

Questions:

1. Where are you from and what did your parents do for a living?
2. How long have you worked your current job?
3. What does your job here entail? What parts are enjoyable and what parts do you find difficult?
4. Where do you live and how do you normally get to work?
5. What is the value of an education to you?
6. What is your educational background?
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10. If you could change one aspect of your job now, what would it be?
11. How many and what jobs have you held in the past?
12. Do you believe that loyalty in the workplace pays off?
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17. Do you consider yourself patriotic?
18. How do you feel about politics and the role that it plays with you individually in your job?
19. How would you define the American dream?
20. Do you believe that it exists?
21. Do you have any worries or concerns about her [Sandra's daughter] and specifically her relation to the work world where she is going?
22. Do you have anything else to share?
23. How are you affected personally by rising gas prices?
24. Do you have any other strategies for keeping expenses down to save money?
25. Do you enjoy your life or do you feel like there's a lot lacking? Do you feel fulfilled and satisfied by your work?
26. About your educational background, if you could go back and do anything differently, would you?
27. Did your parents have a large influence on your education or your work ethic?
28. Were you the first one in your family to go to college? If so, did you actually finish college?
29. Do you feel that life is fair?
30. Are there stories, good or bad, just that you happen to recall about work that were out of the ordinary?
31. Describe the working conditions in your previous jobs.

Transcript:

Narrator: Alright, this is Sandra Ross who has agreed to interview with me and she is the receptionist at the Writing Center. And let's get started. Will you please state your name, your job title, and the name of the organization you work for?

Sandra Ross: Sandra Ross, Virginia Tech Writing Center.

N: Where are you from and what did your parents do for a living?

Sandra: I am from Giles county, my dad worked at the Celanese and my mom was a housewife.

N: Alright, how long have you worked your current job?

S: 3 years.

N: Alright, how many hours a week do you normally work?

Sandra: Here? At the Writing Center?

N: You can include your other jobs too.

S: 46 hours a week, I work here 40 and 6 at my other job.

N: What does your job here entail? What parts are enjoyable and what parts do you find difficult?

S: I enjoy working with the students, most of the time what I do is work with the students, answer the phones, and make appointments and keep them [the students] all in line.

N: Where do you live at and how do you normally get to work?

S: I live in Pearisburg in Giles County and I carpool right now. So we take turns right now driving our cars to work.

N: What would you say is the value of an education?

S: I would say it is very valuable, especially nowadays.

N: Alright, can you tell me some about your own educational background?

S: I went to New River Community College after I lost my job. I got my Associates degree and that's about it.

N: What was the previous job you had?

S: Before I came here to Tech, I worked at the unemployment agency and I hated it.

N: What did you hate so much about it?

S: The pay sucked [laughter] and I had to learn everybody's job that worked there and I made the less... the less amount of money than everybody other than what everybody else made.

N: What would you say requires the greatest amount of financial expenses in your life?

S: The house payments and gas and groceries.

N: If you could change one aspect of your job now, what would it be?

S: I don't know if there is any. Oh yeah, money, more money [laughter].

N: Alright, how many and what jobs have you held in the past, like kind of give me your work history, like what you first started doing like whenever you got out of school and how you progressed—how you came to be here today.

S: The first job I had I worked at the sewing factory. I worked there for almost 15 years. Then I went to work at Federal Mogul, which is a factory that makes engine bearings. I was there for 9 years. I got laid off, got rid of my job permanently. I went to school at New River for two years, I went to work at the unemployment agency, worked there for about 3 months, then I came to work here.

N: Do you believe that loyalty in the workplace pays off, like to your employer?

S: No.

N: Would you like to explain that a little bit?

S: Well, I have found that there... it doesn't matter how good you do your job at some places, there are other people who are suck ups that get everything they want and it seems like sometimes if you come in and do your job, they are the ones—you get harassed more I think.

N: If you had to choose between what seems more important at a job, in the way of employment, would it be what you know or the people that you know?

S: You mean to get a job?

N: Yes.

S: Who you know.

N: How many, and... sorry I have already asked that question... what advice would you give to someone about to enter the workforce.

S: Make sure you know somebody if you want a job somewhere because that really helps to get a job.

N: Would you consider your job stressful?

S: Only when I am doing force adding.

N: And how would you say this job has affected your life?

