



**Jeffrey Heard**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**  
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Date: September 16, 2019  
Location: Heard Dat Kitchen, New Orleans, LA  
Interviewer: Justin Nystrom  
Length: One hour and thirty-four minutes  
Project: Career Servers

**[Begin Jeff Heard Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; they—they have a way of filtering that out. That should be good. Well today is September 16, 2019 if you can believe that. I'm here with Jeffrey Heard and we're at 23—excuse me—2520 Felicity Avenue at and—and Chef Jeff is the chef and owner of the Heard Dat Café up here on—in what I believe was the Felicity Street Market Building once upon a time.

**00:00:55**

And we're here as part of the—the Southern Foodways Alliance long-term service-project. My name is Justin—excuse me; I got a little cold here I'm getting over; my name is Justin Nystrom. I teach at Loyola University New Orleans and we're doing this for the SFA that is housed out of the University of Mississippi. And Jeff is my eleventh interviewee in this project.

**00:01:21**

Jeff, thank you very much for being here.

**00:01:22**

**Jeff Heard:** Oh wow; you're welcome, you're welcome.

**00:01:25**

**Justin Nystrom:** So I guess I'll turn the mic up a little bit. I'd like to—to start kind of just at the beginning. It seems as good a place to start as any. And really counting your growing up I want

to know a little bit about you as a person, growing up and some of the influences in life before you went and started in a career in food.

**00:01:52**

**Jeff Heard:** Uh-hm.

**00:01:53**

**Justin Nystrom:** So tell me—tell me where—where did you grow up? Did you grow up in New Orleans?

**00:01:57**

**Jeff Heard:** I actually grew up in New Orleans. I grew up in downtown New Orleans actually in the—out of the Iberville Housing Project that is right one block off of Canal Street and a few blocks from the French Quarters.

**00:02:11**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; so—so right—right there, right across Basin Street I guess.

**00:02:16**

**Jeff Heard:** Yes. Right across Basin Street, so and I was raised in the housing project. My mom had six boys. I was the second of six boys. My mom was big on feeding us because we was —we loved to eat, you know, so that's when she had the most smiles on her face was when she was in the kitchen stirring the pots.

00:02:38

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

00:02:39

**Jeff Heard:** She was very happy with that. But I loved where I grew up at because it was like being— stayed in the middle of New Orleans. We were close to the river. We can—we can walk to the river and go fishing or we can walk right to Canal Street and window shop and look at things that we wished we could have, things like that. And though we was close to, we can listen for when Mardi Gras season was there, we could hear the parades coming and we can walk right out our front door and then go see the parade after—we didn't have to stand out there and wait for it. We could hear it from the house.

00:03:15

**Justin Nystrom:** The parade came to you.

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**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; so it pretty much came to us, yes.

00:03:19

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah. What kind of stuff did your mom like to cook?

00:03:22

**Jeff Heard:** Well she liked to cook fried chicken was her number one thing to cook and all my friends, I thought they was coming because they liked me but it was more of my mom's fried

chicken that they really liked. You know but she cooked beans and smothered chops and gumbo and sometimes she would even send us to—to go catch fish, like she used to like perch. So she would send us to City Park to—to get catch fresh perch. She would send us to the river to catch catfish. So you know it was all about you know a great meal, all the time; on Sundays we ate early. We went to 9:30 Mass; by 11 o'clock we was eating dinner at 11 o'clock.

**00:04:10**

**Justin Nystrom:** What was your—what was your Parish; at—where—where did you go to Mass?

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**Jeff Heard:** I went to Mass at St. Jude Guadalupe right on Rampart Street by the—and St. Louis.

**00:04:21**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; the oldest church in New Orleans.

**00:04:22**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yes. Yes; so Father Peter Rogers was the preacher at that time.

**00:04:31**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; I think I met him.

**00:04:33**

**Jeff Heard:** Father Roger [unclear]; it's a—Father Peter Rogers was actually here a long time. He had the stuff to do with—when they had the Mark Essex shooting on the Howard Johnson [Howard Johnson's sniper incident, 1973] and all. I can remember seeing him on the news standing out there negotiating.

**00:04:52**

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh yeah; right, right, yes, yeah. I'm thinking of a different Peter Rogers; yeah. You're right; that 1973, the Holiday Inn—where the Holiday Inn is now. It was the Howard Johnson.

**00:05:02**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah and actually I could see it; I was in fifth grade and we could see it from our classroom. We could—because they didn't have all the tall buildings and you could see—Howard Johnson was really one of the tallest buildings at that point in this area. And we could see it from our class, and actually our—our school that we was in is still on the property by the hospital [Interviewer's note: LSU/VA Hospital] right now. They moved it around, so it's—it was on Cleveland and Johnson Street and now they've moved it all the way to Cleveland and Claiborne Street.

**00:05:32**

**Justin Nystrom:** It was McDonough 11.

**00:05:34**

**Jeff Heard:** It was McDonough 11 yes.

00:05:35

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah so I've seen it move.

00:05:37

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah.

00:05:38

**Justin Nystrom:** I did a film about the Deutsches House which was right around the corner.

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**Jeff Heard:** Around the corner, yeah; okay, yeah, yeah.

00:05:42

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, uh-hm, yeah, yeah, oh cool—cool—cool. So that—was that—like you had a lot of—you had a lot of playmates, right? I mean you—

00:05:50

**Jeff Heard:** Oh yeah; definitely. Yeah; that was another great thing that in the housing project that everyone was so close together and we played in the courtyard so you know you can look out your window and see, you know, kids outside playing and you'd tell ma can we go you know? So yeah; so we didn't have to go far. You could play right in front your door and you—you'd get a whole—had enough people to have—start a whole football team, you know the girls

had enough girls to—to jump rope or hopscotch or whatever yes. So that was one of the great things about that community.

**00:06:26**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, so you—so you went to McDonough 11 and then I guess for high school you—where did you—?

**00:06:31**

**Jeff Heard:** I went to Warren Easton.

**00:06:32**

**Justin Nystrom:** Warren Easton okay; were you in the famous band or—?

**00:06:35**

**Jeff Heard:** A little while. I didn't stick—well I was in the band and football team but I didn't stick with either, yeah. [Laughter]

**00:06:42**

**Justin Nystrom:** So when—when—did you start working when you were in high school I guess?

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**Jeff Heard:** Yes; I did. Uh-hm; yes I did. I started to working about at 16—well 15 I worked a little bit for summer school—for summer camps, like for the NORD [New Orleans Recreational



Department] Program, but by 16 I was working. Yes; I was working pretty much almost every evening after school.

00:07:05

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay and was this at a restaurant or was—?

00:07:06

**Jeff Heard:** It was at a restaurant. It was at actually right here on Claiborne and Canal. It was two blocks from my house. It was called the Governor's House at that time and then they changed it to the Travel Lodge. But right now it's Canal Street Hotel that's—they're remodeling or something right now.

00:07:23

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay; so you were like really just very close to where you were living.

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**Jeff Heard:** Yes; oh yes.

00:07:27

**Justin Nystrom:** And you'd go to school and everything was walking I guess.

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**Jeff Heard:** Right; everything was walking, yes, uh-hm.

00:07:32

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah, what did you do at this hotel?

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**Jeff Heard:** I washed dishes and bused tables. Matter of fact, at some point then I ran actually a few room service orders as well; it wasn't a lot because it was right next door to the Oil Co [Murphy Oil] building and that was the [19]70s with the oil boom and all. So that was pretty much we had a lot of business from the corporate people right next door.

**00:07:59**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; there were fewer, fewer hotels on Canal Street at that time.

**00:08:03**

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; at that point, yes.

**00:08:04**

**Justin Nystrom:** And so like I know the Canal Street Hotel kind of fell on hard times for a while and now they're—re—redoing it but when you were there, what was the clientele like I guess?

**00:08:14**

**Jeff Heard:** Oh it was great. It was a property that was owned by Tonti Properties. Now they owned—they—I guess they got out of the hotel business and own a lot of apartments in Metairie and then but it was great. Like I said, it was called the Governor's House so it was—and like I say, the executives from the oil company was right next door and I can tell you; I ran room

service and seen some things that a 16 year-old shouldn't have seen in some of them rooms.

[Laughter] It was many times went in rooms where no one—had bunch a people in the room and no one had any clothes on. This was the [19]70s.

00:08:55

**Justin Nystrom:** Right; right, right. [Laughter]

00:08:56

**Jeff Heard:** You know.

00:08:58

**Justin Nystrom:** What year were you born if you don't mind me asking?

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**Jeff Heard:** I was born in 1962.

00:09:02

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay; so you—I mean you—you come at a time when there's a lot of change going on.

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**Jeff Heard:** Yes; yes.

00:09:07

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

00:09:07

**Jeff Heard:** Yes, because I didn't even realize that actually I was going to—in third grade I was going to McDonough 37 that was on Johnson and Bienville and—and then they switched us to McDonough 11, what was on Johnson and Palmyra or Cleveland—well actually it was just McDonough 37 was one block off of Canal Street on the French Quarter side and McDonough 11 was one block off Canal Street on I guess the uptown side. So they—when the segregation, they was desegregating, they switched our school. We just—all we had to do was cross the street, you know just two blocks away and we had—I didn't realize that at the time what was going on, you know as a child I really didn't realize it.

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**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

00:10:02

**Jeff Heard:** But I can remember the teachers wasn't happy about it. I can remember grumbling about oh I had great students last year and now we got to put up with this and that and that—I can remember all that type of stuff; yeah.

00:10:15

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm; yeah, yeah I mean really the kids I guess about five, six years older than you really felt it.

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**Jeff Heard:** Right.

