

Interview with Melinda Krauch

for HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Emily Satterwhite, Spring 2010

Occupation: Roamer, West End Market, Virginia Tech

Time and Place: March 2010, 1:00p.m. - 2:30p.m., Newman Library, Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewer: Cassidy Weitman, sophomore Communication major from Strasburg, Virginia

MK: Melinda Krauch

CW: Cassidy Weitman

CW: Will you please state your name, job title, and the name of the organization you work for?

MK: My name is Melinda Krauch, K-r-a-u-c-h. My job title is a roamer at West End Market at Virginia Tech.

CW: How long have you worked at your current job?

MK: I have worked there for two years this past February 4, 2010.

CW: Can you tell me a little bit about your family background? Did your parents work outside the home or what did they do for a living?

MK: My, well, my family background would consist of, my dad was an electrician and he worked also, when I was very young, he did, worked on furnaces with my grandfather, his dad. My mom worked as a dietary at the old Saint Alban's Hospital and they both worked outside the home when I was little but after my mom and my dad got divorced, my dad still continued doing the work with my grandfather until my grandfather passed away and then he started working for Virginia, I mean, Radford University.

CW: Mhm.

MK: To this day, he just retired two years ago this past January and when I was in second grade my mom and my dad got divorced, that was back in '77.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Then my mom and I moved to Florida in '78, when I was 10 years old and I told her it was, I was, going to move with or without her.

CW: Really?

MK: To Florida with my grandparents.

CW: Oh, you moved with your grandparents?

MK: Mhm, I told her I was going with or without her.

CW: Really?

MK: Mhm.

CW: And she decided to come with you?

MK: Yep.

CW: Well that's good.

MK: It's how I ended up back in, that's how I ended up in Florida.

CW: Wow.

CW: Could you describe a typical day at your job?

MK: A typical day at my job is I wipe down tables throughout all the little shops we have. I fill up the drink stations with straws, plastic ware, lids. Make sure they're all filled up and stocked, make sure all the tables are clean, pick up all the trash, whether it's on the floor or wherever I see it at.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Make sure the patio is cleaned every 15-20 minutes. Make sure the soda room's boxes are filled up with sodas and stock up underneath, make sure they are all stocked for the night crew because I do the dinner rush, I do the lunch rush and the dinner rush. I work there Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 12:00 to 8:30, have Thursday and Friday off, Saturday and Sunday 8:00 to 4:30. That's my typical day.

CW: Um, could you tell me a little bit about where you live and the cost of getting to work, do you take the bus? What's your means of transportation?

MK: Right. Where do I live, is I live at Sturbridge Square which is on University City Boulevard.

CW: Okay.

MK: The cost of trying to get to work, I ride the bus, which I get to ride free with my Hokie Passport. Which is a good thing because the cost of getting to work would be kind of hard because unfortunately I can't drive even if I did have my driver's license, I couldn't afford the upkeep of a car right now because it's so expensive to keep and keep up the cost of it.

CW: Right, yes.

MK: Insurance and everything, gas is going down.

CW: Right, the upkeep definitely.

CW: If you could change one thing about your work would it be wages, benefits, schedule, location, healthcare? What, what do you think you would change?

MK: I would change the healthcare, make sure everybody has insurance, no matter whether salary or wage.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Everybody deserves insurance because people need insurance because if you get sick there's no way anybody, you could afford it.

CW: Right.

MK: We all need insurance.

CW: That's very true.

MK: Because it's, if you don't have insurance, you can't even be seen at doctors' offices.

CW: Mhm.

MK: No doctor will see you if you don't have insurance. Like, like me for example, I have to go to the free clinic because I don't have insurance and I have to go on Thursdays and Fridays most

times the doctors aren't there and I'm lucky my one doctor, two of my doctors, are there on Thursdays and Fridays.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Otherwise, I'd have to go there with Tuesday night walk-ins and I can't because I'm at work.

CW: Right.

MK: And I don't have a way there because the buses stop at 5:15.

CW: Mhm. So health insurance would definitely be...

MK: Mhm, everybody deserves health insurance, no matter what.

CW: Mhm.

CW: Could you tell me about a time when you wanted to quit your job?

