



**R Scott Harrington**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**  
\*\*\*

Date: June 18, 2019  
Location: Gabrielle Restaurant, New Orleans, LA  
Interviewer: Justin Nystrom  
Length: One hour and four minutes  
Project: Career Servers

**Justin Nystrom:** Today is June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019. I'm here with "R," which is Robert Scott Harrington, who is currently retired, but waits tables for the Sonniers at Gabrielle Restaurant on [2441] Orleans Avenue [New Orleans, Louisiana], and we're here as part of the Southern Foodways Alliance Longterm Servers Project, Oral History Project. My name is Justin Nystrom, and we are here on the campus at Loyola University, New Orleans.

Thank you for joining me this afternoon.

[0:01:17.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** It's my pleasure.

[0:01:17.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Great, great. So, Scott—and you go by Scott, unless you're in the hospital. You make sure—

[0:01:24.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right.

[0:01:24.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Right, right. Tell me, I guess, you know, before we get into some of the places you've worked over time, tell me just a little bit about yourself, like where you grew up and just a little bit about yourself as a person.

[0:01:39.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, I'm from St. Paul, Minnesota, the Twin Cities, grew up—

[interruption]

[0:01:53.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, I'm from St. Paul, Minnesota, Twin Cities, born in 1953, grew up there, had a great childhood and everything, and went to a Catholic military high school. Didn't really like that. It was during the Vietnam War. It wasn't too much fun. Everybody else was partying like rock stars, and I was marching up and down the field with a fake gun, you know.

But anyways, I always wanted to travel and everything. When I got out of high school, three days after I left high school, I hitchhiked from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Miami, and went to Jamaica for three months. Came home, started school a little bit. Anyways, I was seeing this young lady, we were having a great time, and it was January in Minnesota and she wanted to take a trip. New Orleans came up, so we decided to come down here on the train, which was fun. We had a sleeper car. And got to New Orleans and met a couple people, stayed in their place after we left the first hotel, but back then it was kind of easy to do. People were real nice to out-of-towners, and they were real nice.

[0:03:02.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** What year was that?

[0:03:03.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** 1972.

[0:03:06.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** So, three years after *Easy Rider*.

[0:03:08.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Probably, yeah. But make a long story short, not that you probably want that, but—

[0:03:14.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** No, no.

[0:03:14.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** —I kept going to Pat O'Brien's because I'd heard about it, and being from Minnesota and being under twenty-one, I never had a drink in my life, but I drank three-two beer, and I found out over the period of drinking that how full it made you, and I couldn't really see the benefit. I didn't see any fun in it, really. I just drank because everyone else drank it, but you get so full so fast that, you know, you never really get buzzed. But I kept going to Pat O'Brien's because it was such a fantastic place, and it was 4:00 in the morning and people walking around in short sleeves. It was 20 below zero in Minnesota.

Came time for Saturday, I knew Saturday was coming up, we were going to go back, and I asked this guy in a blue coat there, I asked them if they hired white people, because I only saw black people working the patios, waiters and stuff. I never worked in a restaurant business in my life, you know. But he said, “Yeah, come back Saturday so you can have the job.” You know, wasn’t an application or wait for an interview or anything like that. He said, “Sure, come on back.”

So I told the young lady I was with, I said, “I think I’m going to stay, you know.”

And she goes, “Stay? What are you talking about?”

I said, “Well, I think I got a job at Pat O’Brien’s.”

She said, “You’re kiddin’ me.”

Well, anyway, she went back. She was in school, you know, so she went back.

And I went to work that day, supposedly, and I saw the guy, Tony Bondi [phonetic], and

I asked him, I said, “Well, here I am. Can I start?”

And he said, “Well, you got the job, but you can’t start till next week because we don’t have any green jackets for you to wear.”

So I said, “Oh.” I thought it was like a sign, you know, maybe I should catch a train, you know.

But a gentleman on the other side of the room overheard everything. His name was Johnny Mouton, a black guy. He said, “Bro, if you want to work that bad, you can use my jacket, you know. Just roll it up and stick it up here in this cubbyhole so I can have it tomorrow.”

So, without that, I probably would have left, but I stayed, worked that night on the patio, and got trained in. When you talk about Hurricanes and Cyclones and Pete’s Specials and

all these drinks, and even Old Fashioneds and stuff, I had *no* idea what they were talking about, but over a period of time, you know, I kept my eyes and ears open. I didn't know anybody in town, so work was my whole social event, you know. I loved going there. I had to buy a pair of black shoes to wear to work, and I remember going back to this little room I had, and the shoe box, I just kept throwing money in there every time I came home or back to the room. I'd just throw money in there, and I'd take a little bit out each night and I'd go to, like, some of the better restaurants in the city, and even if you had to wear a jacket, I'd put my Pat O'Brien's jacket on. They'd let me sit by the kitchen door on a deuce table, you know. But I would order filet mignon with béarnaise sauce and shrimp remoulade and all this stuff I'd never heard of, except for a lot of seafood. I was leery about crawfish and stuff like that. But anyways, I was living the life. I had so much fun, you know.

[0:06:10.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** So you sent that poor girl back on the train by herself?

[0:06:12.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I didn't send her back; she wanted to go. She had to go back. She was going to school. I called my parents and I told them I was staying, and they said, "Well, what are we going to do with your apartment and everything, all your stuff and everything?"

I said, "Whatever you want. I'm leaving. I'm not coming back, so take what you want and give the rest to Salvation Army or something," you know.

So I stayed and I worked there seven years, two years as a waiter, first on the patio, and then I went to the lounge where the piano players are, which is a little bit higher checks, more tips, and people sit down for longer, you know. But it was really interesting. I kept my eyes and ears open, and then they made me a bartender on the patio, then a bartender in the lounge, and I worked five years as a bartender at the front bar.

So, you know, being nineteen years old and twenty-one years old, I mean, I go to work at 7:00 at night and get off at 5:00 in the morning, I mean, there'd still be fifteen girls, if not there, outside or across the street, and there was a pocketful of money, and no matter what happened that night, the next night was going to be the same thing, you know. So it was enjoyable. I'm not saying it was a lot of sex, rock 'n roll, but it was really fun for a person from Minnesota that drank three-two beer and had a little apartment, went to school, and everything like that. This was a whole different ballgame, you know.

[0:07:36.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Now, the French Quarter in the early [19]70s was a lot different.

[0:07:39.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, totally different, totally different.

[0:07:40.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** What are some of the things that stand out to you?

[0:07:43.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, it was like a small town. I mean, I guess it is now for people that are in the circle. I was there so long, had a great time, but when you leave the French Quarter, like I don't work in the French Quarter anymore, so when I see people that work there, they think I left town because I don't go to any of those places that I used to or anything like that, but you say, "I'm working over here," they go, "Oh, man. I haven't seen you. I thought you left town." No.

But the French Quarter was really tight. I mean, you knew bartenders at each bar, and they'd come in to see you, you'd go see them. You go in to dinner, those people had been waiters had been in to see you, you know. They'd say, "Look, the dessert's on me." You knew a time where certain bartenders were because you'd go see them and they'd tell you about deals on apartments or someone's, you know, doing stuff.

[0:08:33.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Was there like a favorite hang-out place that people who worked—

[0:08:37.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, everybody had their own, I'm sure, you know, but, you know, like Pat O'Brien's was really a happenin' spot, you know. Some people came in there. Even servers and stuff, or waiters and stuff, their restaurants closed at 11:00. We were open till 5:00. The little main bar always had the jukebox playing and drinks were cheaper, a lot of college people went there and everything, you know. So that was fun.

One thing that happened, on a personal note, they had a contest when I was here.

[George] "Sonny" Oschner [III] was the general manager, and he used to sit at the end of

the bar and drink these drinks on the rocks with an olive in it, but it was only water. He'd say, "Look like you're pouring me a drink, put your towel on, then put it down, ice, and put an olive in it." Because people'd buy him drinks all night long. "Get Sonny a drink for me, get Sonny a drink for me." If he drank all of those drinks, he'd be on the floor, so he never drank. So he'd sit there and just sip on the water, and he'd watch the bar and watch the register all the time.

It'd be ten-deep at the bar, slinging Hurricanes across the bar, doing cash, doing this, traveler's checks. You got to run upstairs to get more cases of Hurricanes, bring them downstairs, ice them up. I mean, it was really activity from 7:00 o'clock on.

[0:09:56.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** And when you started there, it was a mostly cash kind of thing, right?

[0:10:00.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, yeah. I mean, credit cards, I mean, of course they had the thing where you'd run it across and stuff, but, I mean, that didn't come in—I didn't really notice that until I started working in restaurants, because Pat O'Brien's, unless you're in the lounge where the pianos are, then you sit down, four people, you order a round of drinks, they bring them in the glasses, so they charge you for the drinks, the glasses. Well, they hold a check on you, you know. So when you say, "All right, we'll take our check," if they give you a credit card, you'd bring it to the cashier, they'd swipe it or do whatever they do with it, and you sign it. They had that, but mostly they'd throw a hundred-dollar bill down.

You know, four Hurricanes with the glasses, back then I think was \$15 or something. If you didn't want the glass, they'd give you back a buck-fifty. I mean, the whole thing was set up to sell glasses and stuff, which worked really well. I mean, they had ten different types and structures of glasses that people walked out with that they paid for, you know. I mean, the whole upstairs was packed with glasses from Mexico, and Sonny Oschner ended up buying the glass company in Mexico, so he was making the glasses, selling them at Pat O'Brien's, selling them to the people.

And the Hurricane was 4 ounces of amber rum, 2 ounces of orange Red Passion Mix, and 2 ounces of lemon juice, so it was an 8 ounce drink, put crushed ice in it, orange and a cherry, \$15, boom!

I mean, there were nights when I first started there, you know, I didn't know anybody, so, I mean, people knew that too. I'd tell them, "I don't know anybody." I didn't have people waiting for me at home. I didn't have to go home and take care of a kid or anything like that, you know. So one night, Sonny asked me—it was after the first or second Mardi Gras—he said, "Do you mind staying around, helping us after we close and everything?" I said, "Whatever you want. I'd be happy to."

Well, one night after I got done breaking down the front bar, we went out to the courtyard, and there were like eight or ten tables set up like you have in a lunchroom, where like eight people can sit on either side, you know, that big a table, fold-up tables, and they had 1's on one table, 5's on another, 10's, 20's, and 50's, and 100's, and all this from the main bar, the people from upstairs, the offices, the managers came downstairs, took off their jackets and everything, had a big bucket over there with Dixie Long Neck in it on ice, and he'd say, "Okay, you take the 1's, you take that." You'd go

[demonstrates],” count, you know. For like an hour straight everyone’s counting money and banding it, wrapping it, banding it. Then they come by and collect it [demonstrates]. Have a couple more beers, then you go to Johnny White’s.

When I first got there, I didn’t know anything about alcohol, and beer wasn’t really too flavorful because my taste of beer then was three-two, and I thought, “It’s got to be kind of the same. I don’t really want that,” you know. And one night this girl on the patio ordered a Banana Banshee, and it’s white crème de cocoa, banana liqueur, and cream, shake it up and put straight up, and I took a straw and put the straw in, [demonstrates]. “Oh,” I said, “man, that’s *delicious*.” [Nystrom Laughter]

So when, you know, you get off work at 5:00 in the morning, then we go to Johnny White’s, and all the bartenders are building it up, saying, “Give me a shot of Jägermeister and a Budweiser! Give me a shot of Jack and a Dixie. And what’ll you have?”

I said, “I’ll take a Banana Banshee.” [Laughter]

The guy’s like, “What?” I didn’t know. Man, I had like six of ‘em. I was like, “Oh, Jesus, this is—.” So I quit doing that, because it was really a funny thing for a long time, the Banana Banshee Kid. [Nystrom Laughter] So I started drinking a little more Budweiser, and I thought that was better. But anyways, that was fun.

And then one night we went out in the courtyard after work, and it was my first experience with crawfish. They had this same table set up, two of them, one here and one there, covered in newspaper, maybe 100, 150 pounds of hot steaming crawfish poured on it with corn and potatoes and everything, and the other table had crabs on it, and I thought, “Uh-oh. I knew this was going to happen sooner or later,” you know. I’m a meat-and-potatoes guy from the Midwest, you know. I mean, shrimp better be cooked

and in a salad or something, I thought. I didn't know. But anyways, I thought, "Well, I'll give it a shot," you know. Well, couple Dixie beers in, you know, you pop 'em, break the heads. I didn't want to suck the heads, but, I mean, you eat the little [demonstrates]. Man, that was pretty tasty. They take a little bit longer to eat, but they're like potato chips. And then when they showed me how to break apart the crab with the Dead Man's Fingers and everything, I was like of leery about all that, you know, before you cook it, telling me about all that, but once you got into it and picking around with it, I mean, it was delicious, you know. And we sat out there till a good 8:00 o'clock in the morning, just having a great time, you know.

So, I mean, the place was—everybody was really together. I mean, this guy Pete Davis was the head bartender, he must've been probably my age now. I'll never forget him, but, I mean, I was nineteen. I thought he was a giant, you know, because he ran the end of the bar where Sonny drank, he knew all the people. He had his name on a drink, Pete's Special. I thought, "Jesus Christ, I wonder if I'll ever get there," you know.

Well, one night, real busy, you know, and you take a bar spoon and you juke it up and down or you turn it upside town and mix it around or do this or whatever, and then you strain the drink. Sonny saw all that, I mean me doing that, and he said, "Scott," he said, "I want you to take a shaker glass, put some ice in it, put a splash of water in the bottom, take that shaker spoon, come and see me."

I said, "Oh, shit."

We went back to this little hallway behind the main bar, and he said, "I want you to see something." He put that spoon in there, put his fingers around it, keeping his eyes on my eyes all the time, and he started doing this [demonstrates], and that spoon started turning

with centripetal force, going around that glass, spinning that ice. He said, “Are you looking at that?”