**00:10:21**

**Justin Nystrom:** When it was—when it was going down.

**00:10:23**

**Jeff Heard:** Uh-hm.

**00:10:24**

**Justin Nystrom:** Now the change happened and they—like Ruby Bridges, yeah.

**00:10:27**

**Jeff Heard:** Right and—uh-hm.

**00:10:29**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, so you—you started working and—and doing the room service.

What—do you—do you remember the first time you set—brought—brought a tray up to a room?

**00:10:40**

**Jeff Heard:** No, not particularly. I don't remember the first time, but like I say, I do remember

[Laughter] one particular time when no one had any clothes on.

**00:10:48**

**Justin Nystrom:** Did it make you nervous to go up to a room?

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**Jeff Heard:** No; it didn't. You know when you're young like that it—it didn't. As I got older it was some times where I didn't want to go into rooms. You know but as a kid no; it—it didn't bother me at all, yeah.

00:11:03

**Justin Nystrom:** And that would—that would make me incredibly nervous.

00:11:06

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah. [Laughter]

00:11:09

**Justin Nystrom:** What kind of food did they serve at the Governor's House?

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**Jeff Heard:** Oh it was just standard like veal chops and veal cutlets and you know club sandwiches, nothing—nothing fancy. It wasn't you know—club sandwiches, eggs benedict—

00:11:30

**Justin Nystrom:** Kind of your basic hotel—

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**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; basic hotel food, yes, uh-hm.

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**Justin Nystrom:** Uh-huh; so you do this for a while and—and you're done with Warren Easton. Where is the next stop for you?

00:11:39

**Jeff Heard:** Well after Warren Easton I was again I was still working at that particular restaurant, the Travel Lodge because I actually worked there until I was 20 years-old. So you know I went to Delgado [College] for about six months then I was planning on going and playing football at Southeastern [Southeastern Louisiana University] and did all the paperwork to get that—but something got thrown off with the girl you know and that's—[Laughter] you know then you say oh, I can't leave my girlfriend and all that you know.

00:12:18

But—

00:12:18

**Justin Nystrom:** For those who can't see this on the recorder, Nystrom is shaking his head. [Laughter]

00:12:25

**Jeff Heard:** You know it's—so but then you know as time flies you know I was 20 years-old and then the girlfriend was pregnant, well 19; I was 19 and she was pregnant, you know so by 20 I had a baby.

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**Justin Nystrom:** Somebody to support?

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**Jeff Heard:** Yeah.

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**Justin Nystrom:** It changes things.

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**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; it really does, yeah, so there goes my football career. That was my plan  
[Laughter] you know.

00:12:49

**Justin Nystrom:** So Plan—Plan B, the restaurant— and so did you—did you—you were  
bussing; did you move into waiting tables at that time or—?

00:12:58

**Jeff Heard:** No; I did not. No; I was still busing and—and running the room service and—

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**Justin Nystrom:** Did you find at that time that a lot of people wouldn't hire a black waiter?

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**Jeff Heard:** No; that's something else that I really didn't at that time didn't pay any—any mind  
to. Yeah; not—not at that point you know. But again, I—I lost that job and I can't remember why  
I lost the job but I remember that's when I really started cooking because my wife and I had—



well my girlfriend at that time, we had just moved together and so I wasn't working and she was working. So at that point that's when I started calling my mom and asking her how to fix different dishes. You know because at that time my wife was working for Schwegmann's Supermarket and it was long hours. It was like from like 10:00 in the morning until 10:00 that night most of the time, so I did all the cooking and combing my baby's hair and all—all that.

00:14:09

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm.

00:14:10

**Jeff Heard:** You know.

00:14:10

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

00:14:11

**Jeff Heard:** But so but then that was in [19]82 when my baby was born. So I went almost a year without working and I got married in between that time as well. Though I didn't have a job when my wife married me; I got married in [19]84, July of [19]84 and then actually I got my big break at Westin Canal Place. They called me actually on my birthday in [19]84, September 10, 1984 they called me and I started busing tables there.

00:14:48

So that was really a big change. Now in [19]84 is really, you know that was the World's Fair. That's when this city really—people don't realize that; that's when this city really took off

because they built a whole lot more hotels then. So that made it—gave it the room for the convention business to grow as well. So when I got the opportunity in [19]84 to work at Westin Canal Place it really was a big change for me. I mean I was working in a—an Italian café—Café Portofino for breakfast and lunch and then I would go work in the French dining room; it was called Les Jardines in the evening busing tables. So then I would say about—about six months all my servers let management know that this guy should be a server.

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So they just kept beating the management about it and beating the management about it and then they made me a server, so I was a server of probably about six months after I started, so I would say about February of [19]85 they made me a server.

**00:16:05**

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm; hmm. So—so tell me a little bit about the service there when you were a busser. How—was it like a front waiter, back waiter, busser, kind of deal? How was that structured?

**00:16:20**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; it was actually it was a team effort. It was—they had a—they had—actually they had a captain, a waiter, and a busser. And so what my waiters really liked about me was that I was proactive. You know I'm listening to everything the customers are asking them for so the time they'd turn—take the order and turn around to tell me, I need two teas and a Coke, I had it on a tray already. You know so that's what the servers really liked my aggressiveness in how I was taking the pressure off of them. You know so then it was—it became a struggle with the waiters of whose section I was going to work, you know.

00:17:06

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; they wanted you on their team.

00:17:08

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; they wanted me on their team, yes. It's like I want him in my section because we're flipping these tables and we're making money. I—I got this other guy that—in my section and I have five tables and four of them are dirty and he can't even flip them. You know I need somebody that's going to flip these tables where we can make—make some money. So I was always—that was always my thing with my mom having six boys that I can polish the floors than my brothers. I could wash the dishes better than my brothers, so I always had competition you know and there's nothing like great competition.

00:17:42

And so again, the servers was just amazed at how I was so aggressive and—and so they just started becoming my biggest cheerleaders. Now that's when I really — I'm not going to say then I realized that they wouldn't make a black man a server — but I did notice the difference in gratuity that I was getting from my other co-workers especially the pretty young Spanish girl that worked with me. She was cleaning up. [Laughter] You know she was cleaning up so you got—you know it was—and that's just because she was a female —oh you know you can smile if you make—oh I'm sorry; I forgot the Coke it's not that big of a deal. But for myself, if I forget something it was always like “Oh, he don't care about me,” you know. “He's—he's not on his job” or “he's not capable of doing it,” you know. But the most thing that you don't want your guests to feel is you're just not concerned. You know you want—you want the guests to know we're concerned about you know making sure everything is right.

00:18:55

But even at that point in my life I didn't realize how important being a server was. To me it was just a job that you know I was going home with great money.

00:19:08

**Justin Nystrom:** What kind of—like was this comparatively how—how much money was this?

00:19:13

**Jeff Heard:** Well um, I found—I just found out a little while ago I mean a few months ago how great money was. [Laughter] You know because of you know the margin of income now that people are making you know but yeah; I was making 100—200 bucks a day in 1985— [19]86 you know, yeah. You know and people are making that today. [Laughter] You know but—but you know for the most part you know like I say, I worked the—the café. I might have made 75-bucks and then I would work the happy hour and then I'd go work the—the dining room, the French dining room. I mean it was—so, on the average it hadn't even got to the part where I probably was making 200 to 300-bucks ever—every day.

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

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**Jeff Heard:** But I was working, you know, 18 hours a day. But if you was to look at if I was a person that would work my one shift and go home, I still would have been making at least 100 bucks every day.

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**Justin Nystrom:** And you say you don't think that's the case now.

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**Jeff Heard:** Far as what?

00:20:23

**Justin Nystrom:** For servers, you don't think servers are making that?

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**Jeff Heard:** Oh no; they're making it. I'm—they're making more—more than that today. What I'm saying is I didn't realize—I forgot what point I was making about today—it'll come to me. Far as I'm not sure—

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**Justin Nystrom:** It's okay.

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**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; I'm not sure.

00:20:49

**Justin Nystrom:** I mean that's good money and that was all—that was—that was cash coming home?

**00:20:51**

**Jeff Heard:** Mostly that was cash; yes. That was cash. Now that's something that Ronald Reagan started in 1986 with this reporting 8-percent of the gratuity so now that became a challenge far as bad tippers. You know so—so like if you had to pay 8-percent on your net sales but sometimes you could have rung up \$100 worth of food and the guest didn't even tip you 8-percent. The guest might have gave you 5-percent, you know; you could have run up a 100-buck check and then the guest left you 5-bucks. But now you got to pay tax on 8-bucks, but you only made 5. So and then it became a problem with the hotel and the business their self as well is allocating your tips right. See, if you didn't allocate your tips every pay day then you're not paying enough taxes. Mainly you're not paying enough Social Security taxes and you really get fined for that.

**00:21:51**

So I could remember one year where I made—maybe, I don't know, maybe about \$16,000 and that's what I paid taxes on because that's what my check said. But then they allocated at the end of the year I don't know another \$10,000 maybe in tips. So, now that's \$10,000 that I didn't pay Social Security tax on or FICA on; so now when you do your taxes you're in the hole.

**00:22:24**

**Justin Nystrom:** Ouch.

**00:22:25**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah and I—and I didn't realize that. You know so that really had me in a bind with the IRS for a few years.

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**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

00:22:33

**Jeff Heard:** So after I figured that out I started allocating more when I filled out my W-2. I started allocating more; put zero dependents and extra take out an extra \$20 and then that way I didn't have that problem when it all came to the—.

00:22:52

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; do you feel like the—the hotel did a good job of—of guiding its employees in this because it's—I mean it's complicated?

00:22:58

**Jeff Heard:** No; they did not. And so and we all thought that it was something that—some reason that it was benefiting them. I'm not sure what—what the reason was. You know but again I was a young man not too concerned about that as long as I was making it and bringing it home every day.