MK: One time that I wanted to quit my job. Just when I felt overwhelmed when the tables, when I can't get all the tables cleaned off. It just feels like there's times when I can't be everywhere. I feel like I should be everywhere at one time. I just feel overwhelmed when there's so many tables to clean.

CW: Mhm.

MK: And I can't get to 'em all.

CW: Mhm.

MK: It's just I feel overwhelmed.

CW: When those rushes come in, those lunch and dinner rushes?

MK: Mhm.

CW: All the college kids trying to get their food and get that table? Stalking over the table waiting for somebody to leave.

MK: Yep. I feel overwhelmed.

CW: Um, could you tell me what you like best about your job?

MK: Helping others.

CW: Just helping them find anything they need or?

MK: I like helping them out, helping with the DART card because this one time a lady didn't know how, it was Homecoming weekend, she's never been there before and she's, I said, well we're running a little bit behind because we had our power go out. So I said would you like a tour of the place? She said sure, she said if you don't mind, I said I don't mind at all, it's what I'm here for. She said how do we get our food here?

I said, we don't take cash, she said, you take Hokie Passports? I said yes, you need to put money on a Hokie Passport, she said well how do you do that? I said you put money on it. She said how do you do that? I said well you do that on our DART machine. She said would you mind showing me how to do that? I said no I do not mind.

CW: Mhm.

MK: And she said thank you for your help.

CW: Mhm.

MK: And I checked on her throughout her, while they were eating and even after they got done eating I suggested dessert to 'em and she said which one would you suggest? I said the giant cookie, our large chocolate chip cookie, and that's what they got and after they, before they left I said I want ya'll, I hope ya'll have a good day and come back and see us.

CW: Mhm.

MK: And two days later Steve came up to me and said I need to talk to you for a moment and he put his hands on my shoulder. I'm like uh-oh what did I do wrong (laughs). He said, you done nothing wrong I just need to see you in my office and I'm like okay what did I do? He's like you didn't do nothing wrong, we got a letter from a lady said you did a wonderful job this past weekend. I said, what do you mean? She said you helped her out with giving her a tour of the place and you suggested a dessert and you checked out, checked with her throughout her dinner and everything else and you showed her how to use the DART machine because she's never been here before.

CW: Mhm.

MK: She said she had a pleasant experience and you showed her around and everything and he gave me 50 extra Hokie bucks.

CW: Wow.

MK: And she said, everytime she comes in there she looks for me and she says hello to me everytime. And it's a good feeling to know that somebody actually took the time out of her busy schedule to write a letter that mentioned me and her say my name.

CW: Right.

MK: Was kinda cool, she actually took the time to write Steve, write the big honchos first then it came down to Steve and I got a letter from him.

CW: Wow.

MK: I still have it at home, I want to frame it and hang it up.

CW: You should. Well I'm sure she was just as helpful, like thankful that you took the time out of your, you know, your job and your day to help her too so that's definitely a rewarding feeling.

MK: Because, every time she comes in she's looking for me.

CW: Really? Wow.

MK: It's kind of nice because whenever I see her she's always saying hello to me.

CW: Mhm.

MK: She says, how are you doing Melinda? I say I'm doing good, I say it's good to see ya.

CW: Well that's definitely good.

MK: It makes you feel good when somebody actually remembers your name and face and everything.

CW: Mhm, you made an impact.

MK: That's what Steve said, I made an impact on her because she actually remembered your name and how to spell it and everything else.

CW: Right.

MK: Most people, you don't hear Melinda but now you are more and more now so when I was growing up most people never heard of the name Melinda.

CW: Right.

MK: I was named after my great-grandmother. Hers was M-a-l-i-n-d-a. Mine's M-e-l. More and more you are hearing Melinda now.

CW: Mhm.

MK: When I was born you didn't hear that name.

CW: Unique.

MK: Mhm.

MK: I just like helping people out. I go out and give, most people only give 95 or 50 percent at their job, I give 150 percent at my job.

CW: Well people need to look at what you're doing more, do it like that.

MK: Mhm.

CW: Can you tell me what you like least about your job or what the most stressful part is?

MK: The most stressful part of my job or the least thing I like about my job is just trying to put those sodas up its, I just wish that more people would understand that I can't life those boxes up. I've had some student managers get smart with me about it.