I said, “I was looking at *you*.”

He said, “You look at *that*.”

I said, “That’s pretty cool.” [Laughter]

He said, “I don’t want you to come back in the bar until you can do that.”

[0:16:11.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm.

[0:16:12.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I said, “Oh, okay.” And I was like a kid that just got chopsticks, you know. I was, like, fumbling and it wouldn’t go around, nothing would move and everything, but all of a sudden, the bottom of the spoon caught the right angle and just started turning in my fingers and went around, and the more you move your arm up and down, turn the spoon around. You don’t have to turn the spoon around. If you go back and forth, the twist in the spoon makes it go around.

[0:16:38.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm.

[0:16:38.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I thought, “Look how clever that is,” you know. So I went down, knocked on the door, open up, the bar is *packed, packed*, and people are screaming. I said, “Sonny, come here! Come here! You know what? Watch.” And I was looking at him.

He was going, “Very good. Now get in there and start selling some drinks,” you know. And he took time out because he saw something that he didn’t like, you know. I thought that was kind of impressive.

And they had an opportunity there, it was called Miss POB, which stood for Miss Pat O’Brien’s, but really the inside joke was “Miss Pretty Old Butt,” right? So the contest was going to be twelve young ladies, they’re going to stop selling drinks, and they’re going to help the ladies up on Sonny’s end of the bar, and they individually walk up and down the bar and do a little twist or whatever they want to do, and they’re going to get graded and rated, and there’s going to be a winner. And they had “Pistol Pete” Maravich in a tuxedo as a judge, and they had—I can’t think of this other guy’s name. He was a sports announcer. I can’t think of his name, but he was a big-time sports—he was in a tuxedo and Sonny was in a tuxedo.

So all these girls are getting up there. They stopped the drinks, you know, and all the bartenders are sitting back, watching. They go, “That’s a nice one.” Everyone’s eyeing and judging everything. When that girl gets down, now sell drinks. Okay, boom, boom, boom.

“Now we have Miss—.” Oh, okay. Well, this girl got up there, I think she was number six or whatever, but anyways, she got up there. I looked at the other guy and said, “I bet

you fifty bucks that's the winner right there. Fifty bucks." And, sure enough, that girl won, right? So I won some money.

The girl was *gorgeous*. So, anyways, she was the young lady that worked in the Quarter, bartender, you know. I knew who she was; I just never knew—I never thought I'd see her in that kind of situation, you know. So I'd go in to where she worked at, and I'd say, "Can I get a Coke?" you know. She'd give me a Coke. I'd give her \$10. She'd come back. I'd say, "No, that's all right," you know. I did that all the time. [Laughter]

Well, make a long story short, about eight years—no, about ten years later, I ended up marrying her, so we've been married for thirty-three years.

[0:18:54.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** That's great.

[0:18:55.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** So she was the winner of the Miss POB contest. [Nystrom Laughter] She still has the plaque at home and everything, you know. But it was a fun place to work.

Then I left there and I thought, being a bartender there five years, I thought the world is my oyster, you know. I can go out and get another job. I mean, you get so busy so long, I mean, I thought, "God, there's got to be a place you can work where you can make good money and you're not slammed all night."

Well, anyways, this friend of mine called me up, Johnny Lewis and he was working—I don't know if you ever heard about Lucky Pierre's?

[0:19:30.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Mm-hmm.

[0:19:30.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Lucky Pierre's was on Bourbon Street. It was open from 11:00 at night to 7:00 in the morning, and it was a "house of ill repute." Frankie Ford used to be the piano player there. I don't know if you remember "Oo-ee, sea cruise, take me on a sea cruise, baby." So, anyways, they said they needed a bartender. Well, at that time, I was seeing a young lady, and her mother was the vice president of Lykes, the shipping corporation, and I thought with Pat O'Brien's, I thought—she said, "Do you want to go offshore, get your papers and everything? Get you a job on a ship and everything. They make *really* good money."

I thought, "Shit, yeah," you know. I didn't know. South America, even New York? I mean, that'd be fun, you know?

So we went down to have lunch with her up in the Lykes building where her office was, the vice president's office. She said, "Well, let's go to lunch." She walked over to these doors and opened up, and there's a beautiful table set for three, I mean really nice, like a dining room, you know. And this guy came in and brought in like, you know, I don't know, a really good chicken salad or whatever it was, it was delicious, right there overlooking the river and everything. And she says, "Well, I got you all set up. You're going to be on this ship. You leave in two weeks. Your papers should come in. You're going to get your seaman's papers," this and that.

I said, “Oh, cool!”

Well, then a day later, this guy Johnny Lewis called me up. He said, “Look, we’re looking for a bartender at Lucky Pierre’s.”

Well, I knew at that time Lucky Pierre’s was like a really hot spot, you know. I said, “Really?”

He says, “Yeah, man, it’s really a good job. You work up in the front with Sinto and Frankie Ford two nights, and then you got the back patio where the food is, the hookers are, money is being transferred, I mean everything. It’s wild,” he said, “but you make a lot of money.”

I says, “Oh, shit!” Well, I did that. [Laughter] The other one sounded like a lot of work, you know? [Laughter]

So when I went down to get the job, he had told the guy about me and everything, and this guy Lucien was the general manager, whoever, and we were talking and everything, and he says, “I want you to know something about this place.”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “This is the only place you’re ever going to work in your life where the customer’s never right.” He said, “We do not have beer here. They’re going to ask you for beer all the time. If you get tired of them asking, show ‘em the door. If they’re asking you where the hookers are, you say, ‘I don’t know nothing.’ You never say anything about the girls. Everybody in there’s a customer. Nobody’s working in there. You understand me?”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “The customer’s never right.”

And there were times that people'd be in there, "Give me a Budweiser."

"We don't have Budweiser."

"Well, give me a Miller Lite, then."

"We don't have beer."

"Well, give me a draft, then."

"We don't have beer."

"Oh, fuck. Well, give me a gin and tonic."

Then they ask you about girls and everything, and they're loaded, it's 3:00 in the morning, you know. There's a lot of things happening around there. Girls are mingling, and it's fun, you know. And it got to the point one time I told this guy, I said, "Hey, you gotta get out of here, man."

He said, "What are you talkin' about?"

I took his drink and I poured it out on the other side of the bar right by his chair. I said, "You know what that means? Get the fuck outta here, asshole!" It was like the place was—it wasn't like some manager was going to come along and say, "You can't talk to him that way." [Laughter]

Well, then I saw two shootings in there by Jan Porretto, police officer. He killed a guy that was from ...a Court of Two Sisters waiter. I don't know what the altercation—I don't know what it was about, but he killed a guy, shot him. And I saw another shooting. I can't remember what that was about.

But then they started messin' with me, Jan Porretto and this other cop, because they were—I don't know. They were in trouble. They were troublemakers. They were dirty cops for sure.

[0:23:19.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** This was like the late [19]70s?

[0:23:21.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, late [19]70s. And they started messin' with me, like they didn't want to pay their checks and stuff. They'd come up and order drinks, then they'd order a little food and everything. Then they'd come over and they'd go, "Thanks a lot." And I go, "Whoa, whoa, whoa!" I mean, I don't want to pay for it, and Lucien sure isn't going to say, "Oh, yeah, you can do that." No, no, no. The money was the main thing, you know.

So it got to be a problem, and there's this one guy in there, Danny McMullan, he was a lieutenant of internal affairs, and he would come in there pretty often, but as a very nice, quiet, polite guy, right? He wasn't in there hustling girls or anything like that. Well, I said, "Danny, can I talk to you for a minute?" I told him, I said, "You know those guys Jan Porretto and them?" I said, "They come in here all the time, they try to beat me for the check, they don't want to tip me." I said, "What's the deal with them?"

He goes, "I'll take care of it."

So one night I'm in there and things happen, and Jan Porretto and his partner are doing the same shit right by the cash register, arguing with me about shit, and right around the corner on the other side, where there was like an elevated section where you can eat and everything, Danny McMullan's face came from around the post, and he went [demonstrates] like that to those two guys. For fifteen minutes, they were back in there.

When they left from back in there, they came over, they put money in the bar, looked at me, turned around, and left. I said, “Man, thanks a lot.” I said, “They were really a problem.”

He said, “Well, just keep your eyes open.” You know, I don’t know what that meant, but I was nervous leaving sometimes, you know, or trying to get home, thinking they’d pick me up. I didn’t know. But that was really an interesting place to work, you know.

[0:25:04.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, because that kind of stuff’s not unheard of.

[0:25:05.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** It was not unheard of at all, no. It was not unheard of. New Orleans was a very—the police force was very corrupt, *very* corrupt. I mean, I knew—I’m not going to—I sold cocaine to police officers that said, “No problem. Thanks a lot,” you know. [Laughter] So, I mean, it was easy. You knew a lot of the police officers. I would go see that girl, my wife Jody, when she was working at different places, I knew all the cops that were there, like Déjà Vu and all these other places, stuff like that. So, I mean, it wasn’t unusual to be leery about where the police were, ‘gin ya or for ya. So, anyways, I worked there for a while, almost three years, and then this one guy used to come in there, Scott somebody, can’t remember his name, but anyways, he was the maître d’ at the Court of Two Sisters. And it got kind of scary at Lucky Pierre’s, and he asked me if I wanted to be his assistant. I thought, “Oh, that sounds kind of interesting.”

He said, “It’s easy. All we have to do is seat a couple of people,” blah, blah, blah, “and they’ll give you this much money. You’ll make some tips. It’s easy.”

I said, “Oh, okay.”

So, first couple weeks, it was kind of easy, but then he never showed up one night, so who does his job? The assistant, right? [Nystrom Laughter] So I was like [demonstrates]. So I ended up being maître d’ for like three years at the Court of Two Sisters, and that was a really eye-opening situation.

[0:26:29.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** So that had to be quite an education, right?

[0:26:31.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, because they could seat like 150 people downstairs and they had two or three rooms upstairs they sat in, too, when they’re busy, you know.

[0:26:39.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** So by this point, you’re getting into your early thirties, right?

[0:26:41.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, yeah.

[0:26:44.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Which is young for a maître d’ of a place like that, right?

[0:26:47.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, considering I wasn't hired as a maître d'. They didn't come out and say—he needed an assistant, so when he didn't come in, he never came back.

[0:26:59.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** What was his name?

[0:26:59.5]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I can't remember his last name. His first name was Scott. I can't remember his last name. But he was a real nice guy. I can't remember what happened to him, but he left. I think he left the city.

But anyways, I filled in, filled in, and Jay Fein, who was the father of now the two Fein brothers that have the place, and the grandsons, he was like, "All right, you're it," you know, because I had a pretty good handle on how to seat people. That wasn't any big deal. If there was a table open, you know, put 'em down, you know? That seemed like no problem. Keeping an eye on the waiters I had a problem with, because the only experience I really had with restaurants was going to eat at 'em, you know? So then, you know, you learn that some of these guys aren't really doing what's good for the restaurant, let alone the customer, so that was kind of tricky.

And then I took on an assistant that was a waiter there for a long time, and he was just the sharpest guy. He was so smart about stuff and real clever and real fast. I mean, if you said, "I need a ten-top right away," "I'll be right back."

And you come back in ten minutes, he goes, “It’s set and ready. Where you want to put ‘em?”

It’s like, “How’d you do that?”

He goes, “I got it. Don’t worry.” I started watching *him*, you know?

[0:28:12.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** So when you say what kind of things that waiters are doing that aren’t good for them or for the customer?

[0:28:17.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, they sit in the back. They gum around or, you know, they don’t pay attention to table maintenance, they don’t clear off glasses, they don’t pour water. They try and put desserts down and then bus tables around it, their entrees. I mean, some of it was just so shoemaker, it was almost—should’ve been common knowledge. You can’t do that, you know?

One time I had a four-top, and they used to serve a Chateaubriand on a wooden carving board, which is filet of beef with vegetables and Béarnaise sauce or Marchand du Vin. So our picture was the filet on one end, with the vegetables, a little Béarnaise sauce or whatever, served nice, looked nice, you know. Well, the four-top all ordered filet mignon.

Well, I’m at the front door, and the guy comes and says, “I want to talk to you!”

I said, “Yes, sir, what’s the problem?”

He goes, “Come on. I want you to see this. What kind of place you runnin’ here?”

“What’s going on?” I’m walking this half a block to get to his table because he’s all in the back. I’m going, “Jesus Christ.” And I get there, and each dish is differently prepared. One has the filet on this side with potatoes, the other has the filet in the middle and mashed potatoes around it. Each one is literally different. I went, “Oh!” I said, “Give me a moment.”

I went back to the kitchen. I said, “What the hell are you guys doin’, man?” I says, “These people out there are having a *fit*.”

The guy said, “Well, I started it, but stomach is so..., so Joe finished this part, and he said he had to go do something, and Ricky went over and did that, and the food had to go out.” [Nystrom Laughter]

I went, “Oh, Jesus.”

So I went back to that table, I said, “Well, sir, I spoke with the chef, and he realized you all were having the same thing, so he wanted to personalize each one for each individual.”

And the guy went, “Oh! Oh-hoh! See, I told you it wasn’t a problem.”

I went, “Hope you enjoy your dinner.” [Laughter]

I went back and went, “Jesus, don’t do that again.” [Laughter]

[0:28:17.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** That’s great. So your assistant came in. I guess you learned a lot about how tables are supposed to be waited by watching them.

[0:30:36.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right, right. He was really sharp. He was a *really* sharp young guy. We were pretty much the same age, but, I mean, back then we were young, you know.

And my brother—well, I'll tell you something kind of funny. When I was at Lucky Pierre's, we were in need of a bus person, basically, you know, and they asked me, they said, "You know anybody who wants to be a bus?"

And I thought, "Hmm. I've got a brother in Minnesota. Let me think about this."