S: I really like this job, I really like getting to know all the kids, it's great when I'm out and see the kids that I know and everything. I'm a people person so I like it.

N: Let's say you won the lottery and retired. What would you do with your free time?

S: [Laughter] I would travel.

N: What places in particular?

S: I don't know if I'd go anywhere to another country, but all the places in the United States—just different places.

N: Would you consider yourself patriotic?

S: Yes.

N: That leads me to a question, how do you feel about politics and the role that it plays with you individually in your job?

S: I don't—I don't know. I mean I know I have to watch what I say and do because you might offend somebody but... I really don't think a whole lot about it.

N: What about... I should have worded that question better, but what about the upcoming election and everything. Do you have any hope for either parties?

S: No.

N: What has made you not hopeful about what they have to offer, or the government in general?

S: I don't know. I just sometimes feel like they'll promise you anything to get in office and whether or not they'll do it is a different story.

N: How would you define the American dream?

S: I guess to find a job that you like and have a house and a family and enjoy doing all the things that you love in life.

N: Do you believe that it exists?

S: Yes.

N: Do you think its available to everyone?

S: I think if you want it, it is. You may have to work for it. It's not always going to be easy.

N: Alright, that's all the questions I actually had down. I'm gonna ask some extra questions, knowing about you, you have a daughter that's in college right now and going to Radford University. Do you have any worries or concerns about her and specifically her relation to the work world where she is going?

S: Yes, I do. I mean the field she is going in there is going to be quite a bit of jobs out there for her. But I just wonder what it's going to be like in the future for her.

N: What is that field?

S: Well she has decided now that she is going into nursing.

N: If she ended up having to work your job, do you think that you would both do it the same way, like do you believe you have instilled the work ethic you have into your children.

S: Yes, I do.

N: You have other daughters too, what do they do?

S: My older daughter, she works at MOOG up the road here.

N: Okay, sorry, my uncle works there too. I didn't know that.

S: You didn't know that?

N: No I didn't know you had a relative that... Alright, I'm gonna ask if you have anything else you would like to share just off the top of your head about anything. About the workplace, about the way you view life, just anything.

S: You know sometimes I think about when I got out of highschool I came here for a job interview and well I came here to take a test and got all nervous and come back and I could kick myself in the butt because I'd have almost 30 years here at Tech, which is pretty good. But then again I think over the years all the jobs I've worked I've got to meet a lot of good people and so I've got a lot of good experiences that way.

N: I'm gonna ask a few more questions just to kind of elaborate on some of the things we've talked about. So you say that you commute, how are you affected personally by rising gas prices?

S: Well, it's hard and especially when my husband drives to Christiansburg every day. But we've all decided to carpool and that helps a lot.

N: Do you have any other tactics or anything, or strategies, to kind of keep expenses down to help you keep money.

S: We don't really hardly go anywhere and then we'll working this other job to have extra money.

N: On the whole, do you enjoy your life a lot, or do you feel like there's a lot lacking. Do you feel fulfilled and satisfied by your work or is it more just... work?

S: No, I actually have to say this is more of a fulfilling job that I have ever had. I like my job here, so yeah.

N: About your educational background, if you could go back and do anything differently, would you?

S: Ah, I don't know if I would have wanted to go to school after I graduated from high school because I hated school. So I don't think I would have got anything out of it—like I have after being older. I really wanted to learn and I did really well at college. So no, I don't think I would have done anything different.

N: Going back to your parents, did they have a large influence on your education or your work ethic?

S: We were never encouraged to go to college growing up, but yeah work ethics was instilled in us, you know hard work. We worked hard around the house so yes.

N: Were you the first one in your family to go to college?

S: Yes.

N: And did you actually finish college?

S: I finished, I went 2 years at New River and got my Associates Degree. So yeah.

N: How do you... do you feel that life is fair? Do you think that it's fair for all people who go to work, that everyone is able to find a job and that they're treated fairly or do you think that some people are looked down upon by others in higher ranking situations.

S: Yes, I do.

N: So you are saying that you do feel like there's some... with the lower paying jobs or maybe lower jobs, that there is I guess, I don't know how to put it. Just that they're looked down upon.

S: Yeah, I think like people don't realize that everyone who works here on campus is very important. And I think some people just look down on us, like we're just a bunch of peons.

N: Have you had any personal experiences with that?

S: No, not here. But like I clean the doctor's office and sometimes I think they look down on us because we clean, like they're better than us.

