

Nicole Singleton: Would you please state your name, your job title, and the name of the organization you work for?

Jonathan LaFratta: My name is Jonathan Gregory LaFratta and I work at Kroger as a meat cutter.

Where are you originally from and what do your parents do for a living?

I'm originally from Lynchburg, Virginia and my dad is an engineer and my mom is a nurse.

How long have you been working at your current job?

About two years.

Would you please describe in detail a typical day on your job?

At the beginning of the day, I go in, and the guys who are just about to leave, you know, tell me how the day is going, if it's busy, tell me what's selling, remind me of any sales that are going on or things I need to pay attention to on the specific day. So I'll, you know, work the counter, do everything we need to do, and just talk and create that transition space. And then, uh, after they leave, typically I just stand and watch the counters, keep everything full, like the meat display case, and if anyone asks for a special order... other than that, I just stand.

\*NOTES: Jonathan usually works a shift in the middle of the day, which does not require him to do the initial cutting in the morning, or the long clean up process in the evening.

What do you like best about your job?

It's not that hard. It's just standing around kinda. Anytime I do have to do something, its just stocking or cutting pieces of meat. And I get to talk to customers a lot, which is like the best part.

What do you like least about it?

Least? I don't know. Probably...management. Um, management gets on my nerves a little bit. That's probably what I like the least... some of the things they do.

What would you say the most challenging thing about your job is?

Most challenging... well there's nothing really challenging. I'd say the most challenging thing I've learned through my job was cutting a tenderloin. The process they teach you is pretty difficult. You have technique you have to use to cut the part the person wants cut off. Trimming it down, it's, you know, pretty... it sucks. So that was pretty hard to learn. But other than that, when you get down, everything else at my job is pretty routine, there's not too much going on.

Would you describe the worst day you ever had at your job?

Let's see. The worst day I've ever had at my job was probably one where I was scheduled to work with a manager. We usually had two closers at the job I'm working at and I was scheduled to work with him and at around three, he says that he's not coming in. So I was going to have to run this by myself. On a Friday night. And it was a game night as well, or it was following a game night or something. It may have

been a Saturday, I can't remember, but... so many people were coming in and my counter was just wiped out, people coming up to the line, there were lines only for special orders, lots of people wanted special orders for stuff that wasn't out there that should have been out there, and management was coming around complaining and I wasn't getting any breaks and it was just an overwhelming amount of work. And it was just a pain in the ass. By the time I got outta there, I was just so happy just to not have to be at work anymore. That was just the most overwhelming day because just so many people were in my face about what they were getting.

What about the best day?

The best day? Um, I don't know. There wasn't really a best day, but the best days were the days where Kroger would, to just, uh, improve morale I guess, they would just have a cookout. They'd be preparing food and just have chips and dip in the back and in different rotations they would just send people back there to socialize with other workers and have food and just relax a bit while you're at work. It made us enjoy going back there. That's probably the best days.

How well would you say management at the organization you work for handles employee's needs?

Um, it kinda depends on the situation. A lot of situations, I think, overall they do a really good job taking care of the employees like on a day to day basis. But on some things, like the union, the union's kind of come and taken over, so there's only so much they can do. And the way they have things set up, some of the time management just has their hands tied and they can't do anything. And in other situations they won't do a really good job communicating, like when conflict arises they end up talking down to the wrong person and a lot of times they won't apologize for it even after they know they made a mistake about it. You know, it just kinda varies from manager to manager. Overall, they're pretty good. It's a pretty good system.

What would you do differently if you were in charge?

If I were in charge, what would I do differently? Hmm... I haven't really thought about it. But, uh, probably not a whole lot... I might spend more time talking to employees and just make sure they were happy with how things were going; probably talk to them more and try to get input from them. Just from my one job, there are a lot of things that managers don't know that they should know that they would know by talking to me or talking to somebody else and just having a conversation with them. Going around talking to them having a ten or fifteen minute conversation just about how that day was. I think that would serve a large impact if any of the managers did that, they could write it up and have key points in hand and use it to make changes. Something as simple as that would probably go a lot higher when it comes to working here.

How does Virginia Tech, the university, affect your business?

The biggest thing it affects is probably, there are seasons... sales fluctuate, customers fluctuate. During the school year it's a lot busier with students from Virginia Tech and summers its slower because most students are gone. Working at the one right by campus, that plays a large impact. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays are always such huge days, especially on game days... its just huge. And then on Saturdays when its an away game, the schedule's just completely different. Virginia Tech just plays a large impact

on how the sales are in my workplace. On top of that, just the kind of people that are coming in, most are students or professors or teachers of some sort. Working at this Kroger compared to others I've worked at, it just the attitudes of the people coming up to you are a lot different because most are students and they know what its like to work to eventually be placed in a professional job, and a lot the professors can relate to it. A lot of students talk about it or you'll hear it or read about it in the newspaper. They can relate to it. They understand it. Whereas when I worked at other Krogers people will have a professional job of some sort and don't know what its like. Its been like twenty years since they've worked a job anywhere close to minimum wage, so they kind of lose some of the respect they had for people like me.

Ok, well working in food service in a small town with a large university, I'm sure you meet all types and ages of people, so would you mind describing the worst customer you ever had?

Let's see. The worst customer I ever had. There was this one guy who came in and I was in the back using the restroom and I came back and he just flips in lid on me. He said he had been standing there for, what he said was, ten or fifteen minutes. I don't think I was really gone that long, but that's not the case. Just right when I got back, he got started. And I was like, "okay," "alright", and "I'm sorry" and I was apologetic to him and I tried to help this customer. He gave me his order, I filled it, and he just ripped it out of my hand. He was totally disrespectful of me. So that's just what bugs me the most about any customer, is when they start disrespecting me. It's like, I'm here to do them service, and not only are they unhappy about that, but they're getting in the way of me being able to do that service, not communicating exactly what you want, you're communicating in a really angry way, and its hard for me to get what you want unless you tell me exactly what you want, which you're not. He's just like "gimme that' and flinging his arm, and yeah, it's hard.

What are you goals and how do you think holding this job will help you to achieve those goals?

My future goals are just probably when I graduate BIT just to get a job in the business world somewhere in my major. And I think how this job helps, well I do get to talk to management a lot and I kind of got to see what the corporate atmosphere was like and how they interact with each other and just being able to be a part of a team. In the meat department, we're all together and when busy times hit, especially holidays, we had to work together and pull our resources to hit every customer. Just that communication will go a long way later, because I think that's the most important part of a team.

Is there anything else you want to share about your job? Experiences? Stories?

Nope.

Okay, thank you so much for your time.

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