CW: Oh, really?

MK: Mhm. And that makes me feel uncomfortable, I figured they're, the men are strong enough, they should be able to understand why I can't lift 'em up.

CW: Right. Well you shouldn't be asked to if there are other people there that could do it.

MK: Mhm. Because I think the student managers should understand why I can't lift 'em up and I have one particular one that's gotten smart with me about it.

CW: Really?

MK: And that's what stresses me out because he said you should be able to dumb 'em and I can't.

CW: Mhm.

MK: He said well maybe you should work out and I'm like. That's what he told me.

CW: Really?

MK: Mhm.

CW: Well, that's definitely not necessary.

CW: Do you feel as though the amount of work you put in is comparable to, to what you are paid, to the money that you make?

MK: It should, it's enough money but I think we should get raises because I know we are above minimum wage but I think the four year freeze is long enough but I think we should be able to get more money because we bring in so much money for West End.

CW: Mhm.

MK: I think the employees should be able to get part of the, we bring in so much money, why can't we reap some of the rewards.

CW: Be rewarded for it, exactly. Because without the workers it would not go round.

MK: No, it wouldn't.

CW: Behind the scenes is definitely, definitely the most important part of it.

MK: You understand what I'm saying though?

CW: Mhm.

MK: Because they don't have money to bring in.

CW: Especially on those days when the buses stop running and it's cold and it's snowing and campus stays open.

MK: Yep.

CW: Um, well kind of tied in with that, do you feel like you make enough money to live comfortably?

MK: I live in the, I do live enough with the money I make it's just sometimes, it's just when the paychecks aren't there on the days when my, the rent's due, I have to pay it ahead of time. That makes me short for the end of the month to pay the other money for that next month.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Even though I paid my money ahead of time, but when the money falls on different days, I have to go back up to my reserves.

CW: Right.

MK: When that reserves runs low, I won't have the money to pay for that next months.

CW: Mhm.

MK: You understand what I'm saying right?

CW: Mhm, if you get off track it's kind of a vicious cycle.

MK: Mhm, because see I put 25 percent of my money, automatically, before I even see my check, and it goes into my savings. Savings right now is why I'm running a little low right now.

CW: Mhm.

MK: Because April, we only get one check in April, April 15th.

CW: Mhm.

MK: So, I just got done paying April's rent.

CW: Oh, okay.

MK: And right now I've only got \$45 until we get paid.

CW: Wait for that paycheck?

MK: Because, I've already got that money spent unfortunately.

CW: Mhm, so when life comes up and paychecks run a little bit short it's definitely hard?

MK: Yes, it is. I just wish that the four year freeze would gives us a little. Because, they bring in so much money, why can't we get a little bit of it, reap the rewards? I know it sounds selfish.

CW: But when you are doing the work and putting in the time and other places I guess do raises, a couple, even you know a couple cents at a time or just a little bit as you work there and I guess for the length of time you work there could be a factor too?

MK: Mhm, yep. But I don't know because I never saw my 90 day evaluation because when Minnie was still over us last year and I said well I think I'm doing better than I was when she was first over us. She said you are doing a lot better than you were when I first did your evaluation but I never saw it. She said, you are doing a lot better than when I first did your evaluation. So just be glad that you never saw your first evaluation. So that kind of makes me think, thank goodness, sorry for saying this, thank goodness she's out and I don't see her anymore because I was stressed out when she was over us.

CW: Mhm.

MK: She was always stressing me out. Always barking, not barking orders but it felt like she was always riding me. That's before I started taking the medicine that makes the voices quiet. I know this is public record but read people, I mind read things and it's not really there. It's like when I put my cat down three years ago it seemed like she was jumping down my throat every five seconds so two weeks later I said Jon I need to talk to you a minute. He said what's wrong? I said I feel like she is jumping down my throat so I pulled her to the side and said I need to talk to you and she said what about?

(Can we turn this off for a minute? Yes.)

CW: Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

MK: Probably still at West End, I hope not, I hope I have a house by then.

CW: Mhm.

MK: I hope to have a house and I hope to have another dog because my husband, soon to be ex-husband, kept the dog.

CW: Do you have anything else you would like to share about your job?

MK: I just hope to be able to have my freedom back.