00:23:18

**Justin Nystrom:** So you, you know you said at this point in time this was just a job but—but clearly there was a point where you decided this was something that you were going to do.

00:23:27

**Jeff Heard:** Oh yeah; actually I made that decision actually on the first—the first day they turned me loose to be a server by myself. I made that decision because I actually my first table I had a lady came in. She was somebody famous. I know that because she had a driver and all. She came in and ordered some appetizers and a bottle of Perrier Jouet, the—you know with the fleur-de-lis, the pretty bottle? She ordered that and I could remember the check was \$302. I remember that and she gave me \$400 in cash and I brought her, her change and she looked at me and she looked at the change and she balled it up and said “that’s for you, cutie.”

**00:24:21**

And at that point I told myself wow; I’m going to get good. I’m going to learn this because—because what happened is I was putting the corkscrew in the champagne bottle and she said oh no, that don’t go like that. And it don’t go like that [Laughter] so that was my first experience you know. I’d get someone ordering this great bottle of champagne on the first table I ever served and I’m about to open it up with the corkscrew and [Laughter] she was so nice and I guess she said this kid don’t have no clue. You know this kid don’t have no clue. But that really motivated me to tell myself that I can really feed my family. I’m going to get—I’m going to get better at this and I’m going to learn this—this field. I really am. So and then again, I always did like to dress nice, so both places had nice uniforms. The Portofino Café had nice uniforms with the long tie and the vest and all but the Dining Room, Les Jardines had the short penguin-tailed tuxedo and tie you know so I was—man I loved it.

**00:25:33**

My—matter of fact, I had to go visit my mom and she said “can you come over and put some clothes on sometimes.” I stayed in my black and white—

**00:25:40**



**Justin Nystrom:** You're proud of it.

00:25:40

**Jeff Heard:** I'm proud of it, yeah, right definitely—yeah, right.

00:25:44

**Justin Nystrom:** I'll be—I'll bet coming home that first day of waiting tables and telling your wife about that tip huh?

00:25:47

**Jeff Heard:** Right; right, right. [Laughter] Yeah; I was definitely—and, again, you know at that time the income was just crazy compared to the average—especially a young black man. You know matter of fact I had saved enough in six months to buy my wife a brand new car. I bought her a brand new 1986 Buick Skylark.

00:26:17

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh those were great cars.

00:26:19

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah and I had—I couldn't even drive at 22 years-old. I didn't even have a driver's license. My parents never owned a car. But she could drive. [Laughter] You know so I bought her and we had us a brand new car and you know it was a great experience. Again, the biggest experience was all the escargot and stuff like that. I can remember telling my mom that; “mom, I served snails... and people eat snails!” [Laughter] You know so you know just that you know

stepping in as a young man growing up, you know not having much, and then all of the sudden you're in this world where all these big time people are dining and I'm—you know I'm in the middle of it not even knowing you know how prestige(d) the position I had was actually.

00:27:17

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah because the Westin Canal Place is still a—a very expensive hotel.

00:27:21

**Jeff Heard:** Right; definitely yes.

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**Justin Nystrom:** Uh-hm; so did anyone kind of take you under the wing and mentor you at this time because like you talk about the champagne bottle and all that like there's—there's a lot to learn.

00:27:35

**Jeff Heard:** Right.

00:27:36

**Justin Nystrom:** About that sort of service. I mean I know you saw it a lot as a busser—

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**Jeff Heard:** Yes; uh-hm.

00:27:41

**Justin Nystrom:** —but was there—was there anyone in particular or was it just something you—you did through observation?

**00:27:46**

**Jeff Heard:** No; for the most part it was through observation yes. It wasn't no one in particular but again, there was this one gentleman that actually his name was Robert, I don't know his last name but it was Robert and he was a straight up gentleman that I liked because he—just the way how straight up professional he was you know. So even then when I was doing that with the champagne he was standing over — not over me — but he came upon when it happened and so if I'm not mistaken he opened the bottle for me if I'm not mistaken. I just don't really remember.

**00:28:31**

But a lot of people at that point you know—you know they showed you things you know. But I was always a person that examined things and took it apart and put it back together you know and I was—and I liked that about people because I'm not a type of person that stay on you. Even now, what I'm doing now, you know I like a person that notices if I switch the green peas—. [Audio Blanks]

**00:29:06**

**Justin Nystrom:** Record here; all right we're recording again. I—we had a technical problem and hopefully we have no interruption in our recording. I'm back here with Chef Jeff Heard. We were just talking about how you picked up you know technique working at the Westin and—and—and so you worked—how long did you work at the Westin?

**00:29:29**

**Jeff Heard:** About four years.

**00:29:31**

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay and—and what—what—we don't have that microphone on.

**00:29:39**

**Jeff Heard:** Oh maybe I pulled it out because I was walking.

**00:29:42**

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh no; I think we're good. Try again.

**00:29:48**

**Jeff Heard:** Four years.

**00:29:49**

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay; we're—yeah we're good now. Okay; but I bumped. It was me; I bumped the audio level. So—so what made you leave?

**00:29:58**

**Jeff Heard:** Actually um, you know things get... confusion—it's a—it was a—some confusion with a female so [Laughter]—and you know that's why I left and—.

**00:30:19**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah I got you, okay. So—so after that confusion where did you go?

00:30:24

**Jeff Heard:** I went to the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza. I went to—it was Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza was just a few blocks away on Poydras and Canal and what was strange about it is that the same person that owned Westin Canal Place owned the—the Crowne Plaza and that was Mr. Joe Canizaro

00:30:48

**Justin Nystrom:** Uh-hm; yeah, I've met Joe, yeah, yeah.

00:30:51

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; he's a real nice guy, yeah.

00:30:51

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

00:30:53

**Jeff Heard:** Real nice guy. Yeah and actually down the years I wound up doing a lot of functions when I was working for August at his home in Old Metairie.

00:31:01

**Justin Nystrom:** Right; on Ridgeline [Drive], sure.

00:31:03

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah.

00:31:04

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

00:31:04

**Jeff Heard:** Uh-hm, yeah. But yeah; then that's where I spent the next 27 years.

00:31:10

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh my goodness.

00:31:12

**Jeff Heard:** In that building; yes. Yeah; I spent the next 20 from 1989 to—to—yeah I left Canal Place in [19]89 so I was at Canal Place for five years, yeah; so 1988, I was there from [19]84 to [19]88 I was at Canal Place. 1988, I went to the Crowne Plaza on Poydras.

00:31:40

**Justin Nystrom:** So did you go as a—as a captain?

00:31:43

**Jeff Heard:** I went as a server. I was a server in the café.

00:31:46

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay.

00:31:47

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; I was a server in the café.

00:31:47

**Justin Nystrom:** Was that single service in the café?

00:31:50

**Jeff Heard:** Single service; yes.

00:31:50

**Justin Nystrom:** And that was new for you, right?

00:31:52

**Jeff Heard:** That was—well no, a lot—I had a busman, busser, so it wasn't front/back. It wasn't no three-man team, so no. It—it wasn't—I wouldn't say it was new. It was—it wasn't as high-end as Westin Canal Place because it was more of a buffet style café and it had a buffet for lunch, breakfast and lunch, so the service wasn't as high there you know in the—in the café itself.

00:32:28

**Justin Nystrom:** Now I've—I've interviewed some people who have worked a buffet and they said it's actually easy money; did you feel that way or—?

00:32:35

**Jeff Heard:** No; I didn't feel that way. No; no, I didn't feel that way. It's less money. I'm not about—I was never about easy. You know I'd rather work—work for pay you know. Yeah; I work for pay. That's the way I always liked it.

00:32:50

**Justin Nystrom:** So did you—was—did this job stay? There was an evolution to your position there or—?

00:32:55

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; 27 years there I was a server, supervisors a few times, a manager a couple of times, a banquet captain a couple of stints, and director for a little while. So—

00:33:16

**Justin Nystrom:** So what do all those—I mean there's—there's a big difference between—I've interviewed a lot of people that talk about like where they're servers and then they say oh, you should be in management.

00:33:26

**Jeff Heard:** Yes.

00:33:27

**Justin Nystrom:** What's your experience with that transition?

00:33:29



**Jeff Heard:** My experience with that transition if you're a server and they're telling you—you need to be in management you have a lot of knowledge of the business, but you don't have the ability to get it done.

**00:33:41**

**Justin Nystrom:** What do you mean by that?

**00:33:42**

**Jeff Heard:** Meaning that physically you know like—I know a lot of people that just physically and mentally couldn't be servers. You know because it's just too much mentally that you got to take on you know or they're—just the personality didn't work. See one gentleman, his personality was to talk and you cannot get caught up in conversation and conversation when you got all these tables around you that's looking for service. You know so that was the—the main thing with being a server; you need to know how to prioritize what—what you got to get done.

**00:34:17**

**Justin Nystrom:** And you were—we were just talking before we started recording this morning that you're not naturally wanting to go and have a conversation like that right?

**00:34:28**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; right.

**00:34:28**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah, so what is your style as a—as a server?

**00:34:31**

**Jeff Heard:** My style is to—to meet you, greet you and—and to figure out exactly what—what are you looking for. That’s one thing about a server; a server—there’s all types of dining experiences, but it’s up to that server to be able to be able to gauge what that expectation is. You know so and to meet and—or to exceed it, so it—you could be on a business luncheon where you know you just—this clientele—this client, you’re trying to get to sign a contract so you bring them to this restaurant to impress them and nothing goes right. And then they say—then the guests don’t sign your contract because you brought to them this restaurant where just everything fell apart.

**00:35:17**

Or it can be a lovely evening, you know a dining experience for a couple that wants to be alone and you’re just smothering them too much you know and just getting—they want to tell you can you just please back up? [Laughter] You know but for the most part it’s about being able to gauge what the expectations are of your guests that’s sitting in your seat. That’s—that’s the number one thing to do.