So I called him up, and he's four years younger than I am. I guess he was like eighteen or nineteen then when I called him. And I said, "Hey, you want to come to New Orleans and work down here and everything like that? I'll put you up and stuff, and you can work where I'm working." I says, "You'll make a lot of money, have a good time."

Anyways, he bought it. He said, "Yeah, I'll do that."

So I said, "All right." So I got him the airplane ticket, and I went to pick him up. I think it was like 9:30 at night or something, at Moisant Airport. I had to borrow a car to do it, because I didn't have a car. I lived in the French Quarter. And I went to pick him up, and we're coming back in the French Quarter, and he says, "Well, tell me about this stupid job I'm supposed to do."

So I was telling him about, you know, busing and helping and getting ice and stuff like that. He goes, "Oh, I guess I could do that. Well, when do I start?"

I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, in the back seat there's some black pants and a white shirt. We're starting in about a half hour."

He goes, "What are you talkin' about?" [Nystrom Laughter]

I said, "We work from 11:00 to 7:00 in the morning."

He goes, “Oh, my god.” He said, “I’m so tired.”

I said, “Well, you’ll pick up when we get there. You’ll see what I’m talking about.”

So he jumped in the back seat, put on the black pants, white shirt and everything. I went and parked the car. We walked to Lucky Pierre’s, got there around 10:30, introduced him to everybody. The cook in the kitchen, Miss Jamie, she was a black lady, she was just the sweetest lady in the whole world, she just took him right under her wing. She said, “Don’t worry about a thing, darlin’.” She said, “I’m gonna walk you through all this. You’re gonna be fine.”

And, of course, the first night, there’s action in that place. I mean, sometimes it doesn’t look visible, but I knew the girls that were talking to guys that had money, that wanted to do something that they were waiting for other guys to come to get—you know, the whole thing was just like a soap opera.

So my brother was, you know, serving people and stuff like that, and he got the hang of it. He did real good. He was getting real homesick, you know, like I guess he had a kind of a girlfriend, he wasn’t sure if he really liked this lifestyle and all this stuff. And I told that to Miss Linda, who was like at that time considered the matriarch of the property, you know. If any new people came in there to work as women, they had to go through Miss Linda to get the okay to stay in there, basically. Otherwise, there were cat fights. So Miss Linda said, “Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it. I’ll make him feel at home.”

So one night, she and about three other girls—I can’t remember who they were—took him. “Your brother’s coming with us.” I didn’t see ‘em for three days, three days.

When he came back, he had the biggest shit-eatin’ grin on his face. [Nystrom Laughter]

He was happy as a lark. He said, “I love this town. We’re staying,” you know. I mean, I

don't know what they did, and I didn't want to know, but I knew that they convinced him that it would be a lot better to stay here in 70-degree weather than to stay up there in 20-below-zero weather. [Nystrom Laughter] So that worked out for him.

Well, he got tired of that and went to Brennan's Restaurant. He got a job at Brennan's, which is a nice, very good place to work back then, you know. It was like—I don't know if they gave [Michelin] stars back then, but it was very popular, and they had twelve dining rooms. They could seat like 700 people at one time, easy. So he would work at Brennan's, and I was at the Court of Two Sisters, and we would compare notes. I'd say, "Well, how many did you do tonight?"

He said, "We did 450."

I said, "Yeah, I did 475. I'm so tired," you know.

So it was fun doing that, but then when I left Court of Two Sisters, I got a job at Brennan's as a captain in the dining room. I'd never been a captain or anything, or a waiter, really. I was a stupid maître d' over there, and I'd never done *that* before.

[Laughter] But I was working with my brother, and we worked together for almost forty years, really. He passed away like three years ago.

[0:34:44.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh, wow.

[0:34:46.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** So I was real sad. We were working at Arnaud's, and he was up against some glasses with his head down. I said, "You all right?"

He said, “Oh, just short of breath and everything.”

I said, “All right, I’ll be right—.” Because I was doing paperwork. I said, “Let me go turn this in. I’ll be right back. We’ll get outta here.” And I turned around, I opened up the door to the office, I heard something, I looked back around, he was on the ground. His lips were blue, and he was chalk-white. Deader than a doornail.

[0:35:09.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** What was his name?

[0:35:10.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Jeff. Jeff [Jeffrey J.] Harrington.

And so anyways, I started working at Brennan’s, and he was there and we started to team up, so I was a captain in the main dining room. They call it the small side because it’s not close to the windows or close to the patio. So I was on the small side and other people were on the big side, and we worked doubles, you know. We’d work breakfast, big Sundays, you know. It wasn’t unusual to have 1,000 people on the book for Sunday morning. Mother’s Day, might be 1,200 or 13. You know, you do another 400 at night with a private party thrown on you for 50 people up in the Red Room, with two different kinds of wine, champagne at the end, and after-dinner drinks, and they want to do cocktails and cigars outside afterwards, I mean, I was there twenty-four years at Brennan’s, so we made real good money. Two of the years we paid taxes on \$72,000, my brother and I, as waiters, so, I mean, that helped me with my Social Security there, and *many* years, more than a handful, it was 60,000 or more.

[0:36:19.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** And this is in the [19]80s, early [19]80s?

[0:36:21.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** [19]80s, right, right.

[0:36:22.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So this was, of course, after the split.

[0:36:27.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, the split. Are you referring to—

[0:36:30.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** The '73 split.

[0:36:31.8]

**Scott Harrington:** I worked for the three sons, “Pip,” Jimmy, and Teddy. So those are the sons of Owen Brennan, Sr., who originated the restaurant. His sister, Ella Brennan, went to do Commander’s Palace, and then her kids and cousins and, you know, Dickie Brennan’s Steakhouse and all these guys, you know, but Pip, Jimmy, and Teddy were the three sons. Pip was an office guy. He liked to stay in the office. If he wasn’t in the office, he’d come in for dinner with his wife. Jimmy, you hardly ever saw him because he liked

to stay by the house and ride around in his cars and have—I don't know what he did, you know. And Teddy was always there. Teddy was really cool. I mean, I worked at private—he had private parties all the time. My brother and I worked them all the time. We did parties at their homes and stuff like that, Christmases and shit like that, you know.

One big private party we were doing, one of the captains came up to me, David Canning, he said, “Hey, Scott, do you have any weed or can you get any weed or anything like that?”

I said, “Right now?” I said, “Look at me! I'm busy, man. What're you talkin' about?”

[whispers] “Teddy wants some weed.”

I said, “Oh.” I said, “Well, I could probably find something.”

“Go! Just go! Just leave the building. Go get it. I don't care what it takes, how much it is.

We'll pay you back. Just go get it.”

Well, fortunately, I knew where I could put my hands on it. [Laughter]

[0:37:54.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** Imagine. [Laughter]

[0:37:54.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah. And I came back with it, and, sure enough, boom [snaps fingers]! Paid, no problem. Boom! No problem leaving. Boom! Gave it to Teddy. Boom! Twenty minutes later, three of his friends and everything back by the wine room, you got to go through this door and it's kind of open space, then you go into the wine cellar, and

they're all back there [demonstrates]. I got so pissed off, they're all getting buzzed and drinking like wine, a thousand-dollar bottle of wine and everything. They had a whole wine cellar upstairs that was closed off to the public, that was all their own private stock, you know. So Teddy was pretty cool, you know.

They had a guy, Harold Toomer, was a server there, and he was an old black guy but a good waiter, and he had one of the biggest stations in the house, and it wasn't uncommon for Harold to have a drink or two throughout the night, you know, and Teddy knew it, you know. It was like the Sugar Bowl or something, and Teddy would have a little powwow and everything, give the old pep talk and everything, and he looked over and told the bartender—I can't remember what his name was, but he said, "Give me a double JB on the rocks." And the guy went around the bar, got him a double JB, came back, said, "Here, Harold, don't get started, but this is the beginning. You do a good job, there'll be more at the end." And he gave a [demonstrates], Harold did that, he said, "All right, let's go get 'em." [Laughter] I mean, we did four or five turns in the main dining room, on the terrace, and upstairs.

[0:39:13.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** And for a restaurant like that, it's a lot.

[0:39:14.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** When you're flaming desserts and you've got a three- and four-course dinner, it's a lot. And back then we didn't have computers; we had checks. So my brother and I, I'd have a table of ten, maybe a twelve here, and my brother'd have a six,

an eight, maybe a four there, and like with ten, you'd have to write down six filets, two rare, two medium rare, three—and then you had to write down sauce on the side on one, on this check like this [demonstrates], you know, and just scribble all this stuff on there, and we'd give it to this expediter in the window, Harry Duncan, who was like—I can't remember what Native tribe he was from, but he was an Indian black guy, right? Big guy too. He had hands like basketballs, and he had a real deep voice, but he was the gentlest guy in the world. And you'd go, "Here, Harry, here's this check for that..."

He'd go "[unclear, speaking very fast]" I mean, he read everybody's ticket right down the line, you know. You'd get into your line and everything, you'd put down your last appetizer, you know. I said to my brother, "Go get those salads, man. Get in line and get those salads," because if you putz around and say, "I'm gonna go have a smoke. I just put down—," or something like that, you get another room in front of you getting salads, you know. That puts you behind, you know. And then you're behind them to get entrees, and the whole point is to turn the table. Don't play around with these people, you know. I mean, we rocked and rolled that place. We were really good, my brother and I, I have to say, you know. We got excellent parties, excellent reviews, excellent tips. We had excellent call parties. And we had a lot of fun.

Harry Duncan and the black guys in the kitchen liked us because we all played around. We'd go out after work and play cards at bars or buy 'em drinks. Harry Duncan and his friends took my brother and I up to the black bars on Orleans Avenue. Five in the morning, 3:00 in the morning, we're in there shooting pool, and people are like, "Who are those white dudes over there, Harry?"

"Don't worry about them. They're with me."

“Oh, okay, Harry.” But we’d sit there and have a ball, you know.

But it was a lot of fun, you know, handwritten checks and everything, and I think it was Sugar Bowl that they introduced the micros.

[0:41:32.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, the first point of sale.

[0:41:33.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right, right.

[0:41:35.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** About what year was that?

[0:41:36.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Ah, jeez, had to be eighty-something. I don’t know what it was, but I know it was—I think it was Sugar Bowl or New Year’s Eve, one of the two. It was a big night, and they said, “This is what you do. You push the button and you push ‘steak’ and then you push ‘rare.’” They showed you that, you know, and then you had a chance to play around with it. They said, “We’re gonna open in twenty minutes.”

It’s like, “Oh, Jesus,” you know. You’ve got these large tables set up and everything. You know, you had to do seat numbers and everything, which you did anyways. You just weren’t doing it on your paper; you were doing it on the computer. But you had to have it on the paper anyways. For a lot of people, it was complicated, but I kind of caught on

right away. But the kitchen had a hard time with it, too, you know. But that was interesting. That was fun.

And then we were working—we'd work in the main dining room, my brother and I, and then we'd get parties that night and work upstairs. Well, I realized we're forgetting soups.

"I need another salad" or something. So this is before cell phones. I thought, "Walkie-talkies." So I got a set of walkie-talkies, so my brother had one and I had one. When you'd hear this [demonstrates], you'd go, "What?"

I said, "We need two more turtle soups, and don't forget those salads. Put that dressing on the side."

"All right!" [Laughter] He'd be screaming at me, you know.

[demonstrates] "We need—while you're down there, get two Jack-and-Cokes. Bring 'em up with you."

"All right!"

Well, the kitchen, you could hear everything in the kitchen, because people are flying around, grabbing bowls and putting bread in the oven and calling out tables. I'm [demonstrates]. "What? What?" He was trying to hustle salads. [Laughter] But it was interesting. People talk about, God, that's pretty clever. Even the general manager, Kathy Abernathy [phonetic], thought, "That's a pretty good idea, you know."

But then shortly after that, I mean shortly, cell phones kind of came to a fact, you know, and that was the kind of thing, just call me on my phone, and then people said, "Well, we don't want everyone on the phone all the time because we don't know if you're talking to your girlfriend or doing a dope deal or trying to get turtle soup for upstairs." You know what I'm saying? We quit using them or something, but, I don't know, it didn't last a

long, long time, but it lasted long enough to make an impression on everybody, let's put it that way.

And at Brennan's, we were very close to the family, you know, Christmas parties and stuff. My brother and I painted the inside of Brennan's three times when we were there. The summertime would be slow, so we always asked, "Miss Kathy, is there anything we can do around here to make some extra money?"

She goes, "Do you want to paint the Gold Room?"

Said, "Sure!"

So they'd buy the paint and stuff, and we'd go there at 8:00 in the morning when they open up. Instead of being in uniform, being in jeans and stuff, and we'd go upstairs. People'd be coming in down there. We'd be painting, and someone would come up and go, "Miss Kathy wants to know what ya'll want for lunch." [Laughter] They'd go downstairs and make us a nice lunch and bring it up, and then pay us money? I said, "This is great, man." We had a little radio up there. We'd go outside on the balcony. It wasn't glassed in then. We'd smoke a joint and everything. We had a ball, you know. But we did it three times while we were there, every room. That was kind of fun.

And then—

[0:44:37.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** And you're still living in the Quarter at the time?

[0:44:38.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, yeah, definitely, yeah, living in the Quarter, of course. And then I think it was 1996 or '98, Kathy Abernathy, the general manager, wrote a letter to the Restaurant Association of Louisiana and entered my name as being Restaurant Employee of the Year. They have a big like a conference once a year. This time it was in Lafayette. So they awarded me Restaurant Employee of the Year, the Restaurant Association of Louisiana, so I had to go to Lafayette to get the award, so the Brennans gave me \$500 in cash, got me a room at this hotel in Lafayette paid for. All I had to do is get down there, you know. I brought a little suit with me, my wife and everything. We were there one night, had a really nice time, went out for dinner. The next night was the big affair, and there was a big ballroom with tables of twelve, round tables all over the ballroom. Melinda Schwegmann was the lieutenant governor; she was there. And I can't remember who else. But anyways, they were calling out, you know, Housekeeper of the Year, you know. I don't want to be derogatory, but Hispanic name, you know. And Bartender of the Year from someplace, and all this stuff. Well, they called Restaurant Employee of the Year, my name, and I went up to the stage and got a nice trophy and a picture with ol' Melinda and everything like that. We stayed the night and everything. It was fun, you know.

