd have waiters. I remember going to New York a long time ago, and we went in this restaurant. It was called Sparks. I was probably twenty-four, twenty-five at the time, and I thought it was just TV at the time. This waiter came to the table, and he had gray hair and he's an older guy. Then I went to New Orleans, I saw this older guy. I'm like, "Man, these guys are still waiting on tables." I'm like, "Could you make that kind of money?" And I was in my younger years and realized it's a good thing to do. It's a job. It's a career. I thought when I was in high school some extra money to buy shoes and do what you that to do, but then I saw the money got bigger. I was living at my parents' house. I was bussing tables, I've got to tell you, Miss Anderson, and I was giving my mom like \$325 a week. My dad came in, he goes, says, "Did you give your mom money?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I do." I say, "Mom, tell Dad I give you money."

My mom said, "Yeah, he gives me \$325 every week."

My dad goes, "Are you making that kind of money?"

I said, “Dad, I’m just bussing tables.” I said, “They keep giving me money. These people, they like me.”

And he was amazed by it. He’s like, “You know, you have to do the right thing with that.” He says, “Are you sure? Do you make that kind of money?”

I said, “Dad, you have to see this. This is amazing.” And they never came to the restaurant wherever I worked.

But I remember after [Hurricane] Hugo, we had a big storm, big snowstorm, and I worked at Marianne’s, and all the restaurants were closed. It was the biggest snowstorm we ever had in Charleston, and that was the funniest thing. I’m at home with Mom and Dad and just laying back, and our doorbell rings, and we all stare at each other like, “Who could that be?”

It was my boss, Serge Claire, coming to pick me up for work. He goes, “We are going to work today.” And he walked in the house, and he kissed my mother on both cheeks, and my dad went nuts. I’m like, [demonstrates] “Don’t do it.” I said, “Dad, that’s the French way.”

He goes, “Oh, okay.” He goes, “He just kissed my wife.”

I said, “That’s my boss, Dad.”

Then that’s how he met my parents, and then he took me to work in his Bronco. We drove down through the snow and opened up the restaurant. It was like four of us opened up the restaurant, Marianne’s, and we had gas stove and cooked, and it was amazing. It was so funny.

I mean, the things I’ve learned and seen in this business, but it all could happen. It could happen to anyone. It’s the way you take it. But I wanted to tell you, to finish on this, there

are wonderful people out here to meet to everyone. You never knew who you're going to meet. Enjoy, embrace it. We need each other. I've met some of the best people in Charleston through the food and beverage industry and still meeting them. But we make things happen. Everyone does. You may not think you do, but whatever you do, smile and care.

[1:25:50.5]

Annemarie Anderson: That's great! Thank you so much for talking to me.

[1:25:50.5]

Darryl Smalls: You're welcome. You're welcome. I hope I did okay.

[1:25:56]

Annemarie Anderson: You did great.

[End of interview]