**00:35:48**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; so—so you know we’ve—we’ve seen dining behavior, diner behavior change a lot over time. Have you seen—what—what things have you noticed about people coming into your restaurant?

**00:35:59**

**Jeff Heard:** Well I noticed you know now today that people are more informed. People have more knowledge; you know like some people know the menu better than you—you do. You know they will ask you a question about the desserts. Tell me about the desserts and you will—you'll describe it to them, well we got the—the flourless chocolate tart with a cherry reduction and—and then they'll tell you left off the walnuts. [Laughter] You know so why did you ask me to tell you about desserts when you know them better than I know them? [Laughter] You know so you know that's a thing, so again, it's about knowledge of your profession, you know.

00:36:41

**Justin Nystrom:** Uh-hm; so who are some of the people you worked with? What was the—what was the staff like at the—at that Crowne Plaza?

00:36:48

**Jeff Heard:** The staff was very—at the Crowne Plaza the staff was very friendly. I can remember that and my co-workers, most of them was a lot older than I was as well. I noticed that you know gentlemen(s) you know they was at least 40 years old; you know some of them was older. You know and—and so—and I found that—that was another thing that being a server, management didn't like too many young people being a server as well.

00:37:20

**Justin Nystrom:** Interesting.

00:37:21

**Jeff Heard:** You know.

00:37:21

**Justin Nystrom:** At the hotel?

00:37:22

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; right, yes. You know they want more groomed persons you know and that's again because of the clientele, you know. The clientele are more patient with someone that looks more mature and knows what they're doing. You know a lot of people would be like "man this kid don't have no clue. Why is—I'm up in here having this fancy million dollar dinner or something and this kid is serving me and don't have no clue." You know so it all—in the dining experience, it all comes together with whatever the guest's expectation is. You know they want knowledge; that's the number one thing they want. They want you to be knowledgeable about the product that you're serving them, knowledgeable about how to serve them. You know do you serve from the left or right, if you're giving me a fish fork or a steak knife you know whatever, "he just brought me my soup and I don't have a spoon." You know so it's all about that knowledge of the—what you're supposed to do you know.

00:38:24

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; now at Crowne Plaza were the other servers mostly men at that time?

00:38:28

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; they was mostly men. Yes; yes.

00:38:30

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah and did they do this like—was this something they had done their whole lives or—?

00:38:35

**Jeff Heard:** It's something they done their whole life; yes, yes.

00:38:38

**Justin Nystrom:** Well one interviewee called it a lifer.

00:38:41

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yeah, yes.

00:38:42

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah. But they were—they were proud of—

00:38:45

**Jeff Heard:** They was proud, definite, yeah they were proud; yes. Yes; uh-hm.

00:38:50

**Justin Nystrom:** Now—

00:38:51

**Jeff Heard:** Can I can go back to when I was a busser, too? I didn't say anything about that.

When I was a busser down on Canal Street at the Travel Lodge and the Governor's House there — they was all older black women that was servers.

00:39:08

**Justin Nystrom:** Interesting.

00:39:08

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; they were all— all of them was women servers. That was in their 40s and 50s.

00:39:14

**Justin Nystrom:** Do you think that was a managerial decision that this is the kind of person we're looking for and that's the vibe we want in our dining room or—?

00:39:21

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; I think that was for that particular dining room in that particular place, like we had a lot of—had a lot—it was a big spot for police officers, yeah undercover cops and all like that. That was one of their—their go-to spots. I don't know; that was one of them. Matter of fact that was the—the biggest clientele; we always kept a big group of undercover police officers having coffee. That's when I realized how big coffee was as well.

00:39:53

**Justin Nystrom:** Is that when you started drinking coffee?

00:39:54

**Jeff Heard:** No; I didn't start then. [Laughter]

00:39:57

**Justin Nystrom:** We were talking about this earlier. You said your first day not drinking coffee and yeah—

00:40:02

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah—

00:40:04

**Justin Nystrom:** I say go with God on that one.

00:40:06

**Jeff Heard:** Right. [Laughter]

00:40:09

**Justin Nystrom:** So—so you're at Crowne Plaza a fair—fairly long time and eventually you make your way to—to John Besh's restaurant August.

00:40:17

**Jeff Heard:** August; yes. Now before—before that now I worked at a—when I was at Crowne Plaza that's another thing, you know in the 40 years I've been in this business I probably worked two jobs close to 20 of them.

00:40:29

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh really okay.

00:40:31

**Jeff Heard:** You know let's say like I worked for Christian's as well.

00:40:35

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh okay; so tell me about—yeah, yeah, Christian's.

00:40:36

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; I worked for Christian's. It was a lot of—a lot of tableside service, Café Brulôt, Caesar salads; we did a lot of filéting of fish tableside. You know we had a one—a Steak Diane that we did table side.

00:40:58

**Justin Nystrom:** What years was this?

00:40:59

**Jeff Heard:** This was like between [19]95 and 2000. Now that when I—matter of fact when I first left Canal Place I applied there and they laughed me out the door actually. [Laughter]

00:41:20

**Justin Nystrom:** Really?

00:41:21

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah and—and I would say that was because of my skin color.



00:41:23

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

00:41:24

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; they was like there's no way you'll come and be a server here. Now see again, I didn't realize what a privilege and what a high position that I was actually in at Westin Canal Place. I had no idea.

00:41:42

**Justin Nystrom:** That was probably like 1989—1990 when you first went in there?

00:41:46

**Jeff Heard:** When I was at Westin Canal Place in between—yeah it was between [19]84 and [19]88 but soon as I lost my job there I did go apply at Christian's and actually I went and applied for busman and they didn't—and they—I'm tell you people was laughing at me. Yeah; you know and but again if I'm not mistaken it was about [19]98 so I guess you could say 10 years later when I started working there. I worked there for about two—

00:42:16

**Justin Nystrom:** So things had changed?

00:42:16

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; things had evolved by then, yes. So when I went in as a server then in [19]98 and I worked there for a couple of years for Mr. Bergeron who sat at the bar and he had like a

one—he had a partition, a glass partition and part of it was like magnified so he could sit behind the glass bar and see everything. He can see if you took a clean napkin and put it in the—with the dirty napkins. He’d see that. He watched everything. [Laughter]

00:42:52

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

00:42:53

**Jeff Heard:** I’m not sure; his name—like we called him “Mr. B.” But his—if I’m not mistaken it was [Hank] Bergeron. I’m not sure of his first name. But he had a partner Mr. [Chris] Ansel who was with Galatoire’s. He was in the Galatoire’s family; that’s what I heard at—he had just broke up with at that time so the whole place was for Mr. B.

00:43:23

**Justin Nystrom:** I didn’t even realize this was going on.

[Adjusts microphone]

00:43:24

**Jeff Heard:** You didn’t? [Laughter]

00:43:25

**Justin Nystrom:** No and it was like it’s—it’s like a—okay that’s better. I can hear my—I was wondering why I was having such a hard time hearing myself.

00:43:35

**Jeff Heard:** Oh okay. [Laughter]

**00:43:39**

**Justin Nystrom:** Now my cough is kicking in. So yeah; Christian's is—is fine dining.

**00:43:44**

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; Christian's was fine—it was fine dining. What I liked about Christian's, it wasn't a lot of setup time. We went in at 5:00. We set up and we opened at 5:30 and we closed at 9:00.

**00:43:55**

**Justin Nystrom:** So side work was minimum?

**00:43:58**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; side work was very minimum, you know. So and he strictly—9 o'clock was the last seating so it was great and it wasn't all—you know like I said it was just Mr. B.

[Laughter] Mr. B and he had a maître 'd. So it wasn't all the pressure, like some—some places where you know they go to the pre-shift and answer all these thousands questions and get a pre-test and things like that. He didn't have that; the pressure wasn't on like that so that was great.

[Laughter] You know—but it's—I loved it. The main thing I loved about it was that timing. It was you're in and out, you know six hours you was in and out. So I lost that job for 09/11.

**00:44:46**

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh okay.

**00:44:47**

**Jeff Heard:** Because once 09/11 happened nobody wouldn't fly so there was no business, so I stopped working because there was no business so I stopped working, and at the same time I was still at the hotel but I wasn't making any income because nobody wouldn't fly. So I was just going to the hotel every day. You know and we made a little bit of money. We started trying to promote to the office buildings to get people in for lunch to have some lunch business, but it wasn't any breakfast business because the hotel was—was empty.

**00:45:21**

**Justin Nystrom:** You know that's really interesting because you're the first person to talk about 09/11 as—so you felt that this was felt—because Christian's of course was up in—away from downtown.

**00:45:33**

**Jeff Heard:** Downtown; yes.

**00:45:34**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah and—and even downtown so even felt—because Christian's would have been locals but out of towners stopped—

**00:45:40**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; right, yes.

00:45:42

**Justin Nystrom:** Huh.

00:45:42

**Jeff Heard:** Uh-hm; yeah.

00:45:44

**Justin Nystrom:** That's super-interesting; yeah.

00:45:45

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah and I remember it because it was a bad time for me actually because my wife and I we had just took a cruise for our 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary and on my birthday September 10<sup>th</sup> my wife told me we had a souvenir and it would be here in nine months. [Laughter] From our cruise—

00:46:08

**Justin Nystrom:** Things happen on your birthday don't they? [Laughter]

00:46:12

**Jeff Heard:** So I was out fishing the next day September 11<sup>th</sup> when the news—when the thing—when the thing actually happened. So now I'm having a baby—expecting a baby and there's no work for a straight year because really once people did start flying the convention season was over. It was almost—it was summertime, so I went a straight year about to have a new baby with no income. Because I mean it just—you know the second job just totally vanished with

Christians and the hotel I—you know I was just going there every day and wasn't making much money.