[0:46:10.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

[0:46:10.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I thought, “Well, that was really nice,” because the letter had to be pretty nice.

[0:46:14.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

[0:46:15.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Because, you know, I did a lot of work for the restaurant, painting and stuff, and I knew a lot about the wines they had, and very familiar with the kitchen. I came up with this thing called Special Apps, where you have an oyster tray that has six different indentations in it that they put the oysters on, put it in the oven to bake. Well, I asked Harry one time, I said, “Hey, Harry.” I said, “Instead of putting all [Oysters] Rockefeller on there, can you put a Rockefeller, Casino, and a Bienville, and put a buster crab, maybe Buster Béarnaise?”

And he said, “Oh, yeah, I know, and frog legs.”

I said, “Yeah, and frog legs.” So I called them Special Apps, you know. So he’d make these, you know, because I thought, “This is going to be a good table. I’m going to see if they want that.” Anyways, that was really a big hit with people, and Harry would—you know, he’d go, “You motherfuck—,” because they’re busy, you know, and I got him—because oysters take *x* amount of time, buster crabs, gotta do that. Someone’s deep-frying the frog legs. Then you got to put it all on the thing, put a lemon on it, make it look nice, and give it to the stupid waiter that’s going to make \$100 on it, you know. [Laughter]

But, I mean, they liked all that, so it must have been a really nice letter that she wrote. I never read the letter, but, I mean, obviously it was nice, because I won something.

[0:47:29.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:47:30.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I'm giving something. So then a couple years after that, or maybe a year after that, it was the Sugar Bowl, and my brother and I were in the L Room, which all the tables were lined up lengthwise because they're all tens, twelves, or whatever, and I had this table of twelve, and two people were adults, ten kids. I'm thinking, "Goddamn." You know, everyone's out there drinking Bloody Marys, Mimosas, ordering wine, full breakfasts and everything, and I got these scrawny little brats in here eating chips and whatever, you know. Well, I didn't treat it that way. But the lady asked me, said, "Do you serve Pepsi-Cola products?"

I said, "No, ma'am, we serve Coca-Cola products."

She goes, "Oh, Jesus."

I said, "Just a minute. One second, ma'am."

I went, "Jeff, come here! Come here!"

He goes, "What?"

"Go around the corner. Here's some money, here's twenty bucks. Get as much Pepsi-Cola products as you can get in liters. I don't care what you get, just as long as it's Pepsi."

“What am I doin’?”

“Just do it. I’ll watch your table for you. Just go get it.”

So he went out the back door, went around the corner to get it, and I set up a tray with glasses, a wine bucket with ice in it, and on top of a tabletop that’s on the tray, brought everything out with, like, four liters of Pepsi products right there. And the lady went, “Wow!” She said, “That’s awesome. My husband is the district manager for Pepsi-Cola, and I’m so happy that you have—.”

I says, “No problem, ma’am. We aim to serve,” you know.

Well, unbeknownst to me, they had a contest for Sweet’N Low, and she wrote the Sweet’N Low people and told them what happened at Brennan’s and how impressed she was with the service. So I got notification that I won second place in the Sweet’N Low contest out of 3,000 people nationwide!

[0:49:21.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** That’s a big deal!

[0:49:21.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right! I thought, “Wow, that was really nice of that lady.” And I showed my brother. I said, “Look! Remember that lady?”

He goes, “Yeah, yeah.”

I said, “Look what happened.”

He says, “I’m the one that went and got the fuckin’ Pepsi. How come your name gets put—?” [Laughter]

I said, “Well, I didn’t know this was going to happen. I thought I was just trying to be nice, you know. I didn’t ask her to write any stupid letter.”

So he was a little frustrated with that.

They also gave me money—they didn’t send me anyplace to pick anything up, but they sent a certificate to my house, Sweet’N Low Contest, blah, blah, blah, “You’re second runner-up.” But the food guy, Fitzmorris or—

[0:50:00.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Tom.

[0:50:02.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Tom Fitzmorris. Well, he’s always had that radio show, you know. So he called up Brennan’s and told Brennan’s he wanted me to come on the radio show for an interview, you know, and the chef came downstairs from the office, he goes, “Scott Scott, I wanna talk to you.” That’s how he talked, you know.

I said, “What?”

He goes, “Tom Fitzmorris wants you on the radio. I’m hesitant, but I guess you have to go.”

I said, “Why are you hesitant, Chef?”

“I’m afraid you’re going to say something stupid.” [Laughter]

I said, “I won’t say anything stupid, Chef. I promise.”

So my brother came with me, and my sister was here in town, so she came with me, and they sat in this room with the glass behind, and I sat in the thing with the headphones on,

talking to Tom. I was telling him what I did and everything, or what we did. I brought my brother's name up three times, you know. And I said, "Yeah, it was really fun. We're always busy, the food's so good there. I love working there," all this, in case the chef's listening, you know.

[0:50:58.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah.

[0:50:58.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** And then he said, "Well, you know who won first place and why?"

I said, "No, as a matter of fact, I never did hear who won first or why."

He said, "Well, it was a Miss—," and he said some name. He said, "She's from—." I think up north someplace.

I said, "What did she do?"

He said, "Well, it says here that she was very cute and had a very perky attitude."

I said, "Well, I can see there's always room for improvement." I didn't know what to say to that, you know. [Laughter]

But those are two things that happened that don't happen to a lot of people in the service industry, you know.

[0:51:29.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah. That kind of recognition.

[0:51:29.5]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right.

[0:51:30.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:51:30.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right, you know. So that was really a fun place to work. The period of time when they were having problems financially at the end was really difficult for everybody that had been there a long time. A lot of people I worked with that were there twenty years was like a short time. You know what I mean? There was like Sergio and Mario and they call them the Cucaracha Brothers that worked there. They worked there thirty and forty years, you know, from the late [19]50s and [19]60s and everything like that. They were like longtime people, man.

And everybody was like family. When I worked there, I worked with my brother. Then my wife was a bartender who worked around the city and everything. Well, she got a job there working upstairs in the service bar, pumping drinks on Sunday, making like 150 bucks in one day in this little bar because they split tips and everything, and she worked there. And my brother-in-law, his wife was going to, I think, Loyola. I'm not sure. Tulane or Loyola, one of the two. And he was a nurse, not an emergency nurse yet, but he was a nurse at the hospital, but he worked there on the weekends because they were busy. So I had half my family working there, you know, at one time.

My wife kind of liked it because we'd get up in the morning and—see, the place opened—you were supposed to be there at 7:00, then they opened at 8:00, and then you worked breakfast and then you'd get a break. Most people went home, but my brother and I would work a party at night or stay. So my wife and I would get up in the French Quarter and we'd leave like around 6:00. She'd say, "Why do we have to leave so early?" I said, "We gotta get there early, honey." I said, "Silverware's hard to find. You gotta find silverware. You gotta have glasses. You gotta make sure you have wine buckets, make sure you got water pitchers." Because they had these gueridons where stuff was set up, and as you got closer to the main dining room, everything was there. The further away you got in different rooms, you wouldn't have two coffee pots. You might have a teapot. You wouldn't have two water pitchers. You might have to go find something. You know, you're missing stuff, you know. So by the time they start seating your room, that period of time you're downstairs looking for the stuff that people aren't using right then, and take it upstairs. You know, they were short on equipment, seems like. Silverware was a big problem all the time.

[0:53:50.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm.

[0:53:51.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** But, I mean, it wasn't unusual to take a setting off a table, wrap it up, and just while you walk away, stick it in your pocket, you know. I mean, sometimes our pants were hanging down like they do like the homies, you know, because we have so

much silverware in it, you know. Sergio'd take the silverware and stick it in a wine bucket and put ice on it. [Nystrom Laughter]

[0:54:10.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** And this was silverware somebody else had rolled, right?

[0:54:12.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, yeah.

[0:54:14.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:54:15.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, one time it was on Mother's Day, and that was like one of the biggest days there. My brother and I worked day and night, but the day before Mother's Day, we worked that night and we had a party, and we had a really good party, and the guy that was working the broiler was named Homer. He was really a cool guy, not because he gave us stuff, but he was really a nice guy. He had sleep apnea, and sometimes you go [demonstrates]. "Homer, how's that thing?" He'd be over there [demonstrates]. "Homer! Homer!"

"It's almost done."

You're like, "Wake up, man!" But he would give us red beans and rice and take a filet and chop it up and put it underneath red beans so when you'd walk out the kitchen, it

looked like red beans and rice. When you got to your station, you go, “Oh, filet mignon! Very nice.” [Nystrom Laughter]

I asked Homer, I said, “Homer—.” Because they had lockers in the stairwell going up the back steps. I said, “Homer, can I use your key tonight and put some silverware in that locker for tomorrow? They’re going to be busy, man.” I said, “I don’t want to be left with—.”

“Oh, I guess so.”

So I told my brother, I said, “Go around and find *all* the silver you can. If it’s not on a table, find it, bring it. We’re gonna roll it.”

So we rolled up silverware before we left, and his locker, from the floor to like almost—I mean almost—it was like four across, four down, four across, four down. It was like perfectly rolled. When you opened it up, it was like, “Oh, perfect!”

So we were working this room called the Chanteclair Room. It was the furthest-back room in the whole place. Tommy Romie was the maître d’, and he said, “I’m gonna set you guys first, because I know you’re gonna turn the tables, but, I mean, you gotta be ready.”

I said, “Oh, no problem,” you know.

So they sat us. We did a first turn like at 8:15. People were in the chairs. We were having drinks for them and everything. So we were rolling, you know. And when they got up and left, my brother’s clearing the room, I went back, had the key, took out the silver, laid that stuff down. “Tommy, we’re ready!”

“Really?”

I said, “Yeah.”

“Right this way, folks,” you know. All the time people waiting for tables. They’re not going to sit there and go [unclear]. No, they were waiting. And we were doing that all day, and people were like, “God, how are you guys finding all this silverware?”

Well, on the last turn—

[Recording ends at 0:56:28.7].

[Begin File 2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** My brother was cleaning stuff up, I went out in the back, opened up the locker, pull it open. I looked around. Tommy’s eyes were on my eyes. He looked at the camera, and he said, “You asshole, man.” He knew right then he had that all the way through. [Laughter] Said, “All day we been looking for silverware. You guys had it all up here.”

I said, “We turned tables for you, didn’t we?”

[0:00:22.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** But management never reacted to that and said, “Hey, man, we should just get more silverware”?

[0:00:25.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, they did sometimes, but the thing was, people were taking it home. They had the worst dish crew. It wasn’t unusual for police to come in once a week

or once a month to arrest one of the dish crew for something, a warrant or robbery or something. And all the waiters would make deals with them. “Here’s ten dollars right now in the morning. I’m going to give you more in the afternoon, and I’ll pay you at the end. But hold that silverware for me.”

“Okay.”

I go in there, “Here’s ten dollars,” a little baggie of smoke. I said, “Now, I want the silverware.”

“Okay.” [Laughter]

You know, there’s problems all the time. Then the Brennans even tried putting these things on the trash cans that were metal collectors, so if you dumped your tray, and they thought that people had silverware and trash and everything on the tray and would just dump it, say, “To hell with it,” and walk away. And the metal collectors would “ding, ding, ding, ding.” They’d collect knives or something and take it off. And sometimes they thought the dishwashers were throwing it away because they got tired of doing it, you know. At the end of the night or the end of the day, they’d just dump it in the thing.

“Let’s get outta here.” I don’t know what happened to the silverware all the time. They tried to rectify the situation periodically, but it was a hustle. It just ended up being a hustle.

[0:01:46.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** And it’s kind of like endemic of a place that size or—

[0:01:49.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, it is and it isn't, because at Arnaud's, working at Arnaud's—I was a captain at Arnaud's for four years, four and a half years—Arnaud's has a whole wall probably that size [demonstrates] with a caged thing, and there's shelves with little holes in it that the silverware containers sit in. So in the beginning of the day, or night, whatever you're working, it's locked up. So the maître d' has to come, unlock it, open it. You take out spoons, you take out knives, you take out this, that out that, go to your gueridon, set it up. Everything's set, you know.

At the end of the night, you've got to put all that back. You don't leave anything on the tables or anything like that. All the silverware goes back and they lock it up, and then they count that, like every month. "Why are we down fifty knives?" They'd try and find out. They stayed on it.

Brennan's was like, "All right, buy some more," or, "We're so busy we don't have time to argue about it right now." I mean, hey, back then it was like that, you know, but I know it was expensive for them. But they made pretty good money there. I'm not saying it was worth it, but, I mean, they could have probably streamlined a lot of things. The management was good, but it wasn't really strict. I mean, if you'd been there a while, they kind of just gave you your lead, you know. "This is a table, these are really good friends of mine. There's no check. Take care of them." You could sell them a 150-dollar bottle of wine for the appetizer and a 400-dollar bottle of wine for dinner. No problem. Brennan's, "Okay the check."

My brother and I waited on the Rolling Stones when they were in town. I can't remember what concert it was, but they came in the restaurant at like 12:00 or 12:30. We closed at 10:00. So Teddy called up and said, "Look, the Rolling Stones are coming in. Scott, Jeff,

David Canning, and Louis Million, the maître d', "I want you all to stay and take care of them. They don't want anybody else around. I got the kitchen staff going to be there. I want you to take care of them."