N: Does anything in specific make you think that like something someone said or...

S: I don't... no, it's just the way, like sometimes they don't want to talk to you and they don't want to get to know you or anything. So I think that right there, just actions. No, they've never said anything.

[Interruption]

N: Alright, we're resuming the interview and we're going to talk about instances in the workplace that have sort of defined my interviewee's life. And so, we'll go ahead into it. And these will be about past experiences in jobs. Do you want to go ahead and regale us with tales of [laughter] just the past and your work, just work stories I guess.

S: Okay, well when I went to work at Federal Mogul, I was an inspector there and I worked on the machine with my husband now. When we both worked there, we were both married to other people and neither one of us—we became really good friends and we worked together and we had a good relationship. And then I worked—he used to work second shift and I was on third shift, then he got moved to third. And we kind of got put on the same machine together. So we just talked and, I don't know, it just happened like it was magic. I just, I truly believe it was meant for us to be together. Needless to say, we both, I know this sounds awful, but we both were unhappy in our previous marriages so we just fell in love—head over heels in love—and we've been together ever since then.

N: What are some other stories, good or bad, just that you happen to recall about work that—I don't know—really affected you I guess, or were out of the ordinary.

S: Well, when I worked at the sewing factory I worked there for 15 years and I met a lot of really good women, mostly worked with women there. And we were kind of like a big family. One of the girls I was really close to, she was in a very abusive relationship with her boyfriend. And my husband that I was married to; he was a real butt hole. He liked to run around with the women and he wasn't a good husband at all. Needless to say, when I

left there and went to work at Federal Mogul, we were still really good friends. And I got a call one morning when I just got off work that her boyfriend had shot and killed her. It was really devastating and when I went to the funeral home and everything, all the other girls that I worked with were there and they kept telling me they were afraid that I was going to be the next one because they knew what a real butt hole my husband, my ex husband was. So that was an experience. And that kind of really—I hated my life, the only time I was really happy was when I went to work. I had to come home and just see him sitting there in the chair—I really wasn't very happy. But that kind of was a wake up call to me.

N: In your previous jobs, what about the working conditions? Were they good, or bad, or they were okay?

S: Well working at the sewing factory, it was hard, very hard work. And not the best working conditions. They treated people like crap, they had a quota you had to get out, and they expected you to do it—things don't always work the way they're supposed too. It was very hot, I stood on my feet sometimes 12 hours a day and you had to be at work at seven. You had two ten minute breaks and you had to be back at exactly ten minutes. You only had 30 minutes for lunch and you had a little bell that went off when you went to lunch. It was really hard work.

N: You talk about working at Federal Mogul and also the sewing, your job at the sewing plant you said it was?

S: Yeah.

N: Were those like assembly lines or how would you describe them?

S: The one at the sewing factory was production work. When I started work there I ironed blouses and I was on production then. And then I eventually got to, I wasn't on production anymore, I put tags in blouses, hang tags in them, and put them on the truck, loaded them on the truck and kept up with how many shirts needed to go out. So that wasn't—but it was still hard work because you had to get the work out. And yes, Federal Mogul was also production work. I inspected engine bearings that came flying down a machine. Some nights I would inspect and pack 10,000 bearings. But, I mean, after I got the hang of it—when I started working there I was like there is no way I'm going to get the hang of this because it was just so fast. But after I was there I mean I got the hang of it, it was just like it was a normal day.

N: Would you consider your life to be more stressful at work or outside of work? At this job, or in past jobs?

S: Well, it was kind of stressful at Federal Mogul because I made good money but I also worked a lot of long hours and I either worked second shift or midnight, which most of it was midnight. And a lot of nights you didn't get a lot of rest, you went in and you were really tired. So it was really stressful, you felt like crap all the time.

N: Do you have any stories about injuries or anything out in the workplace. Like anything you heard of or anything that happened in your previous jobs since I guess they were more physically intensive.

S: Well, when I worked at the sewing factory, like I said I loaded the trucks and we had these carts like that we loaded our blouses on and pushed them onto the tractor trailer. It just, it was parked there and we had ropes hanging from beams that we would hang the blouses on and I did that a lot. And one day I was helping push the cart on the truck and one of the bars came down and got my finger there. So needless to say, I mean I didn't really feel any pain but now my finger kind of feels funny after that. That was one of the injuries.

[interview continues]