**00:46:55**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah. Yeah; yeah, what time of year was—would you consider the absolute worst to—to be waiting tables in New Orleans?

**00:47:03**

**Jeff Heard:** I would say August, the month of August, July and August.

**00:47:10**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, what—what are some of the better—?

**00:47:13**

**Jeff Heard:** The better months is when convention first starts, October, November—October and November, yeah; I done had some beautiful Novembers. Matter of fact, if I can recall the Novembers I probably made more money in the month of November than any other month you know for years.

**00:47:36**

**Justin Nystrom:** Not—I know for some people Mardi Gras is hit or miss depending on where you are. What was your experience with Mardi Gras?

**00:47:42**

**Jeff Heard:** Mardi Gras was always you know good for breakfast business, you know because it was a party—people just want to party and they’re not looking for fine dining or anything like that. But they would get up and eat a big breakfast, drink champagne and Bloody Mary’s, and things like that.

**00:48:06**

**Justin Nystrom:** Run up a big bill?

**00:48:06**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah, uh-hm, yes.

**00:48:10**

**Justin Nystrom:** But other than that not so much?

**00:48:12**

**Jeff Heard:** No; not—not so much. It was just again it’s probably more bars made money than anything else.

**00:48:20**

**Justin Nystrom:** Was—was that a harder crowd to work because of the party atmosphere?

**00:48:24**

**Jeff Heard:** No; not necessarily no. No; I found that Sugar Bowl crowd was a hard crowd to work. It’s according to what team came in.

00:48:34

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh really?

00:48:35

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah, yeah; like if it was LSU they're hard to work. [Laughter] Yeah; they're tear—they tear up things, yeah.

00:48:43

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah?

00:48:43

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah but another—

00:48:44

**Justin Nystrom:** [Inaudible] Stanford or somebody right coming in? [Laughter]

00:48:48

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; you know and tell you about the most tedious place I worked, I worked for Louis XVI. Yeah; I worked there and it was—you had to get in for—you had to come in for 3 o'clock and prep til 6:00. You had three hours of prep. Your gueridons you had to prep your gueridon and polish all your silverware and it—it was—it was all a — pre-test every day.

00:49:21

**Justin Nystrom:** Really?



00:49:22

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; every day because they would change the menu. They would change the menu every day. They would change the menu and have a special preset menu as well. You know but oh, what—what—I'm trying to think of the maître d—well we used to call him kamikaze; that's not his name though. [Laughter] But yeah; it was tough. They had one of the deepest wine lists. They had a famous wine list, man. And I tell you it was—it was the first place that I worked at that was pure a la carte. If you wanted a stick of butter it was a price for it.

00:50:05

**Justin Nystrom:** Huh; yeah.

00:50:06

**Jeff Heard:** The bread is a price. I don't care what it was a price. You know everything was separate.

00:50:13

**Justin Nystrom:** Did you find guests were shocked by that?

00:50:14

**Jeff Heard:** No; the guests wasn't shocked at all, no. See that's another thing I found when I was working at August, a lot of people want to spend money, especially companies. You know a company like whether it was Driscoll Strawberries came in and they was entertaining their clientele and they wanted an update every hour on the check, what the bill was. And as the night

was going on it wasn't enough money being spent. So they was like well, "bring the wine list. We need better wine." You know because he would say that; his boss would tell him, "you didn't wow the people enough." You know we—we're trying to get these people's business you know. You didn't—they need to be drinking McCallan 25. You know, keep showering them. Give them more. Give the more, more; spend some money you know. [Laughter]

00:51:08

**Justin Nystrom:** I'm in the wrong dinner. [Laughter]

00:51:11

**Jeff Heard:** See and I thought—I thought about that many nights. Why don't I get invited to dinners like this? You know [Laughter]—you know yeah but you know, again, you know it's something that you learn as you—you go on. You learn that you know there's different levels of this business that you really out—I wonder sometimes what it's like at the Academy Awards Dinner or something like that you know what them servers—. You know servers are like 80 years old and probably won't quit. [Laughter]

00:51:44

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; right.

00:51:46

**Jeff Heard:** You know say I worked at the Marriott and the coffee people do not quit. If you—people that serve coffee make three figures.

00:51:56

**Justin Nystrom:** Really?

00:51:57

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; they make three figures. You don't realize that you have this ballroom. You have ballrooms in here with a thousand people in it that might have four or five coffee breaks a day. And you're charging \$85 a gallon of coffee. So the gratuity on people done bought \$20,000 worth of coffee in one day. And you get 20-percent gratuity off of it.

00:52:24

**Justin Nystrom:** So that's considered a very good job?

00:52:26

**Jeff Heard:** Yes. It's a very good job.

00:52:28

**Justin Nystrom:** And that—yeah; interesting.

00:52:30

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; coffee service is a very good job. You know like most people think about banquets as a sit-down dinner, but it's a lot more to banquets to a sit-down dinner. That's just a small part of it. You know you have breakout rooms, meeting rooms, you know things like that—that really you know it's where the income is.

00:52:53

**Justin Nystrom:** Coffee and pastry trays.

**00:52:54**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; coffee and pastries, you know you might do a—a snack break where you got ice-cream and you know popcorn and all types of different things, yes. So when you're talking about big groups you know you can have a—you know you—and staying a day—that's another, I don't know—another thing what happened with banquets is it was having a hard time finding servers to serve breakfast. So what they did, they start pooling the day's money. They'd pool the breakfast, lunch, and dinner so because everybody wanted to work dinners—instead of a \$100 steak I'm making more money if I serve a dinner. I don't want to serve no lunch.

**00:53:36**

So what they did—what they did they would pool the gratuities so now you'd get paid the gratuity could be \$40 an hour so if you came in and worked breakfast, lunch, and dinner they'd say you worked 12 hours so now you're getting paid 12—12 hours at \$40 an hour.

**00:53:55**

**Justin Nystrom:** Not bad.

**00:53:55**

**Jeff Heard:** If you came and worked the breakfast and worked four hours you're getting paid 40-bucks for four hours. So that broke the challenge of they couldn't get anyone to work breakfast.

**00:54:05**

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm; interesting. Yeah; yeah, equalizing it out.

**00:54:07**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; equalizing it out and made it what—you know people don't have no problem working breakfast.

**00:54:13**

**Justin Nystrom:** And I guess one of the other benefits of working for one of these big hotels is benefits, right?

**00:54:17**

**Jeff Heard:** Right.

**00:54:18**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; so did benefits keep you in the hotel?

**00:54:20**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; now see when—that's another reason say like I worked at August, I made \$2.01 an hour. At the hotel I made \$12 an hour. And I had benefits at the hotel. But I made great gratuity at August so for the most part time—my benefits come out of my hotel check; my paycheck at August was just as much as the hotel because I had no benefits coming out of the August check even though I made \$10 more an hour at the hotel but that went all to my benefits.

**00:55:02**

**Justin Nystrom:** Now when you got those kids, those—your birthday surprise and all that those benefits I guess are—are important right?

00:55:09

**Jeff Heard:** They're very important; yes, because that was another thing. I went a long time without medical insurance but for some reason I bought the medical insurance that April of—and then a year later I was having a new baby.

00:55:25

**Justin Nystrom:** That's good timing right there.

00:55:26

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; really great timing, yeah.

00:55:28

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah, yeah. Well cool; so—so when did you start? So you worked at Louis XVI, you did Christian's; were there any other places in there at that time or—?

00:55:39

**Jeff Heard:** I worked the Marriott. I worked the Marriott. I worked a place called Italian Grille that Miss [Ruth] Fertel owned. It was on Veterans [Parkway, Metairie].

00:55:49

**Justin Nystrom:** Okay.

00:55:49

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; she was the main owner and it was Dan Levy, he was the director for all Ruth's Chris; it was his restaurant actually but she backed him—backed him on it.

00:56:00

**Justin Nystrom:** Ruth's Fertel?

00:56:02

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; she was a nice lady.

00:56:04

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

00:56:04

**Jeff Heard:** She is a real nice lady. You know and I worked there a couple of years as well. I worked at the Marriott for like three years.

00:56:12

**Justin Nystrom:** So you're working these two jobs, keeping food on the table at home, yeah, yeah.

00:56:18

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yes, uh-hm.

00:56:19

**Justin Nystrom:** The kids are getting—

00:56:19

**Jeff Heard:** But the longest I ever worked two jobs was—was August.

00:56:24

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; so when—when did you start working for—?

00:56:25

**Jeff Heard:** I started working at August for—in [20]05. I started working February of [20]05.

When I started working there he was the—the head chef. Mr. August was still the owner of the building. Yeah; Mr. August owned the restaurant.

00:56:41

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh okay.

00:56:42

**Jeff Heard:** Yes and Mr. Duke August I heard he got upset with the Windsor Court, the Grill Room, he got upset with the Grill Room and they had—it was Pastorio, an Italian restaurant right across the street that had caught fire a few years before and it was just sitting there. So Mr. August told them that he was going to put a restaurant across the street from them and it was going to be the number one restaurant in the city and not the Grill Room. You know the Grill Room held that award for a while. You know so that's what Mr. August did and he took most of



the staff from the Grill Room and brought it to August. And they became the number one restaurant.

00:57:28

**Justin Nystrom:** Huh; yeah. [Laughter]

00:57:29

**Jeff Heard:** So after he made that feat, Mr. August, he offered to sell it to Mr. Besh, so I started there that January or February of [20]05 and Chef bought it in April and then the storm hit in that August of [20]05, Hurricane Katrina. It shut everything down. But it actually raised Mr. Besh up because when we all came back he started working—Mr. Duke August see, he owned half of St. Bernard Parish so FEMA hired his chef to feed everybody down in St. Bernard Parish, so that's actually where Chef made his money at if you ask me. He made his money off of FEMA feeding everybody down in The Parish for two years and then that's when he started buying other hotels—I mean excuse me—other restaurants.