I said, "All right." So we sat around after 10:00 o'clock and waited, set up a really pretty table right by the windows in the main dining room. It was really pretty, all the lights and candles out in the courtyard and everything. It was really nice. And we had wine lists, all kinds of shit around. Mick Jagger come in with the band and I guess it was his roadie managers or something like that. It was like twelve people, you know. They were having a really good time, and the food was really good. Things were going great. And then Mick gave my brother the card, like American Express card or something. I was like—we asked the maître d', "What should we do?"

Said, "Well, if they gave you a card, then go ahead." So my brother went to run it off and everything. I think it was like 1,500 or 1,800 bucks or something like that. I don't remember what it was. But it was declined.

So then he went back to Louis, he said, "Well, now what are we going to do? It's declined. You want me to go tell him that?"

He said, "Well, just a minute."

"Teddy, sorry to wake you up. They gave the card and everything. It was declined. It's like 2,300-dollar check or something. All right. No problem."

"Just tell them it's compliments of Brennan's. We hope they enjoyed themselves," he said. No problem.

So they just picked up the check. Boom! Why it was declined, I don't know. I mean, it said "Mick Jagger" on it. My brother still had the slip where you do that to it, you know. So that was kind of interesting.

One day we had Elizabeth Taylor come in, and after hours, and Louis Million, the maître d', had two dozen red roses with baby's breath and everything, all this stuff, and we had to go through how we were going to stand by the door when she walked in. He was going to present her with the roses and walk her to the table and everything.

When she came in, she barged right by him. She didn't even stop to say hello. She just barged right by him and went in and said, "Where are we sitting?" The only table with a candle, right by the room, nice round table, real pretty, rooster plates on it and everything, really pretty. I mean, Louis was like, "I'll just put these over here." [Laughter]

And one time—who's that guy? Oh, Harry Connick, Jr. got married, and he and his wife and the family had a reception there, upstairs in the AB Room, set up real nice and everything, nice wine, really nice party. Well, downstairs in the main dining room, I had Carol Burnett, and she had like a party of six people with her or something like that, and she was real sweet. Well, she found out that Harry Connick, Jr. was upstairs with his new bride, so she wants to bring them a bottle of champagne. So she said, "Could I get a bottle of Dom Perignon I want to bring up to the Connick family for a little celebration?" I said, "Sure." Tell them, "Get me a bottle of DP, put it on the check," and everything like that. I said, "I'd be happy to carry it up there for you and walk it up there."

She said, "Oh, well, thanks, honey."

So I walked her up the stairs, gave my arm, had the DP in it. We got to the doors; they're closed. I gave her the DP and I stepped back, and she went [knocks], a couple times. I

thought, “Well, what are they doing in there?” So finally a guy opened up the door, and he goes, “Oh!”

“Yes, I’m Carol Burnett,” or Miss Burnett or whatever she said, because the guy looked, like, stunned to see her.” She said, “I just want to present this to Harry Connick, Jr. and his wife.”

And he went over and said, “Just a minute.” Closed the door and went over [whispers], comes back, opens it, opens up. He said, “Not right now.” Closed the door, went back. [Laughter] And I’m standing there. [Laughter]

And Harry Connick, Jr. basically told her, “Not now, Carol. This is a bad time.” That’s what he basically told her.

[0:07:35.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh, my goodness. [Laughter]

[0:07:36.5]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I know. So weird, you know.

So she gave me the bottle of champagne, and she said, “Will you make sure that they get this?”

I said, “Of course I will. I’ll even ice it down right here and make sure everybody knows about it. No problem.”

[0:07:49.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** I’ve heard she’s a class act.

[0:07:49.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** She was real sweet. I mean, she took it like a champ. I mean, I was a little stunned, and she kind of just like blew it off. Maybe it was innocent, like they're really in the middle of doing their first kiss or something. I don't know what they were doing, you know. But you'd think they'd have time out for Carol Burnett to take five minutes, say, "Oh, thank you very much." No.

But that was the kind of place it was. It was fun. I had a really good time working there, really good time. It wasn't a job, you know. I mean, it was fun to go there because I knew everybody, and there were times when the group of us that were like old waiters, I guess you could say, back then, well, we had a Christmas party, and all of our wives and girlfriends came. So there were like twenty of us, including the wives and everything. So we had a table set up in the Red Room, which we all thought was the prettiest room, especially around Christmastime, real red burgundy and white trim and real—I don't know what you'd call it—cozy, you know. And it had Christmas decorations. They did a big double square table draped to the floor with two different tabletops to give it contrast. They had the rooster plates with like four forks off and three of this and two different wine glasses and everything. It was really pretty. And we all worked there, so we all made comments about it.

Pat Cassidy was the captain at that time, a friend of mine, a gay fellow—not that there's anything wrong with that—but really a cool guy. He's the one that set everything up. So he had special appetizers ordered already for us and hors d'oeuvres. We ordered anything we wanted off the menu.

The balcony was open to air. They didn't have it closed in. When we were eating our appetizers, we give him some weed, "Pat, you roll us up a couple numbers, and we'll go over there and smoke and everything."

"Yeah, no problem." He's sitting in the corner and twisting up joints, giving it to us.

And Louis downstairs made the instructions to everybody, "Nobody upstairs. Nobody go upstairs, no matter what." So nobody was coming up there. We had the run of the place upstairs. I mean, we had everything. We had flaming desserts. We had two different kinds of wine. We had steaks. We had everything. I mean, I don't know. They cut that check so much that they practically gave it to us. Everybody was stunned when they found how much it was, you know, because we were planning on paying the piper, you know. We weren't asking for anything free. We just asked if we could have a party up there for Christmas, you know. I can't remember what the check was, but everybody went, "Oh, my god! That's so nice of them. That's so nice of them, isn't it? That's so nice of them. You got \$50?"

"Yeah, I got \$50." Everybody put in \$50. It was like unbelievable, you know. So they were really good to us in that way.

One time they had profit sharing. That was kind of interesting. That didn't last that long. But their family had their problems, you know, the three sons. They all had families that were wild. I mean, Teddy Junior, he was a baby when I started when I was working there, and now he's, I don't know, thirty-some years old or something like that. He's a grown adult. So, real interesting family. We had a good time, but I liked it there. It was fun.

[0:11:01.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Sounds like a special place, yeah.

[0:11:03.2] Calibrate 1:08:00

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, it really was, you know. My wife and I still talk about it. We have an original Brennan's plate at home. My sister, before she passed away, crocheted this Brennan's rooster and all this stuff. So, I mean, there's memorabilia around the house that we remember it and everything, you know. And I got the awards there and stuff like that. It was kind of special, you know.

[0:11:24.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** So were you there till they closed?

[0:11:28.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, I was there till it closed. Well, I left for a while from 2000 to—right after [Hurricane] Katrina I left, I did other things, worked other places. But then after Katrina when I came back, I didn't know what the city was going to be like. Anyways, I went to truck driving school. I thought maybe that'll be fun. I like to travel. There's nothing wrong with driving. So I did this truck driving thing. I was pretty good at it, but I was away from home so much, you know. I'd call my wife, and it would be like after Katrina—I don't know if you knew anything about Katrina, the streets and everything that was built up and the mess and the power out and people driving around in trucks giving away food and everything like that. It was really something, man. It was eye-opening, you know.

Well, I left to go drive over the road, and I'd call her up, and I'd be in like a Walmart parking lot way in the back at like 2:00 in the morning up in—oh, not 2:00 in the morning, but 11:00 at night, say, and I'd be up in the mountains in Colorado, you know, and the skies would be brilliant and nice and cool. And I'd call my wife, she goes, "It's 99 degrees down here and the electricity's not on." She'd tell me this. "The car broke down. There's no way to get to the bus, or, "The stores aren't open." And it's just like it was never a, "Hey, how you doing?" "Oh, I'm doing great." It was always something was going on, you know.

[0:12:52.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, it was a struggle.

[0:12:53.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** It was a struggle. So when I came back one time, I just told the company I was working for, I said, "I can't do this anymore. I got to get a job in the city." So I did that. I only drove truck for about six months or something, but it was interesting. It was fun, I mean.

[0:13:07.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Really? Because that's kind of—there's a lot of isolation in a truck, right?

[0:13:11.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, that was. I didn't really like that, but I wanted to do something different. In the city, I mean, they had McDonald's and stuff were hiring \$10. I wasn't looking to go to some restaurant that was cooking out of a kitchen with a Bunsen burner and everything like that. "Let me heat up some soup for you. Let me get this." I didn't want to do that.

And it wasn't till really six or eight months into pass that some of the better restaurants started popping open. I mean, there were certain things that—I don't know. Anyways, it was too kind of isolationist. I didn't like being out of town. And I knew that sooner or later, they're going to send me to the Northeast, and that petrified me, you know, because some of the bridges are shorter than what they're supposed to be, because it's the northeast and some of the highways go this way when they should have gone that way last year. And people would tell me horror stories about it when I'm sitting having dinner. "So, you been to New Jersey yet?"

"No."

"Oh-hoho, wait till you go up there."

I was like, "Really? Why?"

They'd tell me. I'd go, "Oh, my god!"

They said, "Sometimes you got to back in. It doesn't look like you can get a Volkswagen in there, but they expect you to do it like that [snaps fingers], because if you don't, they're calling the boss."

I said, "Aw, Jesus, don't tell me that." Because I could back in all right, but if you give me a couple shots at it, you know. But all that, it just made me—I said, "I can't do this, man."

But at Brennan's during the hurricane it was interesting. Jimmy Brennan, Lazone Randolph, the chef after Mike Roussel passed away—Lazone Randolph, Jimmy's wife, Lazone's wife, I think those were the only four, they went down to the restaurant and stayed there when the hurricane hit and the levees broke on Tuesday or Monday, whatever it was. Well, they could see on the news there's big problems, you know, and there's going to be break-ins and looting and everything. So they had keys. They went in and got in that front door and shut it, and that's like a fort. If you don't go in the front door or the kitchen door, you got to go over the roof and everything, you know. So they went in there and shut the doors.

Well, all the power was off and everything. So they opened up those coolers. They had steak and lobster and crabmeat and vegetables. They had everything a big restaurant has, but, I mean, they had primo stuff. I mean, they had beautiful sirloins and filets and everything. And they had natural gas, the stoves worked, so make a long story short, they were very comfortable. They had the whole wine cellar to themselves, just unlock it and just, boom, anything, because it's going to go bad. They're going to end up throwing it all away, because the heat in August, the air conditioning is down, the wine's going to be no good.

So Lazone would tell me, when I talked to him later, he said, "Oh, man, we had some dinners you wouldn't believe, man." He said, "Even Jimmy was cooking, and I'd go back and pull a bottle of that, and he'd say, 'No, no, no.'" He'd get up and go get another one that was \$300 more or whatever. He's like, "We had a beautiful time." He says, "A matter of fact, you know, the plumbing didn't work or anything like that."

I said, "Oh—." I didn't want to hear about it.

He said, “No, you know what we did?”

Well, our white wine was—.” I can’t remember the name of the wine. Anyways, it was a house white wine. Someone would say, “You have a white wine?”

I says, “We have—.” Louis Latour Chardonnay is what it was.

Anyways, he said, “Well, what we did is I went and got about six boxes, cases of Louis Latour Chardonnay, took them in the bathroom and opened them up. When you used the bathroom, you just pour the chardonnay in there and flush the toilet.” [Laughter]

I said, “Oh,” I said, “that was good thinking.”

He said, “Well, I wasn’t going to do it with the good wine. That Louis Latour, that’s like monkey piss,” he said, “but that worked out good.”

I said, “That was a really good idea, Lazone.” [Laughter] So they stayed in there the whole time until things calmed down. They opened up the doors and, “Well, let’s go talk to the insurance people.”

[0:17:05.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah.

[0:17:05.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** That was that. Then I went back to work for them after, I guess, about six months or eight months after the hurricane or whatever it was, and lasted four years. I was there the last day, went there that Friday to work, and couldn’t get in the back door, and looked at the front door, it had “Do Not Enter” tape across it and everything. That was a payday, too, and all the dishwashers were out there, people

working in the offices, they're all out there. No one could go in. You open up the back door, there's a sheriff there with a big badge saying, "No entry. You have to be either management or family, only people that can go in."

So we all sat across the street like, "Oh, my god, what are we going to do now?" If it weren't for Mr. Pip [Owen Brennan, Jr.], who went into his own bank account and cut checks for everybody that was on the payroll up to that date, nobody would have gotten a check. And when he cut those checks out of his own bank account, not out of Brennan's restaurant bank account, out of *his* bank account, everyone took that check and went over to that bank over on inside the CBD. I can't remember which bank it was. I can't remember the name of it. But, like, every line had Brennan's employees in it [Laughter], and we were all trying to get them cashed before something came up and went "ding, ding, ding," insufficient funds. We all thought that was going to happen, you know. But everybody got their checks cashed, but if it weren't for Mr. Pip, that wouldn't have happened.

What the financial problems were, I mean, Brennan's used to—people'd come in with cartloads of food and wine and everything, they just sign for it, they leave, sign for it and leave. And towards the end, they come in with that, they say, "We want cash." They'd have to go out and get 300, 400, 500 dollars for crabmeat, you know, money for fish. They had to pay cash all the way through. No cash? Taking it back, you know.

[0:18:56.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** So all you older hands saw it kind of coming.

[0:18:59.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, yeah, yeah, we knew there was problems, you know. The guy that bought the building, wanted the building, he already made offers on it. The building had a lot of problems, you know, plumbing-wise or electric-wise and stuff like that. But they made offers on the building. Can't think of his name. White. I think his last name was White.

[0:19:19.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Terry.

