

Kate Tressler
Interview Transcription: Josh Robbs
Nov 3, 2008

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

Josh: My name is Josh Robbs. My job title is Senior Data Reductionist and the place I work is Virginia Tech Transportation institute.

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

Josh: I'm originally from the Virginia Beach area, a little place called Poquoson—P-o-q-u-o-s-o-n. Its named for an Indian culture that the word swap was Poquoson, so I'm from a swamp, well marsh, its not freshwater. Ah, but my parents grew up in separate areas, Colorado my father and Richmond my mother. My other uh went through many jobs and is now uh a certified public accountant or a CPA. My father has worked in a foundry for twenty-five years.

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

Josh: I started at my current job late last year December, beginning of December so I've worked there (counts on fingers) ten or eleven months.

Kate: How did you come to have this job?

Josh: I came to have this job through my friend. A buddy of mine worked there and he got me a job there because its one of the higher paying jobs in Blacksburg for someone of my educational abilities.

Kate: How much do you make?

Josh: I currently make thirteen dollar an hour that's a raise from ten. I got promoted to a more or less more important aspect of the same job oh two or three months ago.

Kate: Tell me about having graduated from college and how that degree may affect the type of work you do?

Josh: Well, I basically sit around and reduce data on transportation video uh, specifically in the range of psychology and or infrastructural safety and since I graduated with a degree in English I suppose that I have no say or at least relation to the work I do... at least scholarly.

Kate: Do you plan on staying at this job, and if not where do you plan on going in the future?

Josh: I do not plan on staying at this job; really it's a transitional thing supposedly. Umm I currently am trying to write a masterpiece that I will sell to a publisher who will get me the hell out of here. If that doesn't work out I'll probably go into some sort of editorial field and/or write for a newspaper/ magazine or (something).

Kate: Does the fact that you're leaving affect your job performance at all?

Josh: Interesting Question. I work 5 hours a day 25 hours a week sometimes I work the weekends. It's a limit set by my lab boss. Basically to ensure that we do our best work that way were not straining it, getting strained and stressed out by working too long looking at, you know, what isn't always the best type of video and its taxing work. Having said that my Fantasy football team is in the best shape its been all season. Uh, going into week 7 I am uh 5 and 1 and that's because I devote something like an hour to two hours a day on making my team better. Clearly not work related. For the uh, three hours or so that I do work I do work well and hard but I don't really work my full shift at all times.

Kate: Ok um, how does your chain of command work and how is your relationship with your boss?

Josh: Chain of command goes people I've never met above my boss who is the lab manager at VTTI her name is... we won't say her name for the security of her job. (Laughter) Umm, anyway, the chain of command goes, she is above me and I'm a part of a... I dunno what's a triumbrate of four people called... a quadrumbrate? I'm part of a quadrumbrate of people, two per lab—there's two separate labs. Ah, and under us are ten to twenty different, uh data reductionists and it is my duty and the duty of my fellow compatriot who works in the afternoon to extrude the most useful and productive work out of these fine young individuals who are mostly students, umm some aren't, most of them are. [Phone rings playing Enter Sandman] Sorry that's my phone. [Break] My relationship with my boss is fine. I have to go into these productivity meetings everyday for a half an hour where we discuss particular ins and outs of the projects were on and who's breaking the rules and how were supposed to deal with that and all this BS. It's a useless meeting that I get paid for so I go. I try not to talk cause then I'll have to talk to her. She's very socially awkward and I don't like to fraternize with her if you will, and I'm not the only person who feels that way. But my relationship with the people under me is interesting enough in the fact that I do as little as possible so as not to get fired and in lou of that I give everyone heads up on like things that they need to be doing differently so that they don't get fired and make me look bad. So if—for example today umm my boss told me that I needed to start paying more attention to the sign in and sign out sheets, which basically keep track of the amount of hours people are working. Well the fact is people come in late and leave early basically working 3 ½

hours and getting paid for 4. That's quote on quote stealing from the company, although I feel that the company is stealing little bit of our soul, so I don't feel so bad about it, but I'll probably go in on... well tomorrow, Friday, and tell them to try and make sure that they're at least covering themselves better so that they don't get in trouble, thereby getting me in trouble. My relationship with my underlings is such that they like me and I don't get fired.

Kate: So do you have a personal relationship with the people that work under you?

Josh: I don't have a directly personal... well that's not true, my roommate works under me and uh I don't ever tell him what to do. He's really big and he might punch me... no that's not true. He's probably the hardest of the workers in there other than my fellow proctor who's kind of an asshole. As for people in the other lab I'm actually fornicating with one of the said reductionists. Actually she's my girlfriend, I'm joking, I'm making light of the situation, umm we've been dating for a long time, we actually met before we started working there so its not like we started our relationship at the job site although it happens. [Laughter] Umm, onto my fellow proctor that's an asshole. He believes in productivity and he believes that productivity of the lab is paramount and he's very friendly with Julie because Julie sees his potential even though he's like thirty five and [video cuts off] as I was saying he's thirty five and he has like a really cool degree and he still works my job. Whereas I look at this as a seriously temporary type ordeal for myself, basically another year to have time with my friends, although it may become longer then that, well whatever, he's using this pretty much to pay off his gambling debts I've surmised he has a gambling addiction. Basically we work the same job and everyone hates him everyone likes me because I know the jobs a joke and he doesn't. Is that full extent of the chain of command? I think that covers it fairly well.

Kate: Do you have anything else that you'd like to share?

Josh: No, he's an asshole. Julie—that's not her name by the way—I don't like her—my boss—either.

Kate: Ok, thank you!

Josh: [Laughter]