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Behind the Apron Project: Mary Dawkins Interview, 1997

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WEBVTT

00:07:24.000 --> 00:07:32.000

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: I would go over there and they would give me a little job peeling potatoes or working in the flower garden. Their Parings bought my school clothes.

00:07:32.000 --> 00:07:41.000

They carried me to New York for vacation when I was a child. I was small and I had to stand on a stool and do the dishes.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:07:41.000 --> 00:07:44.000

Are the Parins still living?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: No, they're dead.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:07:44.000 --> 00:07:49.000

Ok. What other jobs have you had?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Cooking.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:07:49.000 --> 00:08:04.000

For whom?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: For the Parings and then - I left the Parings and then I went to Oyster House in '49 and I worked White Sand cooking.

00:08:04.000 --> 00:08:14.000

I worked up at the forty - up to the route six - route eighty! In Oysters from Lores to then.

00:08:14.000 --> 00:08:25.000

And then I went to the power plant. And I cooked there until I retired.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: You retired from the power plant?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:08:25.000 --> 00:08:29.000

I retired from the power plant but I'm still shucking oysters and clams.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:08:29.000 --> 00:08:35.000

Ok, and you started shucking oysters in 49'? [telephone interrupts]

00:08:35.000 --> 00:08:53.000

OK, You say you worked for Lores, how long did you work for them?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: I worked for Lore, I started working for Lore around - in the 60's or 70's.

00:08:53.000 --> 00:08:59.000

And I worked there until Lore went out of business. And then I went in cooking.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:08:59.000 --> 00:09:14.000

For whom?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: For Frying Pan, White Sand, and then to the plant. And when I finished at the plant, I went back into oysters at Denty.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:09:14.000 --> 00:09:17.000

Who owned Lore's?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:09:17.000 --> 00:09:21.000

Lore owned it himself.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: What's his first name?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Joe Lore.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:09:21.000 --> 00:09:32.000

And you started at Denton, in what year?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: '49.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: Ok. Was this just to supplement your income, or was this your regular job?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

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It was my regular job at that time. It was only part time work from September to March, and then I was in White Sand cooking until the Oyster House opened up again.

00:09:44.000 --> 00:09:48.000

Then I went back September to March, I think.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:09:48.000 --> 00:09:53.000

When you first started with Denton, who was the owner?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Warren Denton.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:09:53.000 --> 00:10:00.000

And when you went back the second time? Was it still Denton or was it under new management?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Under new management.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:10:00.000 --> 00:10:05.000

And who was the new manager?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Normon Durell.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: Durell, ok.

00:10:05.000 --> 00:10:21.000

How did you learn how to shuck oysters? Who taught you how to shuck oysters?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Some of the old shuckers. Lot Door, Harrion, and Berndeen Bean, I watched him shuck.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:10:21.000 --> 00:10:26.000

How long did it take you to get the hang of it, to catch on?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:10:26.000 --> 00:10:36.000

I'd say quite a while. Maybe a month, then I got to shuck like everyone else.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:10:36.000 --> 00:10:42.000

Who first told you about shucking oysters? How did you learn about it?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:10:42.000 --> 00:10:54.000

Well I grew right up with the Oyster House right down below me. Soller's Oyster House. When I was a child going to school, that Oyster House was open and I used to meet the workers going and coming, when I was going to school.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:10:54.000 --> 00:10:59.000

How many oyster house is there in the area?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: There's only one.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:10:59.000 --> 00:11:04.000

And when you first started, how many was there?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: There was two.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:11:04.000 --> 00:11:08.000

What had you heard about the Oyster House before you started there?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:11:08.000 --> 00:11:16.000

I heard that it, I could make more money than I could working for the Parins cooking.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:11:16.000 --> 00:11:24.000

Is there a difference on how the owners treat the women opposed to the men or is there no difference?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:11:24.000 --> 00:11:30.000

No difference.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: [[clearing throat]] Excuse me. What about the hourly wages, is it the same for women and men?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:11:30.000 --> 00:11:36.000

Yes.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>: The workers, what is their racial makeup?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:11:36.000 --> 00:11:59.000

Now it. First it was all black. We may had, maybe but three or four white. When I first started there was a hundred oyster shuckers, and then as the years went by, they got all black, and now it is mostly Mexicans.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:11:59.000 --> 00:12:01.000

What is it like working with the Mexicans?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:12:01.000 --> 00:12:05.000

Fine. I just learned to speak their language.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:12:05.000 --> 00:12:08.000

So can you understand what they're saying or - ?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>:

00:12:08.000 --> 00:12:22.000

Some things, some can speak English, yes. Um, and when I don't understand I'm trying to speak Spanish, you know, 'comprende', I don't know what they're saying.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:12:22.000 --> 00:12:32.000

OK. So what's the atmosphere like at the Oyster House?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: It's very nice. It's nice. It's very nice. We get along together nice.

<i>Shelia Montague Parker</i>:

00:12:32.000 --> 00:12:39.817

Ok. About how many Black workers are there now?

<i>Mary Dawkins </i>: Oh, it may be



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