[0:19:20.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Terry White, yeah. Well, when he got the place, come to find out his partner was Ralph Brennan. So the other side of the family always wanted that location. They always felt like they got kicked out, basically. So not only did they get the location, they got the equipment and everything in it, and they got the recipes and they got the logo and they got the name. They got everything they wanted. So, I mean, Ted Brennan, I don't know how it all came down. Some people said that Ted had boxes of cash stashed places, you know, that he'd been siphoning out. Some people said that. I don't ascribe to that. I always respected him and thought he did a very good job. So, I mean, there's just other things that fly around in that sort of situation, you know. So I never knew what happened, and I wouldn't pretend to suggest that that happened, but I know that they were paying cash for everything at the end, and I know that if it weren't for Mr. Pip, nobody would have gotten paid at the end. And I know that they

didn't want the other side of the family to get it, because he wanted—Ted was the last one to—because Pip got out of the whole thing, apparently, Jimmy ended up passing away, and Ted had the whole thing, and he wanted to leave it to his daughter and his son and stuff like that. Well, that didn't work out, and they basically lost all of it in a court thing when the settlement was recipe, logo, everything goes to that side, not that side. So that was disappointing, I'm sure, for them, and it was the end of an era, you know, really. I mean, if I had to recreate a restaurant to work in that was fun and everything like that, it would be the ideal place. I mean, that was the best time I ever had.

I always felt bad for the people like Mario and Sergio and all these guys who worked there a lot longer than I did, that were—I mean, the whole family knew their birth dates, they knew the kids they had, they knew what happened when their wife got a C-section and all this stuff. It was really personable to work there. But I never wanted to go work for the other side of the family.

Teddy Junior opened up a restaurant with his sister on Decatur Street. I waited for that place to open because I wanted to work there, you know, and Lazon was going to be the chef, and blah, blah, blah. It turned out to be such a huge place, they sunk so much money into all this liquor and wine and tables and everything upstairs, they never did any promotion. I mean, I'd go to work there at two, three nights, they'd have three people on the books, six people, that's it. They'd have two sets of waiters working, and it wasn't happening, you know.

I asked Teddy one night, I said—I mean, we never got a paycheck. He'd always pay us in cash or something. I said, "Well, why don't we have a big splash opening, like a red carpet, and, I don't know, stand outside in a tuxedo and say, 'Hey, get all your friends in

here and your relatives, anybody you know’?” Just pass around hors d’oeuvres and pour sparkling wine or something like that, so newspeople’d over and take pictures or something.

“The big opening is we’re going to start serving the dinner menu next week and it’s going to be—.”

I said, “Oh.” That’s all they did. They never had any sort of concierges come over or nothing, you know.

[0:22:38.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, at the time when there’s so much more competition for restaurants.

[0:22:41.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** To get to Brennan’s Restaurant on Decatur Street, you have to walk by fifteen restaurants, you know. I mean, you could go in there and eat for \$100 for two, but six restaurants on either side of you, you could go in there and eat for \$60 for two with a bottle of wine and have a nice lobster dinner, you know. It’s, like, unbelievable. And it was so expensive.

And Lazone, they did all the same menu, all the same things that were on the Brennan’s menu, but they called them different names. So some of the guys that they hired that didn’t work at Brennan’s before, they’d say—I can’t remember what they called it, like Decatur Nancy, let’s say, because at Brennan’s it was called Trout Nancy, filet of trout, lemon butter sauce and capers and crabmeat. They gave you a beautiful piece of fish,

crabmeat the size of your knuckles. I mean, it was *beautiful*, you know. Over there they called it Decatur something, and they'd go, "Why's everybody keep calling it Trout Nancy?"

I said, "Well, when we worked at the other—" You know, all the names were different, but we knew what the dishes were. They'd order something, I'd say, "Oh, yeah, that's that Filet Brennan. That's what they're talking about."

And they go, "Oh, I know which one that is."

But it just didn't work, and they ended up losing the place, and they lost their ass on that. Then I got a job at Gabrielle's.

[0:24:01.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** With the Sonniers.

[0:24:02.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, well, I'll tell you, I was getting longer in the tooth, so to speak, you know, and I didn't like going to the French Quarter anymore, because I was living in Bywater. My wife and I bought a home down there in 2000, and I like going home. I don't go out drinking and I don't hang out with people at work. My brother passed away, so, you know, I just don't go out, hang out, and stay out till 2:00 in the morning like when I was a kid, you know.

So, I mean, I think I was looking on Craigslist or something, because I couldn't work at Brennan's, I wasn't making any money, and I'd waited for them so long. I'd just left Arnaud's, which was kind of a high-paced fancy place. I had to wear a tuxedo, and you

have to flame coffees and flame desserts. It's not unusual, like on Mother's Day, you show up at 10:00 o'clock in the morning, but you've got to do breakfast, lunch, and you don't get home until like 11:30 at night because you've got to do dinner, very long days. But that happened Mardi Gras—not Mardi Gras, but Mother's Day and Easter and stuff like that, so there was a lot of work there. When I worked at Arnaud's, I worked in the Richelieu Room, which is on Bourbon and whatever, Bienville or Iberville. But the kitchen was back on Dauphine so if you get six oysters and the guy says, "Can I get some horseradish sauce?" "I'll be right back."

Well, by the time you go walk a block across to get the kitchen, "Get some horseradish sauce for some oysters, please," and you get back, [demonstrates], "I thought you forgot about me," ate the last one, you know. It was like, "Goddamn, man." So I started keeping stuff in the side and making it easier. But, I mean, it's a big place to work, is what I was getting at. I didn't want to do that again, you know.

So I saw something about Gabrielle's. My wife and I used to go there. That's when I used to have a motorcycle, we'd ride around, and we'd stop in and eat like big eye doctors, you know. And I used to love that place because they had such a good lamb dish and stuff like that. It was really good, you know.

And then I saw "Gabrielle's Opening Soon, Orleans Avenue," blah, blah, blah. I thought, "Orleans Avenue." I thought, "Well, why not? I'm not doing anything else." I really don't want to flame things and go through all this rigmarole, wearing a tuxedo or work in a place like that with back waiters and front waiters and everything. Thirteen tables, I thought, "What can go wrong, you know?"

So I went and applied and, you know, fortunately I was hired. I mean, I really like it there. It's a nice place. The people are great. The food's good. If I said it was easy, that might piss them off, but, I mean, compared to apples to apples, I mean, it's a lot easier, you know. You don't have to flame desserts. The bar's right there, you know. You have the tables right there. You don't have to go to another room to do something.

There's never been a problem in the kitchen that hasn't been solved in three to five minutes. You know what I mean? Even if you make a mistake, it's like, "Chef, I fucked up. I need a fish right away."

"All right."

[0:27:05.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** I've eaten there a few times. You can almost make eye contact with them when you're in the dining room.

[0:27:08.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right, right. He's really a qualified guy. He's really calm. He can get riled if you act like an idiot, you know, which some people there do, and he gets kind of pissed. But, I mean, with Rick and I, Rick Hughes, who we work with, he worked with me at Arnaud's and Brennan's, we were together. I'm not saying—I mean, we basically know what we're doing. I mean, Chef's even asked me to help him in the kitchen, like, "Can you peel those shrimp while he's doing that, and after you get done there, can you go over there and get—?"

One night the dishwasher was so far behind, he had dishes stacked up to the ceiling.

Everyone punched out. Well, I punched out and I went back and helped him for two hours and straightened everything out. He said, “I thought you left.”

I says, “I was back helping that guy.”

He said, “Oh, man, you don’t have to do that.”

I said, “I know, but I looked in his face, I thought, ‘I can’t leave the guy like that, man.’”

But, I mean, I like them, they like me, so far. I’ve had a couple bumps in the road with them, some I don’t think as important as they did. [Laughter] But they’re very nice, you know.

[0:28:19.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you’ve seen a lot of changes over time. Have you ever set anyone on fire with your flaming coffees or desserts?

[0:28:26.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** No.

[0:28:28.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Well, that’s good. So that’s like a success.

[0:28:30.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right.

[0:28:31.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** But have you ever seen that happen?

[0:28:32.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I've seen things like that happen. I'll tell you a couple of stories.

There's a young man at Brennan's named Michael Sevinau [phonetic], and he was probably structure-wise 5'5", thin build and everything like that, a young gay guy—not that there's anything wrong with that—and a really super guy. He was really a cool guy. But, anyways, you'd have to carry trays stacked up twelve on a tray, you know, two, two, two, two. Not twelve; six on a tray. Yeah, six high, you know. Three high, I guess. What am I trying to say? [Laughter]

[0:29:09.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** A lot of plates.

[0:29:11.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** A lot of plates, heavy trays, right, right, as many—if you can carry twenty, go for it.

[0:29:16.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** Plates with lids.

[0:29:17.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, with lids, right. Well, the thing was, at Brennan's they had a Crabmeat au Gratin that was done in a silver metal boat that was crabmeat and cheese and everything. They'd put it on the flat burner over there and [demonstrates].

[0:29:33.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Get molten.

[0:29:34.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Sprinkle a little paprika, do a little parsley on it, and they'd put it on a platter that's supposed to have a doily to stop it from sliding, right? Or a folded napkin, you'd put it on there, right?

Well, Michael Sevinau had a tray filled up to the top, but on the back corner was a Crabmeat au Gratin. When he came out of that kitchen and he swung the tray like that, that Crabmeat au Gratin went sliding off and right down the back of a pregnant woman.

[0:30:05.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh, my god.

[0:30:06.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** And it was, like, bubbling cheese with crabmeat. That lady screamed. They heard it throughout the whole—the chef heard. Everybody. That lady screamed, and she was pregnant. I mean, you could see welts boiling up on her.

And Michael stood there like, “Oh, my god!” And he stood there with all his entrées.

[Laughter]

That lady’s husband got up and got in his face, like he was fuckin’ dog dirt. He was going to pop him, I thought. But, fortunately, he didn’t, and Michael went and put the tray down. The maître d’s came over, everyone came out, and everything’s comped, all this shit. They had to go to the hospital or something. It was really a bad, bad situation.

[0:30:50.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh, wow.

[0:30:51.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** That was a bad one. One night there was a guy up on the top of the stairs in a Christmas party, someone was talking to him about something, he went [demonstrates] right down the stairs, died right there. They had people waiting for tables and everything sitting there and everything. That one didn’t go over too good either.

[Laughter]

[0:31:11.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** “On second thought, I think we’ll eat at McDonald’s tonight.”

[Laughter]

[0:31:15.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right. I mean, things happen. Dessert-wise, with flaming coffees and stuff, you really have to be pretty careful you know. Now, at Arnaud’s, they want you to only flame it like this high [demonstrates], you know. If you tilt the pan back a little bit, it gets hot; the top gets hot. The hotter it gets, you hit it with that rum or whatever, it can jump, you know.

And at Brennan’s, we used to, like, [demonstrates] hit it with that rum, and then sprinkle cinnamon in there and everything, like, sprinkles all over, you know, and it was exciting and everyone would, “Oh!” you know.

Like in the daytime, if we had a whole room of different tables and everything, but we try and all get them on bananas and stuff, you know, and we’d say, “You cooking bananas?”  
“Yeah.”

“You cooking bananas?”

“Yeah.”

“Let’s cook them together,” you know. We’d have gueridons set up and do the whole thing and serve everybody, rather than going to this table and cooking it and then going to that table and cooking it. Nuh-uh, that takes too long. We’re doing it all together.

“Ladies and gentlemen, these are your bananas. Everybody watching? Here we go.”

[Laughter]

But at Arnaud’s, it’s like you couldn’t do that. I mean, if each table ordered Bananas Foster, and they all got done with dinner at the same time and just ordered, you took a dessert on three tables, they all want bananas, and they all want Café Brûlot, you got to make three Café Brûlot and three Bananas Foster, one right after the other, which was aggravating [Laughter], to say the least, you know. Café Brûlot’s a flaming coffee thing,

you peel the orange, with cloves, and flame it and give it to them. A lot of people didn't even know what it was. They said, "I don't know what it is, but it looks so good, I'll take it."

I said, "Well, it's kind of an acquired taste. It's got orange peels and rinds. You like coffee like that?"

They go, "Sounds good. Will you make it for me?"

I go, "It's all right, you know, but it's a \$14 coffee," or something like that, you know. But it's a pain in the ass, but, I mean, Brennan's was more—I don't know, the waiters just seemed to be kind of a show over there, you know. "Is your waiter as goofy as mine is?" Actually, I'm having a good time, you know. [Laughter]

[0:33:23.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** You had a lot of regulars at Brennan's, too, I'll bet.

[0:33:25.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Even a lot of regulars that come in for, like, Sugar Bowl and stuff like that, you know, they come in annually, but a lot of regulars in the front dining room and stuff like that. That's basically all the Brennans' friends and business associates and, I don't know, people from out of town that they know are in town, and stuff like that. But the rest of the restaurant, I mean, a lot of times people would say, "Well, last year when I was here, the chef didn't mind doing this for me, and he said he'd do that."

I said, “No problem. We’ll take care of it.” I mean, we’d split dishes, egg dishes, you know, have a half Eggs Broussard and a half Eggs Benedict. You could have the—you know, split this for you, try to make it nice for you, you know.

The chef would pull his hair out, but I said, “The guy ordered it, Chef. What do you want me to do, you know?”

“Well, you’re talking him into it.”

I said, “Well, I kind of mentioned it, but he liked the idea.”

Said, “Oh, you asshole.” [Nystrom Laughter]

No, but they got to do it. They’re not going to go out there and say, “Look, pal, we’re not doing it because that guy told you we could do it.” But, I mean, they were cool about it.

But Arnaud’s is kind of a different cowboy, you know.

[0:34:22.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Run differently?

[0:34:26.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah. Brennan was is very comfortable. I mean, I knew all the rules and I knew how far I could kind of push things, and even if I pushed them too far, I knew how much trouble I might get in and might not. Arnaud’s, I didn’t really know all the rules because it was so big, you know, as far as maître d’s and banquet section and maître d’ over here for that room and that room, and the kitchen manager. But then you had the expediter you got to talk to, and you had the bar, but then you had the head bartender over there. If you need this, you got to—it was like, what?