00:58:40

**Justin Nystrom:** Hmm; uh-hm.

00:58:40

**Jeff Heard:** But he—I feel—I look at him as family actually. I watched his children grow up. I was there 10 years. I watched some of his kids go from elementary school to go away to Notre Dame to college. You know worked a lot of functions at his home and—and when we first

started out it was he and I traveled to a lot of people's homes when he was the cook and I was the server.

00:59:06

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh wow.

00:59:07

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; you know before he got—before like I said, we worked before he got big. You know I was there with him. And we—and we traveled so I learned a lot about packing up and traveling—

00:59:20

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; the catering kind of thing, yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:59:22

**Jeff Heard:** Yes.

00:59:23

**Justin Nystrom:** What were some of these trips like? Where did y'all go?

00:59:25

**Jeff Heard:** Oh we went to Covington, Robert, Louisiana, Texas, Florida; we went to Atlanta a couple of times to do the—the golf tournament. Yeah; so—

00:59:40

**Justin Nystrom:** So you—would you fly, would you—would you take all your ingredients with you and—and—or would you buy them where you were?

**00:59:47**

**Jeff Heard:** Well he would ship them. Yeah; he would—most of the stuff he would ship. We would freeze, ice it down, and—and ship.

**00:59:54**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; timing I guess is critical.

**00:59:55**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yes.

**00:59:57**

**Justin Nystrom:** Fed-Ex.

**00:59:58**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; but—but the August experience was—was great because—so—so after the storm when we got back that's another thing.

**01:00:08**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; how long were you—were you gone?

**01:00:09**

**Jeff Heard:** I was—nothing happened to my home so I was—

01:00:17

**Justin Nystrom:** It's doing it again.

Technical issues with recorder]

01:00:16

**Jeff Heard:** I thought I seen it blink.

01:00:19

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah. Yeah; I had to stop this one and this one is still going so I guess we use this one for the rest and make sure it's still going—yeah. We're recording, so—

01:00:38

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; so after the storm—oh I didn't mention that. I actually got hired at August. I walked in the door. Like I said I like to be sharp and fresh haircut, clean, walk in the door, the maître d, before I could get the application filled out he came over and asked me what I was looking for and I told him I was looking for a server job. So he interviewed me right there on the spot and didn't ask me anything about food. He just asked me a few things about like cordials and stuff like that. So when—when I had the knowledge of cordials he was—I guess that was the way he gauged how long you've been in the business and what you know. I can tell you what's in the flavor of Frangelico is and these types of things, so that's all he asked me. And he said I want to hire you. I want you to bring you on as a banquet server. I said wow; great.

01:01:32

I left there very excited because I needed the—the job. This was [20]05 and like I said I had just went through the struggle with having the new baby and a whole year and no income so

I really needed a job. But I was happy. And at the same time, it wasn't—I was glad to have the job but I found as well that—that it wasn't any black servers—

01:02:07

**Justin Nystrom:** None.

01:02:09

**Jeff Heard:** —not in the banquet area or in the dining room.

01:02:12

**Justin Nystrom:** Wow.

01:02:12

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; it wasn't any, you know so after the storm was all over with I asked Octavio [Mantilla], who was the partner, I wanted to be the banquet captain because the captain actually first night that we opened, my banquet captain and this partner, the guy that was—he was a server, — he was a manager, they both came back and they wanted me to come back that same night on the opening and I said I just—I can't make it. I'll be here tomorrow. And when I came back the next day they both had done quit.

01:02:47

**Justin Nystrom:** Huh.

01:02:47

**Jeff Heard:** Because no matter what, Octavio and Chef Besh, they bring in the pressure. They don't care if it was the first night back or whatever. [Laughter]

01:02:55

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

01:02:57

**Jeff Heard:** You know they're not having it so they had done quit, so I asked Octavio can I run—so I was working but it wasn't any banquets because nobody wasn't you know wasn't traveling you know and it was because of the storm. You couldn't get in the city. So people was happy to be dining though. Oh, it was so easy to wait tables then. Man it was so easy to wait—wait tables. Nobody wasn't complaining about anything.

01:03:19

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

01:03:20

**Jeff Heard:** They was just happy they was being able to eat and socialize for the guests and tell their stories and all.

01:03:25

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

01:03:26

**Jeff Heard:** But I asked Octavio when the banquets pick up can I go—I wanted to be the banquet captain, so he said that’s not a problem. So once the banquets started going again they made me the banquet captain. And what I loved about it was that I had full control of everything, you know once I was up there a while they seen it was—like the manager didn’t have to come upstairs. He can take care of what was downstairs.

**01:03:50**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

**01:03:51**

**Jeff Heard:** So you know and then again Chef you know we became real tight. Chef and I like I said we traveled together and what he really liked about me—he was a very neat person, well-groomed and I was the same way. You know so we just traveled and now we—even if I wasn’t the part, I looked the part. You know that’s what he liked, you know, so once I was in his graces, it was easy for me because everybody else was like—comes Chef, you know so when he was emailing people make sure Jeffrey on this and make sure Jeffrey this and when Mr. August died make sure Jeffrey is handling the repast and—I can’t remember the gentleman’s name.

**01:04:35**

But anyway when he started sending out emails and—and saying my name all the time that gave me more clout to be able to say how I want things, you know. So you know when you give me team members I evaluated them and put them in position to succeed. And if I couldn’t find a position for them I would let them know. You know so when I have a three-man team, I need a person that can do it all and run the food, know the wine knowledge, bus tables. I need it all. But once we have a big team and we get 10—12 people you can give me someone that’s—

may not be that skilled but I can find something for them to do once we started. They can work in the kitchen or whatever; I can find things for them to do.

**01:05:22**

But it was beautiful because I just walked in and got my BEO, gave out assignments, my—my team seen what type of worker I was. I wasn't the person that's I'm just going to lay back and let you do all the work. I'm hands on with you and we're going to make sure you will be professional and we're going to make sure the guests is happy and at the end of the day we're going to go home and we're going to go home with enough money to feed our families. So that was the—the great thing about August is that I had full control of my room. You know and I did away with this is your table and that's your table. I did everything by committee, you know I got these two people are going to serve the food, these two are going to run it, this—these two are going to pour the wine, and everybody had a—a job to do and then that way it wasn't — no one got neglected. The guests or—all the guests got took(en) care of it; it wasn't one table that got left over because it was a weak server taking care of their table. The whole team took care of all the tables. You know so that made for—for great teamwork and great morale.

**01:06:45**

So again in that—in that business that's something that I always stayed away from because of you go work at the Marriott somewhere and you're serving 500 people for dinner and they tell you this is your table, that's your table, and then you're working with him and this person never waited a table in their life, and now you got to carry them the whole night and then at the end of the night you're both leaving with the same amount of money.

**01:07:12**

**Justin Nystrom:** Same amount; yeah.



01:07:13

**Jeff Heard:** You know and that—that doesn't work. And the new people are going to get a table; they'll tell you well you got table 344. It's down there in the barroom somewhere. You just—you can't see it from here. You just go start walking that way and you'll find it, you know that's how far away you're from the kitchen. So but the server that's been working here he'd pick up his tray as soon as he walked in the door. This table right there by the door and he'd serve them but you've got to walk two blocks to get to your table.

01:07:42

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

01:07:43

**Jeff Heard:** So it's things like that—that always bothered me in the banquet business, you know.

01:07:47

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

01:07:49

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; so again, it's all about the guest though you know. It's about the guest and being—to me being a server, especially a la carte is you have to be 100 all the time. You can't score 99. It has to be 100 because that's the expectation that the person that's sitting in that seat has from you.

01:08:11

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah and August is a la carte.

01:08:12

**Jeff Heard:** Yes and August is a la carte. But—but I'm just saying particularly I don't care if you work at Applebee's you know you have to be 100 because that person sitting in that seat has an expectation from you. And the reason he has an expectation from you is because he knows you have an expectation from him. You want a few dollars from him; you want gratuity from him. So a lot of people sit on the chair that feels entitled. You know now I'm going to talk about say a black woman for instance.

01:08:48

It's a totally different dining experience when you have to deal with a black woman on the table. And I'm just telling you how it is. You know I worked Essence Festival for a long time and if you have a table of six women on it, six black women, it's a challenge. You know because they have a certain expectation from servers because they know that server wants something from them and that's just—I don't know where it derived from but it's just the way it is. You know so—

01:09:20

**Justin Nystrom:** They need to be shown more? Deference?

01:09:21

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; needs to be—

01:09:22

**Justin Nystrom:** Better service?

01:09:23

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; you have to be—yes, you have to be on your Ps and Qs because a lot of people do that. A lot of people tip you with thank you. You know I done had plenty of people I mean just praise you and praise you and praise you and then you say well, I didn't get 5-percent. They feel that their praise was enough for you. You know but—

01:09:43

**Justin Nystrom:** I've heard that called the verbal tip.

01:09:44

**Jeff Heard:** Right, right; there you go. [Laughter] You know but you know and then a lot of people it's a shame to say they just don't know. A lot of people feel 5-bucks is a tip no matter how much the check is. They feel 5-bucks is sufficient. You know and a server needs to learn what the guests—again what—what's expected of a guest. Like, I know a black woman if she's drinking coffee or tea I needs to bring her a whole lot of sugar. She likes a whole lot of sugar in her tea. And that's not being stereotypical; that's just knowing you know—

01:10:25

**Justin Nystrom:** Because you've been doing this—

01:10:25

**Jeff Heard:** —your clientele.

01:10:25

**Justin Nystrom:** —awhile.

01:10:25

**Jeff Heard:** You've been doing it so long, yeah, yeah and knowing your clientele you know. So you know and I think the biggest thing with most people again when they dine out they feel entitled, like some people feel that it's a game to play with the server. You know like I could never work at Copeland's or Houston's or something like that because you get too many inexperienced diners, like a lot of servers will not work on Valentine's Day. You know a lot of servers will not work—a lot of servers they'll say at August, August servers are here to work when graduation season came. You know because people with money that send their kids to these nice restaurants and the kids have no clue you know how to act in a nice restaurant.

