

Interview with Brian Soyars

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

Occupation: shift manager, Burger King, John Newcomb Inc.

Time and Place: March 23, 2010, 5:10 – 5:20 am, Blacksburg, VA

Interviewer: Jason Ramsey, senior history major from Patrick Springs, VA

JR: Jason Ramsey

BS: Brian Soyars

JR: Please state your name, job title, and the organization you work for.

BS: Brian Soyars, shift manager, Burger King, John Newcomb Inc.

JR: Thank you. Would you please tell me a little bit about your family background?

BS: Well. I'm from Pittsylvania County, VA, uh, just outside the city of Danville, my dad is a livestock trader and uh, my mother's family was in the same trade, so, that's pretty much what I'm from.

JR: How long have you worked for Burger King?

BS: A little over seven years now.

JR: And would you describe a typical shift at your job?

BS: hmm...

JR: Like what time you show up, and what's your routine...

BS: Gotcha. Uh, typically I show up about eight or nine o'clock at night. I'm the closing manager, so I start uh, start shutting everything down, cleaning everything up, and usually I start preparing for the inevitable drunk rushes we get on most nights when the bars let out, and then after that's over, finish cleaning up, shut down the store and go home. That's pretty much my routine.

JR: Um, how did you uh, come to get the job at Burger King?

BS: Originally I applied at a location on campus, I got the job several years ago, actually a few months after I applied, they just looked through a stack of applications and gave me a call. I still needed a job and so that's how I got it. I stayed at that location for, um, almost seven years, until it shut down, and then I transferred to another location in the same town, Blacksburg, which is where I'm working now. That's how I came to be at that location.

JR: Um, what is your pay rate and are you satisfied with it?

BS: Ahh, my pay rate currently is ten dollars and fifty-five cents an hour, and uhh, given the state of the economy at the moment, and the fact that I have a full-time job that pays that much, I'm happy enough.

JR: Do you live in Blacksburg?

BS: Yes, I live in the town of Blacksburg.

JR: Um, would you tell me, like, what are some of the work associated costs of living in Blacksburg?

BS: Hmm work associated costs... well, I suppose utility bills and uh, rent typically are more expensive in Blacksburg than they would be in the surrounding area.

JR: How do you get along with your hourly employees?

BS: For the most part I get along with them quite well. As long as they're respectful of me, and I treat them with respect as well, and we all work together, we get along pretty well. Every now and then you run into employees who are just plain lazy, or completely inept at their job, and then I have trouble getting along with them, naturally. But otherwise, I get along with them fairly well.

JR: And how do you get along with your bosses?

BS: I actually get along with my boss very well. We're, we're friends, have been for a while, I've worked with her ah, the entire time I've been with Burger King. Uh, and her boss as well, we get along pretty well.

JR: Um, how are your shifts divided and what shift do you prefer?

BS: Ah, right now I'm exclusively on closing shifts, uh, which is pretty much always eight or nine o'clock until four or five o'clock in the morning. I actually prefer quite the opposite. I would much rather be opening in the morning and leaving after lunch.

JR: How does Virginia Tech affect your business?

BS: Ah, Virginia Tech affects our business quite a bit because we are ah just on the other side of the street from the edge of ah campus, near some of the dorms, so a vast amount of our business comes from students, and the lifestyle of students, uh, creates added business during my shift at night, as I may have mentioned earlier about the drunk rushes we get when the bars let out. We actually stay open for four to five hours later than most other Burger Kings because we get that significant amount of business just from the college students coming home from the bars and heading back to their dorms.

JR: How do you get along with the customers that come in during your shifts?

BS: That varies greatly depending on the type of customer. Uh, we have a lot of regulars that I get along with well, I can talk to on a personal basis, and we discuss, you know, our daily lives. We have our regular walk-in customers that just wanna come in and get a bite to eat, and I get along with them pretty well. Students sometimes can be a problem. (Laughs) Especially when they're coming in late at night. Ah, some of them, quite obnoxious. Not respectful at all, they actually seem to revel in making your life miserable. Those customers I get along with very poorly. (Laughs) But um, for the most part, I get along with the customers alright, It's just a, a few in the bunch that make the nights really hard to get through.

JR: Um, what are some of the things you like about your job?

BS: Umm, well, one perk obviously is free food. (Laughs) It's only about a mile from my house, which is convenient. So if anything happens to my car, it breaks down, I can walk to work if I have to. I like most of the people I work with. My boss is a friend, many of the other people I work with are friends, and I find your average person working in a job like Burger King tends to be laid back and uh, fun to be around.

JR: Um, what do you think is important for people to know about what you do?

BS: Uhh, the most important I believe is to ah consider that uh, it's a service job, and I and the people working with me are there to serve you, and uh, have to uh, be friendly and respectful and uh, we try our best, and I would just think it would be most important for people to remember that, and to try and ah, return that favor and treat us with respect as well.

JR: Where do you see yourself in five to ten years?

BS: In five to ten years? Umm, If I stay in my current line of work? Hopefully will be running my own store. If not, I'm not sure. I've recently been considering looking for a second job, and I might just play the job market, and see what appeals to me.

JR: And, would you like to share anything else in the interview?

BS: Uh. Well. Overall I suppose, uh, historically, my job hasn't been that bad. (Laughs) But, night shift is definitely, uh, a challenge, something to be dealt with, especially in a town like this, and for anyone listening, uh, I suggest the morning. (Laughs)

JR: Alright. Thank You.