And when you're a captain at Arnaud's, I don't care on your team, captain, front waiter and back waiter, who makes a mistake, the captain gets blamed, no matter what it is. If the back waiter puts a dirty glass on the table and the maître d' walks by and sees it, he's going to call the captain over. "How'd you let that happen?" [Laughter]

[0:35:17.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Do you find—one of the things I'm noticing in doing these interviews is a lot of the people who have spent their career waiting tables actually came to New Orleans like yourself. Do you find a lot of the people you work with that are like yourself were from somewhere else?

[0:35:35.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I don't know, because—not really, because I don't really ask people where they're from. I mean, if you're in New Orleans, you're living and working in New Orleans, I mean, I figure you're part of the troop, you know. I mean, I might ask you where'd you work before this, and if they say someplace in Houston, I go, "Oh, you're from Texas? Oh, okay." But, I mean, I always was—when I worked at Pat O'Brien's and everything like that, I mean, people said I had an accent. Well, I didn't realize that from being from Minnesota, but it was totally different sounding than what it was New Orleans people had, which I tried to blend in some things, but it doesn't come out too good sometimes. [Nystrom Laughter]

But, I mean, I never thought—you know, most people around here ask what high school did you go to. That's what they want to know. When they ask me what high school I went

to, I always say, “Well, I didn’t go to school in New Orleans.” Well, that kind of cuts everything off right there.

A lot of people say, “Oh, okay. Well, forget about it, then.” I don’t know. I don’t care where you’re from. You know what I’m saying? It never really interests me if someone’s from—if they wanted to say, “I’m from Massachusetts, I just got in town, and I’ve been working here for six months,” I say, “Oh, interesting. Do you like it?” But, I mean, if you’re not from New Orleans, you don’t know what high school, everyone’s going to—it’s just, who cares? [Laughter]

[0:36:59.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** It’s just not a question, yeah.

[0:37:00.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Who cares, you know? But, I mean, New Orleans people are pretty welcoming. I never had a problem with being from out of town or felt like a carpetbagger or some northerner. No one ever made me feel like that. But I have a lot of black friends and work with a lot of black people I get along with fine. Don’t get me wrong, I think there are black people and I think there are “N” people, you know, and I think there’s a difference, and a lot of people don’t want to hear that. But I’m going to be sixty-seven years old, and I’ve seen a lot of both. There are a lot good and there a lot of bad in both, in white and everything. There’s good Chinese and bad Chinese. I’m just saying. I mean, no one ever made me feel like an outsider. I never came in here complaining, “I’m not working with that guy because—.” I always try to say, “Hey, bro, what you doing?”

[0:37:49.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Well, yeah, I think about now where it's a conversation in New Orleans where there are a lot of new people in here, people who come here more recently.

[0:37:55.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right. I think that's always been true, though. New Orleans is a migrant town. Even back when it was founded, you know, it was a seafaring town and people'd come in, they'd leave, come in, they leave. You could work in New Orleans and work in the French Quarter and go work at Gabrielle's and everything, and all of a sudden, run into somebody at the supermarket and they said, "Oh, I thought you left town. I hadn't seen you in so long." They don't realize I don't go to the shops in the Quarter. You know what I'm saying?

[0:38:23.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

[0:38:24.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** So that's the way it is, you know. I mean, people just assume that you're not alive if you're not in their little world down there.

[0:38:32.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:38:33.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** But the city is kind of like a little world if you look at it in an over-structure. I mean, the Uptown people are the same way.

[0:38:38.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, there are times I'll go a couple of months, it seems like, without ever leaving Uptown.

[0:38:44.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right, right. Some people don't like crossing I-10 down there. They say, "I'm not even going to cross I-10. I just want to stay in this side of I-10. I don't want to go over there," which means a lot. I mean, they don't want to go to Treme, they don't want to go to Claiborne, they don't want to go to Uptown or even out to Metairie. "Well, you can't get that here. You have to get something else."  
"That's fine. I'll get something else. I'm not leaving."

[0:39:06.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** I'm not going to Jeff Parish, huh? Best time of year to work?

[0:39:10.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Has to be the fall, winter, and spring.

[0:39:16.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Any specific [unclear]?

[0:39:18.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, summer's all right, but it's just slow. But fall because football season starts, school gets back in session, people are back from vacations, people are taking people out to dinner, and it's starting to be Thanksgiving and stuff. Winter, Christmas parties, Sugar Bowl, Mardi Gras is coming up, no problem.

[0:39:40.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** So Mardi Gras—because you worked a lot of Mardi Gras. What's Mardi Gras like at Brennan's?

[0:39:46.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Awesome. Just awesome. They do decorations in all those rooms. Pip Brennan was the founder of Bacchus, so we'd do Bacchus parties and everything like that. They all have the kings of Bacchus in there, the movie stars and everything. They'd bring their entourage with them. The whole restaurant would be closed. They'd set it up with bars and wine and food tables and everything throughout the whole restaurant. People in tuxedos and hot-lookin' dames. Oh, it was awesome, man. You make a pile of money. What's wrong with that? That was fun. Mardi Gras at Pat O'Brien's, it was a ball-buster. I mean, it's constant, constant. But you have police at the door. At Pat O'Brien's, there was times where you'd have to jump over

the bar to stop a fight, you know. Pete Davis was notorious for it. People would get so loaded and then start pushing each other and stuff, Pete'd jump over the bar and get between them, get everything straightened out. The guy from the front door would come in.

Well, one time during Halloween, I jumped over the bar with Pete, I grabbed this guy, I'm shaking him, saying, "Get out of here! Quit that!"

He said, "It's not me! Frankenstein started it! Not me! Frankenstein!"

I looked around, the other guy's Frankenstein. I mean, here I'm fighting with, like, some clown or something like that, and the guy's telling me, "Frankenstein started it."

I'm like, "What? Oh, oh, I gotcha." I mean, it was weird, you know.

Well, then Sonny put cameras in the main bar and said, "No more going over the bar," because of lawsuits, you know. Said, "Don't do that, man."

But Mardi Gras at Brennan's were a lot of fun because it's always the buildup, you know.

Mardi Gras is in a month from now, so then the parades start like a couple weeks before, and then people have group dinners or people coming in from out of town to see the first

week of parades. And then you get into Mardi Gras weekend, you know, that Friday,

Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, well, *everything's* booked up, you know,

private parties in the rooms, a lot of hotels are filled up, they're greasing the poles at the

Royal Sonesta [Hotel] that's right around the corner. People are coming in for breakfast.

You don't start off with, "Good morning. Would you like some coffee?" You say, "Good morning. Can I get you a cocktail?"

"We want three Milk Punch, two Bloody Marys, and make mine a Long Island Tea. I had a long night."

“No problem,” you know. That was 9:00 o’clock in the morning, you know. It’s like that all day.

Mardi Gras Day, it was one day that it was one of the major restaurants open. I think it’s still open on Mardi Gras Day, I don’t know, but we were always open. At first I was thinking, “I don’t want to work fuckin’ Mardi Gras. I want to go out and party and everything.” But going to work during Mardi Gras *was* a party because in the main dining room, *everybody* came in in costumes. They’d come up and start talking to you, you’d realize, man, you know this person. He’s so-and-so. They’d all be in costumes having a great time and, you know, you do extra stuff for them, say, “Sit around, get you some after-dinner drinks, and tell the maître d’, say, “Yeah, just tell them to put it on the tab.” It was fun, you know.

Mardi Gras Night, they do a big party, and by the time you leave, the police are going up and down the street. You’re at Johnny White’s or at a bar with my brother having a cold beer, saying, “Remember that girl on the second turn? God, she was gorgeous,” you know. It was fun. If I had it to do all over again, I’d do it all over again.

[0:43:11.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** Do it all over again.

[0:43:12.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right.

[0:43:12.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** That’s great. That’s great.

[0:43:13.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** See, I was supposed to go to school, you know, finish going to school. I was going to be a lawyer and everything in Minnesota. When I was a kid, I had rheumatic fever and nephritis when I was in second grade, at the same time. They gave me my last rites and everything twice, you know. I was in the hospital for six months and I was bedridden at home for six months. And I was young, I was just a kid, you know. Well, the reason why I bring it up is because when I became older and I still had the heart murmur, that kept me out of Vietnam. I was 1-A. Then I had lost half my kidney with kidney disease. So I was, like, traded off to the University of Minnesota kidney specialist thing because I was like a test case, you know. So there were times I’d go in the hospital and they’d take out blood and do all this stuff, then they’d let me out, and I ended up on twenty pills of Prednisone a day, you know.

I was young, you know, but it was fun in a sense that because I was kind of sheltered when I was young, you know, I always wanted to get out. I hated laying around and everything. But coming to New Orleans, I was still on twenty pills of Prednisone a day when I left Minnesota to come down here for a week and everything, and I had brought some pills with me, but not enough. But when I decided to stay, my mom said, “Well, what are you going to do about this, Dr. Burns and everything, and you’re under a doctor’s care for twenty pills?”

I said, “Yeah, I feel pretty good. I don’t care what we do. I’m not coming back, Ma.”

So I've never had any problem with it. I've never had to go to the hospital because my kidneys were failing, or I never bent over backwards because I got chest pains or anything. So, I mean, I never think about it. But, I mean, I remember back then people were worried, "Well, I can't believe you're not coming back to this sanctuary at the hospital."

[0:45:01.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah. The irony is, is Minnesota has this idea of a healthful climate, and New Orleans is a pesthole, and here you come down here and—

[0:45:07.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, I think it might have been some of the alcohol and everything maybe petrified some things. [Laughter] I don't know what it was, but I wanted to stay, you know.

[0:45:14.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** It killed the bad stuff, yeah.

[0:45:16.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah. So, I mean, when you're a kid and growing up like that, I was looking for adventure.

[0:45:19.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah. You found it, sounds like. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:45:21.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah. Found my wife, everything, you know, bought a house, everything, no problem. American Dream, you know.

[0:45:29.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. These are totally out the window. We're going on almost an hour and forty-five minutes, so—

[0:45:37.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Whenever you got something to do, that's fine with me.

[0:45:39.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** No, no, no. This has been amazing, actually, and you've kind of caught—I feel almost silly asking you some of the questions I have, because they're don't seem nearly as interesting as some of the stuff you've told me already. But you've seen dining change a lot over the time you've been waiting tables, I guess, you know, like maybe the customer. Has the customer changed a lot?

[0:46:01.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Oh, yeah. See, at Brennan's and, I think, Antoine's, Arnaud's, and Galatoire's, when you went there for dinner, you had to have a jacket on. So we had

jackets in the front hallway thing hung up, and people'd come in and have to put them on. Sometimes, I mean, they didn't really fit very well, you know, but they'd put them—and I used to go out to eat. When I was at Pat O'Brien's, I'd go out and eat places in my waiter's jacket and sit by the kitchen door or the bathroom and eat like forty-five or sixty dollars' worth of stuff. Back then that was a lot of money for a dinner, you know.

But, I mean, that stopped, the jacket thing. Then there was a time period where you had to wear hard shoes and slacks, and women couldn't wear cutoffs and shit like that. But then the credit card, that became a big thing. I mean, everybody had an American Express credit card. Some people didn't travel with suits. Some people were on vacation, and they had their wife with them that wanted to wear cutoffs and a \$6,000 diamond ring, and he had a platinum credit card, and he wanted to come in and having a \$300 dinner. They're not going to turn him away anymore. So there used to be a time where everybody kind of looked silly sitting in that stupid jacket because they didn't bring a jacket, and then it really kind of—you never could tell, but then you'd come in and go, "Oh, man, look at those people sitting there, like in a tee-shirt. Oh, my god." Not a tee-shirt, but like a polo shirt or something.

But then you come to find out, you take care of people and try and make their experience as pleasurable as possible and be as knowledgeable as you can to help them out, and they ended up tipping you as much or more than someone sitting there in a Brooks Brothers suit. You get a lot of doctors that go, "Oh, screw that guy."

They go, "Oh, okay," you know.

And the guy next to him in a polo shirt and 100-dollar pair of jeans and sandals, you know, gives you \$200 on something because you were such a nice guy and did such a

good job. So that changed. Yeah, you started to realize—some people started to realize, rather.

There's a guy—I shouldn't tell this story, but at Gabrielle's there's a waiter there, and a couple weeks ago, he made a proclamation verbally, out loud. [Laughter] He said, "You know what I just figured out?"

And people said, "What? What?"

He said, "The better service you give, the more money you make." [Nystrom Laughter]

I was, "What?"

He said, "Yeah." He said, "I thought it was all if you're just nice to them and, you know, get friendly with them and everything like that, they'll take care of you. But it's the better service you give, the more money you're going to make."

I was like—I didn't know what to say, you know. I can't believe, forty-one years old and you're just figuring that out? I said, "Goddamn. Okay."

So every once in a while I kid him with it, you know. I say, "Well, I know where you worked before."

He goes, "You don't know where I worked."

I said, "I know. Shoney's."

He'd look at me, and I go, "All right, I'm sorry. Denny's." I said, "All right, I've got it. Waffle House."

He's like, "Oh, fuck you." [Laughter] But, you know, I don't know.

[0:49:12.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** How about cell phones and stuff like that?

[0:49:14.5]

**R. Scott Harrington:** That's really been a problem.

[0:49:15.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah. When did you first start seeing that?

[0:49:18.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I don't know. I never really wanted a cell phone until I realized I kind of needed it to keep—my wife had one. I used to have a flip phone. I don't have a—I don't want that. I don't want to be on Facebook. I don't want to look up directions. If I don't know how to get there, I don't plan on going. I don't want to look up stuff on Google. I don't want any of that.