01:11:20

You know and servers is always gaging and—and assuming, taking assumption of when the person is sitting in their seat because of past experience. That's why for myself I'm—I'm a great tipper and I will always be a great tipper. You know because I'm trying to get people to lose this stereotype about a black person don't tip. You know I found that when Essence Festival first had start coming to town, a restaurant my wife and I went to all the time, which grat our check and we had to tell them that we're not—we're not tourists. We're regular guests in New Orleans that's here all the time and you grating our check, you know because of, you know the stereotypical about black people don't tip.

01:12:18

**Justin Nystrom:** And Essence is huge now. Right; I mean it's Essence—

01:12:19

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah. It's huge.

01:12:21

**Justin Nystrom:** —bigger than Jazz Fest actually.

01:12:22

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; yes, yeah, it's Essence and it's huge. And people don't realize that. It's like if—if Saks Fifth Avenue would disclose their income for Essence weekend, I guarantee you it's competing with Christmas weekend.

01:12:36

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

01:12:36

**Jeff Heard:** I can guarantee you.

01:12:38

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

01:12:38

**Jeff Heard:** They—they're making money and you know so it's a crazy amount of money that Essence brings to this city at a time when it's actually really needed because after Essence there's nothing left in—

**01:12:51**

**Justin Nystrom:** Nothing big.

**01:12:51**

**Jeff Heard:** —the city, nothing big until October now since Hurricane Katrina. It's nothing until October, but it used to the conventions would start September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**01:13:01**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah and they're not doing that.

**01:13:01**

**Jeff Heard:** No; they're not—they're not starting to. They're too scared of a storm is going to come.

**01:13:05**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

**01:13:06**

**Jeff Heard:** You know yeah. So—

**01:13:09**

**Justin Nystrom:** So—so what brought you to this place?

**01:13:14**

**Jeff Heard:** Well again, I was always trying—I always cooking for the family and friends, always big—big portions of food, if the family—some family member was getting married, a party, or something I would—I would do it, so the catering is something that I always wanted to do because it's safer. You can you know you get signed contracts and you know exactly what you're getting paid. But when you open a brick and mortar you come every morning and you unlock the door and you're sitting and you're waiting for someone to come through. And that's—that's very scary, you know. It's very—very scary.

**01:13:53**

And in the business I was serving tables, people would ask me where do I dine? Well, where do I eat? I want to go actually in the neighborhood and eat. And being in New Orleans I really couldn't tell them too many places to go. You know—you know all the restaurants in the city I really couldn't tell them, too many neighborhood restaurants to go where you can get a reasonable meal because that's the main thing they wanted. They didn't want the French Quarter prices.

**01:14:20**

You know and they wanted authentic New Orleans food. You know and I really couldn't tell them too many places.

**01:14:28**

So I was doing my catering and still working the two jobs. So it was tough because I would ask for off on the jobs and have a catering event and when I finished the catering event then I had to go right back to the jobs.

01:14:41

**Justin Nystrom:** Just making sure this is still on; yes.

01:14:43

**Jeff Heard:** So when this opportunity came along I said well this will give me a little more time to concentrate on my catering so if I have a catering event I can actually still get it done and try to get my business built at the same time because I found myself when I was having a catering event it was sometimes I was up 2:00 in the morning prepping for a catering event and had to go to work for 6:00 a.m. You know so that was—that was tough you know.

01:15:14

But—but coming here was great for me to give me that free up my time to build my catering and when I came here this was a famous barbecue spot and I really didn't know what I wanted to do here. So I just had basic sandwiches and all and I was featuring—always did try to feature crawfish, because that was my logo. And things really wasn't working for me, so I tried to do the barbecue since people kept coming through the door saying it was a famous barbecue—so I did that. And it still wasn't right because they was looking for the 1980s price point  
[Laughter]—

01:15:59

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

01:16:01



**Jeff Heard:** “Oh we could get the \$1 burgers.” Well this is not the [19]80s; there ain't no \$1 burgers.

**01:16:05**

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

**01:16:06**

**Jeff Heard:** You know so I went back to what I do you know just New Orleans style food with a great presentation that catches the eyes. And I started marketing to the tourists that actually— what I wanted to do from the beginning and it slowly but surely started taking off, so right now during the day I would say 80-percent of my business is tourists.

**01:16:33**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

**01:16:33**

**Jeff Heard:** I would say my last couple of months have been tough because you know it's slow. It's the slowest time of year. But I know soon as next month comes in—

**01:16:42**

**Justin Nystrom:** And we're—we're up away from—we're up a ways from the tourist zone if you will so tourists come and seek you out?

**01:16:49**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yes they do. They definitely—and they—and I would say their biggest vehicle to get them here is Yelp! you know my Yelp! reviews is just amazing. It's like wow; I have guests tell me, say do you read your Yelp reviews? I said no, not really. They said you need to read them. **[Laughter]** And like—and I'll say wow; you know but again, it's in my DNA. It's in the Heard DNA and it's another amazing thing.

**01:17:16**

I had a cousin who came; a first cousin came from North Carolina just this Saturday and told me that her dad was a great chef, my dad's brother. And I had another cousin that came a couple of years ago from San Francisco and told me her dad was a great chef, my daddy's other brother. So it's actually in the Heard DNA as far as the—the cooking.

**01:17:42**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; that's cool.

**01:17:41**

**Jeff Heard:** I said yeah; it's in the Heard DNA. I thought I got it from my mom. My mom had six boys and I hung out in the kitchen with her. So I got the love for cooking from her but the gift is from God and it's in my—it's in my DNA. I can come to your home and stir your pot and kick it up a notch.

**01:17:58**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah.

**01:17:59**

**Jeff Heard:** You know so my thing in here is—well I got it from my son—the term is “skeetch” which means thumbs up, good, amen, so it’s positive. Everything is positive about it.

**01:18:09**

**Justin Nystrom:** “Skeetch?”

**01:18:09**

**Jeff Heard:** Skeetch you know so like I had a cup of jelly and he “skeetched” it and made a sauce for the wings with it. So it’s like—it’s like kicking it up a notch. See, I don’t make the product you buy. I just make it better.

**01:18:23**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; like 3M or—?

**01:18:25**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; right. [Laughter] Yeah; like 3M, you know.

**01:18:29**

**Justin Nystrom:** Or BASF

**01:18:31**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; but still—but still I don’t get excited and energy doesn’t build in me like it does when I talk about service. You know and that’s what setting me apart right now is the service that’s here. You know my daughter was in the service industry you know; it’s

something—I've been in it. It's something that I instilled in them. We have always dined out. You know we—I raised them in Metairie, lots of restaurants in Metairie you know so we were after ballgames we would always go out and eat for—for the most part. You know so right now it's about service.

01:19:12

**Justin Nystrom:** Is waiting tables in your blood, like is it something like you kind of—?

01:19:15

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; it is. It is. I'm so addicted to it that I built me a dining room at my home. At my home I have my kitchen is my garage—my garage is my kitchen. I built the kitchen in my garage and right above my garage I have a dining room that sits 40 people.

01:19:32

**Justin Nystrom:** [Laughter]

01:19:33

**Jeff Heard:** So—

01:19:33

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

**Jeff Heard:** So I started doing private five course tastings because I need to be in the room. I can't just cook the food and then send it out. So this gave me the opportunity to prepare the food

and to be in the room. So I will go in the room and I will talk in the third person. You know I would talk and say my name is Jeffrey; I'm the captain and I'm charge of your dining experience tonight. And I said the Chef Jeffrey is—Chef Jeff is going to start you off tonight with a lobster bisque you know shrimp crouton and whatever you know. And so that gave me still that feeling of being in the room with the guests and all and giving the accolades at the same time I'm serving my cuisine as well.

01:20:21

So I did it for a few years and—and it—it really wouldn't build though. My son told me I was charging \$50 for a five course meal—

01:20:31

**Justin Nystrom:** That's not bad at all.

01:20:32

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; but Malcolm my son told me it was too cheap—. People are saying it can't be nothing great. He said I should have been charging \$100 you know and people would have come running say \$100; it's got to be good. You know so—so I don't know. [Laughter] But I had—I love doing it because again I like putting on the suit and tie and being in the room. And really—what I really liked about it I really was—had enough power and—and being in charge where I could tell a guest after I feed them you don't have to go home but you got to get the hell on out of here. [Laughter] And it wasn't nobody couldn't fire me [Laughter] because I spent a lot of late nights at August. At August we had a penthouse that we served guests in. And it had a wraparound balcony so after we served the guests they wanted to go out and drink scotch and cognac and smoke cigars until 2:00 in the morning.

01:21:28

And it—and that was very frustrating when had to go to the morning job at 6:00 a.m. you know. Yes; but we had a private room. You know Chef Alon [Shaya]?

01:21:40

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

01:21:40

**Jeff Heard:** You probably do, yeah. Well Chef Alon well he and I served a lot of dinners in that room. Well, all the chefs we served a lot of dinners in that room and we served a lot of Passover dinners in the private dining room, another great guy. Out of all the chefs, most of the chefs that run the Besh organization restaurants they started with me as a banquet chef. Most—most of them you know—

01:22:05

**Justin Nystrom:** You got the Bones and then moved on from there.

01:22:07

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; moved on like Chef Mike [Stoltzfus] at Coquette and Magazine—yeah he was my sous chef for a while and he was—matter of fact he’s one of the worst sous chefs I ever had. [Laughter] He couldn’t get it done you know because we—it was a little private room. It was me and a chef; it wasn’t you know—it was usually 20 people, 30 people at the most so it was always just a two-man team for the most part because it was just a regular kitchen. It was a little small kitchen like a regular apartment kitchen.

01:22:39

**Justin Nystrom:** You had to be 100-percent.

01:22:40

**Jeff Heard:** You have to be 100-percent that's right, yeah; you know and my—one of my worst experiences was waiting on Fitzmorris.

01:22:48

**Justin Nystrom:** Oh Tom?

01:22:48

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah he picked me—picked me—picked me until I couldn't answer something and he called Besh over — because Besh was the chef in the kitchen and—and they—and something I couldn't answer and he come and you know he didn't know this. [Laughter]  
And but again, you know I felt that was being a black server, you know.

01:23:10

**Justin Nystrom:** Huh; uh-huh.

01:23:11

**Jeff Heard:** I felt that he wouldn't have did that you know—you know and with clientele, too another thing restaurants felt that their clientele was going to be more patient if a black man

wasn't waiting on them. Take—I'm waiting on you and make a mistake they're going to ask for the manager in a hurry. And that's just the way it is.

**01:23:31**

And—and I found that when I presented the check, again I mentioned that, when I presented the check I'm not going to get the gratuity that a white man is going to get. So I had a handsome tall white brother that worked for me so at the end—most of time when we worked in the penthouse it was a two-man team. So and—and we—we documented this; most of the time when I let him present the check we always got extra gratuity, always. They always—you know it's always 20-percent gratuity.

**01:24:08**

But as a server you always are looking for more as a server you know. Okay; you got 20-percent, you know \$2,000 check is \$400 tip but we want more. That's just the way it is and most of the time when I let him present the check we—we made more. You know and that's just the way it is. You know why? I don't know. [Laughter] He needs more money that I need? You know I don't know; you know.

**01:24:40**

**Justin Nystrom:** It's so deeply engrained.

**01:24:42**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah but again, that's not always the case. You know some people just like to tip. So like some people like to spend money. You know and for different reasons you know and you'd never know. That's another thing about being a server; you know when you go to work you never know what you're leaving with. You know and another thing about being a



server like you could be a welder and work for a company 20 years and make \$50 an hour. The business gets bad they lay you off and you go be a welder for another company and you're not getting nowhere near \$20. You know but you can be a server and get laid off and go walk in another restaurant and your income won't change. You want in a good restaurant you'll make—if you was making 100-grand, if you're in a great restaurant, you'll make that same 100-grand as a server. That's the great thing about being a server.

**01:25:37**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; yeah.

**01:25:38**

**Jeff Heard:** You know—

**01:25:38**

**Justin Nystrom:** It's about—

**01:25:40**

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yes, yes. Uh-hm; yeah but again the service industry is—is crazy because of the person is seating in the seat, the expectation they have of you. You know you have to put up every time 100-percent. You have to, you know, and it's visible. You see it; it's just like in sports, you know when they—when they go and they look at the tape, they can see you missed the block you know and they look at the play again, you missed the block, you missed the block, you missed—they can see it over and over. So we have to replace you because you—you keep missing your assignment.

**01:26:25**

You know and that's just the way it is. You—you can't feel some type of way about it because we're trying to produce here. We got a job you know and I don't care who you are, you know I had took on my brother at August but I told management, my brother came to work with me when it was a two—three-man team. He don't have the experience to work with me as a two-man team. Now when we got a big function and we need 10—12 people he can be on the schedule. You don't have to put him on the schedule because he's my brother because he definitely can't work just me and him. He's my brother.

**01:26:58**

And he can't get it done and I'm about getting it done. I'm not about well you're my brother and you need money. I'm sorry; not up in here. [Laughter] You know that's just the way it is; it's about getting it done. You know and again, maybe the President of the United States' job might be harder—well it was harder, I don't know about our President today, like he on Twitter; that can't be too hard, you know when you're on Twitter. [Laughter]

**01:27:26**

He's always on Twitter, you know but again, I feel that being a server is just something that's just very special and—and another thing, being able to—I'm about proving myself and being able to prove myself over and over and over again. You know I was reading an article about John Ochsner, the heart surgeon, you know how he felt when he did heart surgery and that person's heart started beating again.

**01:28:06**

You know—you know he said that it's just no feeling like that. He said—he said when that person you know—so I kind of look at that as when a person is dining, you know I want a person to get up and feel like in a daze like what just happened to me? What happened in there?

You know I mean it was like a knock-out punch; I'm still in a daze. That dinner was so good I'm staggering. And it wasn't just the wine. [Laughter] You know it wasn't just—because I done did that too. I just sit at dinner man and then get off that chair and you'd be like—. [Laughter]

01:28:44

**Justin Nystrom:** But there are great moments like that. You know you leave a restaurant and you think that was amazing.

01:28:48

**Jeff Heard:** Right; yeah. It was; yeah you know just like still trying to figure it out you know and I learned that—I learned that. Matter of fact, I know when I learned it. I learned it 25 years ago at my 10th wedding anniversary. I went to Mr. Bs and that's when I had first just started getting into drinking wine. And I left—and then we had a room at the Sheraton on Canal Street, so we didn't have to go far [Laughter], and I remember walking out of there and I was in amazement. I was like you know—I was like wow; I didn't know wine would do this to you. I didn't know food would—. I was like kind of confused [Laughter]. You know but it was—it was a feeling that was just—don't get any better than that.

01:29:35

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

01:29:35

**Jeff Heard:** You know it—it really don't and so I make you know—it upsets my wife but that to me that is my go-to, a great meal, you know and a nice bottle of wine is my—is my go-to. And

it's like—you know especially the wine. [Laughter] Especially early; we went just—our anniversary and we made 35 years in July and we went to Virginia to a wine vineyard and there's nothing like sipping on wine at 11:30 in the morning. [Laughter]

01:30:07

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; there's some great vineyards in Virginia.

01:30:10

**Jeff Heard:** Virginia; yes, yes, yes, yes. We got a few great meals too. You know and it don't have to be fancy either. You can have a great salad and a great piece of pizza and be like wow. [Laughter] You know—

01:30:27

**Justin Nystrom:** When it hits everything right.

01:30:28

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah definitely, definitely, uh-hm.

01:30:32

**Justin Nystrom:** Well I think we're—I honestly don't know how long we've gone because I didn't—I usually have a running total on here but it's been—been running. How long are you going to do this?

01:30:44

**Jeff Heard:** Oh I'm going to drop dead doing this. [Laughter] But I'm looking to—to grow. I'm negotiating a spot now. I don't know—it'll have to go into a partnership and I'm not sure about that but that's kind of like tying me back up to being obligated to someone else.

**01:31:12**

**Justin Nystrom:** And a lot of those are—they can be difficult; yeah.

**01:31:15**

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; yes, you know so I'm in one right now and it seems like a great idea but last week I found—not last week but the last month I'm finding challenging employees. It's—it's amazing how it's hard to find good employees. And what's really amazing to me, I have my 16—well she's 17 now, my daughter and her 16 year-old friend that will outwork every grown man that I done brought in here. It's just I can't believe that. You know it's like a grown man and you won't even take time to go home and study the menu. So I say to you I need a—um Bourbon Street you're scrunching your eyes trying to remember well what exactly is a Bourbon Street. You know that means you don't care about what you're doing.

**01:32:15**

You know it's like you have no concern about it. You just about the pay. Yeah; so that's been my challenge, you know to—you know again, I'm not a person that can ride you. I'm not a person that's going to be on you—on you—on you. I want to teach you what I need you to know and I need you to be aggressive enough to—to get it done you know or care enough to get it done.

**01:32:53**

You know but I'm finding that very hard that most people just want to you know pick up a paycheck. And you know that's another thing, starting a business I didn't think about much because even on a job I always felt I'm doing it myself. I'll do it myself. I'll do it myself. I'll do it myself. I want it done right. But you—you can't do it all when you're—you can't. [Laughter]

01:33:17

**Justin Nystrom:** No; it's a team effort always.

01:33:19

**Jeff Heard:** Yes; you know yeah.

01:33:24

**Justin Nystrom:** Well this has been amazing. And I think you soft-coat a little bit. You can tell stories. You get warmed up—

01:33:32

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah. [Laughter]

01:33:33

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; you can tell some stories when you get warmed up and you told me some really, really great ones and ones that I hadn't—I hadn't had before, so that's—that was special to me, so—

01:33:43

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah.

**01:33:44**

**Justin Nystrom:** Hundred percent.

**01:33:47**

**Jeff Heard:** Wow; I feel like I don't know. I feel like I'm leaving something out. [Laughter]

**01:33:52**

**Justin Nystrom:** Is there anything you'd like to add?

**01:33:53**

**Jeff Heard:** I really don't know. You know again like I was saying, I—I am better at people asking me questions you know and it's something that they might want to know.

**01:34:03**

**Justin Nystrom:** Well there was a point where you started flowing out you know and—

**01:34:06**

**Jeff Heard:** Yeah; yeah well I think we did spend a little time, yeah. [Laughter]

**01:34:09**

**Justin Nystrom:** Yeah; oh yeah—

**01:34:10**

**Jeff Heard:** Should be a little something, yeah, yeah.

**01:34:10**

**Justin Nystrom:** Well Jeff, thank you so much. This has been amazing and—and thanks for taking the time and like I said, Kasimu will be in touch shortly to take some pictures.

**01:34:19**

**Jeff Heard:** Okay great; well I hope the recorder understands, you know I'm—I'm from New Orleans and my English—sometimes I talk to Siri and it says what I you say? [Laughter] You know and I got—

**01:34:31**

**[End Jeff Heard Interview]**