But cell phones aren't so bad. It's the new stuff with all the technology that people spend more time on that than they do taking care of the customers, which really aggravates me. One person at Gabrielle's does that, and I won't say who, but 99 percent of them don't. But when only one person does it, it can cause problems anyways because his tables might have glasses left on it, or they're ready for the check and he's back there texting someone, his friend or something. And you want to say something, you know, "Get off the phone, man. You're working, you know. Put the phone down." But it's not your position to say it, and you might be right, but you're not the one to say it to him, or you said it to him wrong and you have a bad attitude. You know, the whole thing goes around and around.

[0:50:31.0]

**Justin Nystrom:** So you don't really care if customers have them?

[0:50:32.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, that's a big problem—not a problem. It's annoying. I mean, I go to the table a lot, the wife's got one, he's got one, they're both doing it. "Would you like to order? Oh, I'll come back."

"Oh, oh, yeah, we're ready. Just a minute."

But, I mean, that's between them. I don't care. But a lot of kids have cell phones now.

When they sit at the table, they play games while their parents have dinner, you know, those little pocket things. I mean, it's just part of life now. It's aggravating when servers, in my opinion—when you go to work, you should put the damn thing down, you know.

That's my opinion.

[0:51:08.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** That's interesting, because, you know, like a lot of the perception is with other diners, but for the server it's, yeah, "You've got a job to do."

[0:51:15.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** It's a job. It's like the one guy that has his cell phone, I asked him one time, I said, "I'm trying to get bread and everything for a table." Now, we all get tipped the same. We all get a pool tip over there. When you start work and when you end

work, no matter what it is, it all comes together, we all get the same. So, I mean, I'm in there trying to do stuff, and he's in the way on the phone texting his boyfriend or girlfriend or whatever. And I said, "Don't you have anything to do?" And he's in the way. I don't say that. I say, "Don't you have anything to do?"

And he'll move out of the way a little bit, he says, "I don't have a table till 7:30." Well, it's like quarter after 6:00.

I'm like, "Well, if you don't have a table till 7:30 and it's a quarter after 6:00, and I'm getting bread for that table, that's not my table, I'm pouring water for that table, it's not my table, how come I'm doing all this and you're on your phone texting your boyfriend? I mean, do you just do the tables you do and you don't help anybody else? I mean, I don't get that. We're all sharing tips. We all work for and do stuff."

If you don't have anything to do, look for something to do. Make more coffee. Clean things up. Go out and pour water. Bus a table. Take that trash bag out. Do something, you know. That aggravates me, you know, because that's what everybody else does. Not only me and everybody else does what he does, everybody else does what I do, and he doesn't do what we do. And he's getting the same money, money we are. So that's aggravating. And then if management doesn't say anything, that's double aggravating, because if you say anything to him and management takes it the wrong way, then you're in trouble for saying—so that's aggravating.

But as far as customers, I mean, they're in there, they're paying the money, they can do whatever they want. If they don't want to talk to each other, they want to be on the cell phone, they can write down, "Two gumbos, two salads, two filets medium rare," and give me a piece of paper that says, "Whenever it's ready, bring the shit over." I don't care.

[Nystrom Laughter] That's up to them, you know. They're paying for it, you know. That doesn't bother me.

It bothers me sometimes to see, like, the management or something at the bar on their cell phone all the time. I mean, they should be walking around going to tables, "Is everything all right? Can we get you anything? Let me get some water for you," you know. Then go back and say, "How come you're back here on your phone and I'm pouring water on your table?" Go tell him something like that sometime, instead of sitting by the bar on your phone yourself. So stuff like that's frustrating.

[0:53:34.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** Do you think customers are more educated about food than they've been in the past?

[0:53:38.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, definitely.

[0:53:41.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** Has that affected kind of the interaction you have with them?

[0:53:44.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, sometimes, you know, you get asked questions quite often, you know, and I'm not one to lie to somebody, I mean, when they're paying for something I'm supposed to bring them. So if they ask me something I don't know or I'm

unfamiliar with, I'm going to say, "Would you give me a second? I'll be right back." And I go ask the chef. I don't go ask the knucklehead that I'm working with next to me. I go ask the chef because I want the answer to go give the customer. So if anything ever comes back, I'm going to say, "He told me that." So people do ask you about stuff, and I'm knowledgeable about food and wine and things like that. I mean, with wine it's easy because you can bluff your way through. I mean, wine is so subjective, you know.

[0:53:44.2]

**Justin Nystrom:** It is.

[0:54:25.9]

**R. Scott Harrington:** It's dry to me, but it's sweet to you, you know. It's not sweet; it's light. It's got a raspberry flavor, but really it's more of a chocolate flavor. I mean, "Come on, man. Really?" Okay. If that's what you think it is, who's going to tell you you're wrong? You know what I'm saying? But if you can get the basic parameters that they want, "I want a nice dry white wine, not too buttery," I can figure that out, you know.

[0:54:49.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** Something suitable for flushing the toilet perhaps.

[0:54:51.5]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, like a Louis Latour chardonnay you're talking about. Right.

[Laughter] I think about that, you know. I want to tell them about it, but I don't want to tell everybody, you know.

[0:54:58.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** I don't think I'm ever going to flush a toilet and not think of that.

[0:55:01.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Right. Well, I thought that was so funny when he told me. But, yeah, customers are—some are, some aren't, you know.

Well, one thing that's funny I notice a lot, at the nicer restaurants I worked, like Brennan's and Arnaud's, and I don't know why this is, but when people sit down to eat, they go from the outside to the in with silverware. Very clever, I think, you know, the way it's supposed to be. [Laughter] At Gabrielle's when they sit down to eat, they grab the dinner fork for the appetizer, the butter knife to cut their steak with, even though there's a steak knife. I mean, they do things so differently, I'm saying. I'll go back and tell Rick, I'll say, "Those knuckleheads are using their—this is the third dinner fork I gave them, and they've only had salad and appetizer." I mean, you know, it's like—and there's still a salad fork sitting right next to them they haven't touched. It's like what's the deal?

[0:55:54.6]

**Justin Nystrom:** They're not educated.

[0:55:55.0]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, that might be true, or maybe they like a big fork, I don't know. [Nystrom Laughter] I don't know. But, I mean, I try and replace it. I got to replace it all the time. I got to keep an eye on that. Now, some people don't. Like the guy I'm tell you about, he doesn't. So when I bring over entrées and I see three salad forks are out and one guy's got a dinner fork, and there's an empty table next to me, I'll say, "Excuse me," and I'll grab the three dinner forks and give them to them, pick up the salad forks, go back, put those away and bring out the dinner forks and replace them. But, I mean, I just do that because out of reflex. When people get up from the table and go to the restroom, I'll pick up the napkin and fold it neatly and put it in their space and push their chair in, so when they come back it looks like someone knows that they've gone away from the table and we're aware of it, you know.

And "Are you finished with the cocktail?" You don't just grab it by the rim and pick it up. You pick it up, you know, and, "Would you like another cocktail?" You don't have to say, "You want another drink?" You know what I'm saying? There's a certain way to do it and ask people to come to your—you have to run the table, not let the table run you.

That's the big thing, you know.

People want to get to you, they'll, "We want to order some appetizers right away while we're waiting for the rest of our party."

"Unfortunately, we're not able to do that. Chef wants everything on one ticket."

"What are you talking about?"

“One chef, very busy, he likes to see what’s happening with the appetizer, salad, and entrée.” He likes to know what’s going on. Not an appetizer check here and then a salad check and then maybe a couple entrées here. You know, it’s not Shoney’s. I mean, I don’t say that but, I mean, we don’t do it that way.

When we get busy, a lot of people want to order appetizers. Then you have menus in your hand, and the appetizers come out. I have to give you plates. You get bread and butter. You’ve got menus in your hand. I say, “Why don’t you just take a few moments and enjoy the menu. I’ll take your whole order. You won’t be rushed or anything like that. Everything will come out nicey-nicey. Bread’ll come out and everything. You won’t have the menus in your hand. We’re ready to go.”

[0:57:54.8]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah, and a smaller place has to do that, right?

[0:57:57.4]

**R. Scott Harrington:** I think so.

[0:57:59.1]

**Justin Nystrom:** In a smaller kitchen like that, because they have to time everything.

They don’t have as much latitude.

[0:58:03.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, the timing isn't so bad, because if they order something that takes a long time, and they ordered appetizers first, all I'm saying is that's their problem. That's what I tell them, I said, "You know that's going to take a while." I don't want to tell them, "You know, dummy, if you would have ordered the appetizer and the entrée, that would have been cooking. When you would have been done with the appetizer, that would have been ready to go. But, oh, no, you want to do it your way. Okay. Your way it's going to take a while. All right?"

But, I mean, it's not the timing, it's the chef, because if a ticket comes in for an appetizer, he puts it up on the board. After they're done with the appetizer, another ticket comes in, he said, "I thought Table 11—oh, salads." You know what I'm saying? All of a sudden, there's three checks for one table. It's like, "Well, what part of this table are we on now?" It gets confusing for him. I mean, he's cooking a lot of entrées and appetizers and stuff, and he's got a guy with him that's trying to keep up with his side of the board, it just is confusing. If you've got a table, just give me the damn order and let the chef figure it out. Everything is cooked to order. It's going to take time for everything, and you're not going to be rushed.

I told this old lady, she says, "You're not going to bring it all out at the same time, are you?"

I said, "No, ma'am, we don't bring out the soup and put the salad on the side and put the entrée on the other side. No, ma'am, we don't do that." Hello! But people think that, you know.

[0:59:23.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** What do you think of this trend towards the places where there's small plates, you know, the idea?

[0:59:28.6]

**R. Scott Harrington:** That's up to people that want to go pay for that. You know, it's like going to some of these festivals and stuff they have, you know. I mean, you got little plates of stuff of famous restaurants that you can try for \$7. I mean, if that's what you want to go in and sit down, have a 100-dollar bottle of wine and three or four small plates of things, those little food and everything, a lot of people like that little tapas idea. But it's not really a—it's not winning for me. I'm not going to go do it. Unless it was the only job in the world to do and I had to work there, I would, but, I mean, I'm not going to go physically say, "Man, that's the kind of restaurant I want to work in. Don't you want 21 dollars' worth of appetizers and a 3-dollar beer? You're here for an hour and a half, I got to deal with you, get you more bread and butter all night long for nothing." [Nystrom Laughter] No, I don't want to do that.

[1:00:21.5]

**Justin Nystrom:** I think we've covered a ton of ground. I could review some of these questions, but is there anything you kind of want to kind of wrap with?

[1:00:35.8]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, the only thing I would say is I probably should have stayed in school. I think I would have probably [chuckles] done well in another profession if I

would have had the background for it. But I'm happy what I did. And it pains me to see so many people on the street begging for money on every corner that for some reason in their life they made bad decisions. But the decision to work in the restaurant business became a good one for me, only because you take it professionally. Not that it's really a profession, but you take it professionally and you find that you can make a living at it—I've always worked in the restaurant business since I've been here, bar or restaurant, forty-some years. Never been homeless, never missed a meal, you know. So, I mean, I don't know. I mean, it's been fun.

Now, there's other sides of it where people do it part-time or they don't really like it and they feel—I don't know what they feel. But people think, "Well, I'll just go be a waiter then for a while." Well, try it. Let's see how well you do doing it. A lot of people think they can do it, and they get there and they can't work the computer, they don't know what the drinks are. I mean, it just doesn't go right. They don't make the money. Then they say, "I don't know how you do it. I don't want to do this stuff. Is there a construction company maybe I can pound nails?" All right. So I don't know, I mean—

[1:02:11.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** They don't ever make that connection between service and the tip?

[Laughter]

[1:02:15.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, they do, but some don't, you know. [Laughter] And some it takes a little time for them to get there, which is amazing to me, because I kind of learned

that when I was growing up, you know, dealing in greenery when I was in high school and everything. The more you get necessarily isn't the best. Sometimes you want to look for quality, you know.

I don't know. I mean, people do take it differently. I mean, some people get into the service industry late in life because of problems with their other job or something like that, and I know it's a struggle for some people. And in those times, it's hard to explain to them, you know, if you did it this way, or if you took those glasses off, or if you approach a table and say, "Good evening," rather than saying, "You want a drink?" then you sound like you're being condescending to them. "Let me do it my way. People like my attitude. I don't care what you say. I've worked other places than this." Everyone's got an excuse for why they do certain things, and that's why good help is hard to find, you know.

There's no structure. I mean, some of the maître d's I've worked for have gotten awards for being maître d's in the city, and they teach you. They literally watch you, and when you make mistakes, they go over and say, "You know why you don't do this, you do it this way and this way and this way."

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir."

And then if they see you doing it again, they're going to say, "You do it another time, you're outta here."

So you learn, you know, and it does pay off in the end, I believe. But, I mean, some people get into it late in life, and they're like, "Well, I don't care about that. I mean, I'm supposed to bring them the hamburger and the French fries and the Coke, and they're supposed to give me \$5, and that guy gave me a dollar."

"Well, why did he do that? Did you bring him ketchup?"

“Oh, I didn’t know he wanted that.”

“Did you think to ask him if he wanted another Coke?”

“Well, he didn’t say he did.”

“Well, okay, you know. Where are we at with all this?” So I don’t know.

[1:04:07.4]

**Justin Nystrom:** This has been fabulous.

[1:04:10.1]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, I’ve had a good time.

[1:04:11.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** And thanks so much for taking time to do this.

[1:04:16.7]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Sure.

[1:04:17.7]

**Justin Nystrom:** Gosh, I’m still chewing on all the things that you told me.

[1:04:22.2]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Yeah, well, you should see it from my side. [Laughter]

[1:04:25.9]

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah. That's the idea.

[1:04:28.3]

**R. Scott Harrington:** Well, say hi to Rick. Rick wants to talk to you, too, and he's got some stories he could tell you from Brennan's and everything. So he's quite a guy.

[1:04:34.3]

**Justin Nystrom:** Well, great, great. Well, I'm going to stop this.

[End of interview]