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## Linda B. Godfrey

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Institute of Child Nutrition

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## Linda B. Godfrey Oral History

Linda B. Godfrey's 35 years as a registered dietitian have taken her from work on the food service staffs of a hospital and nursing home, as a teacher, and as a U.S. Army reserve unit member to her retirement in 2005. She retired as Child Nutrition Program Director for the Shelby County, Alabama, School System and from the United States Army Reserves with the rank of Colonel.

She received her B.S. Degree from the University of Tennessee in Food Science and Institution Management, completed a dietetic internship at the University of Alabama Medical Center in Birmingham, and received a M.S. in Nutrition and Foods from the University of Alabama.

Ms. Godfrey continues to be active in a number of school nutrition and dietetic associations and serves or has served in a major leadership role in a number of nutrition-oriented organizations. She has received numerous awards and was awarded the Management Practice Award by the American Dietetic Association in 2004. Her presentations include meetings at the local, state, and national level.

She serves on numerous committees at the Alabama State Board of Education and for several universities. Her involvement in civic organizations is extensive.

JB: I'm Jeffrey Boyce and it's June 16, 2009, and I'm here at NFSMI with Linda Godfrey. Welcome Linda and thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

LG: Thank you for asking me.

JB: Would you begin today by telling us a little bit about yourself, where you were born and grew up?

LG: Sure. I was born in Louisburg, Tennessee, which is about fifty miles south of Nashville and I was raised on a farm, one of three daughters, and worked on the farm. It was really a tobacco farm, but we had cattle and pigs and chickens and a huge garden. So I was one of those children that didn't look forward to summertime because I knew I was going to have to work really hard.

JB: I know the feeling. I grew up on a farm too, but it was mostly cattle. Was that eastern Tennessee?

LG: It's middle Tennessee.

JB: What's your earliest recollection of child nutrition programs? Was there a lunch or breakfast program at your elementary school?

LG: Well, I'm really flattered that you asked me if there was a breakfast program, because I am too old for the breakfast program. I think the breakfast program was

actually implemented a year after I graduated from high school. But my earliest recollection – two things that I wanted to share – when I was in elementary school it was a real privilege to take the trays – in my elementary school there was a table in front of the return window – and it was one of those things where if you were selected to take the trays and put them in the tray return window it was a privilege, not a punishment but a privilege, so we all looked forward to being the ‘tray-picker-upper-person’ I guess you would call it – and then the other thing that’s a little bit more serious I guess – is when I was in elementary school we had the milk program and we were able to purchase milk as a snack for 2 cents. We went to the cafeteria and everybody did it. I didn’t have a lot of money growing up but everybody did this. We had 2 cents and we could purchase milk and we got peanut butter and crackers to go along with the milk, so that was our early-morning snack. So even though we didn’t have a breakfast program I guess that that was kind of the substitute.

JB: Was it whole milk or chocolate milk or...

LG: Oh, of course it was whole milk. This was a rural area in Tennessee and I don’t even know if they had chocolate milk at that time. We didn’t have it in our cafeteria all. It was whole milk and we all drank whole milk because we drank whole milk on the farm - I guess you could say it was whole milk because we skimmed the butterfat off and made butter, so maybe I drew up drinking skim milk – I’m not sure about that.

JB: Did you have a home pasteurizer?

LG: Oh yes. We had a home pasteurizer and we did our own canning and freezing and slaughtering of animals. We did all of those things. It was a farm where we grew what we ate.

JB: And you made butter too you said?

LG: Oh yes, butter.

JB: There’s nothing like that homemade butter is it?

LG: It’s wonderful, it’s wonderful. I’ve made a lot of butter in my life.

JB: What were some of your favorite menu items in your school lunch program?

LG: Well, my favorite menu item - and I know that people just laugh when I say this, but it still is pretty much one of my favorites – I loved macaroni & cheese, pinto beans, and turnip greens and cornbread. That was just one of my favorite things. And then we had something else – people kind of cringe when I say this – but I can remember – you know how you have those certain memories of really good things? – we had hotdogs, and for us hotdogs was a privilege too, because you didn’t raise hotdogs, so to buy hotdogs was pretty much a delicacy when you’re raised on a farm. We would have hotdogs and navy beans, and I can remember that being so good, I just loved that.

JB: Hotdogs chopped up in the navy beans?

LG: No, no. It was hotdogs and then navy beans, like I might serve baked beans today.

JB: Oh, okay.

LG: The side item was navy beans and I just remember how good that was. Of course we had desserts, we had all kinds of desserts, but not a lot of fresh fruit; more canned fruit than fresh fruit when I was in school.

JB: What schools did you attend?

LG: Are you talking about after high school?

JB: Both.

LG: I went to what we called an elementary school – it was called grammar school I think at that time – and then we had a middle school that was called junior high, and a high school.

JB: All in the same town?

LG: All in the same town. Not in the same building. There were three different buildings. And I rode a bus to school every day too. I rode a bus an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon every day. That's where I did a lot of my homework and reading and things like that.

JB: So then you went away to college. Where did you go to school?

LG: The first college that I went to was David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee. It's a Church of Christ school. And they didn't have a Dietetics major there but I completed my first two years of undergraduate school there, and then I transferred to the University of Tennessee because I knew I wanted to be a Registered Dietitian. So I transferred to the University of Tennessee and completed my education there. And I might tell you – and I guess this has something to do with wanting to get away from the farm – that even with transferring I was able to graduate in three years in undergraduate school. I WANTED to get out of school and I WANTED a career. That was really important to me.

JB: What made you choose Dietetics?

LG: Well, that's an interesting story too because I was very involved in 4-H from the time that we could become involved in 4-H and I always loved to cook and bake and I was in the cherry pie cooking contest, and the biscuit making contest – all the different contests. If there was a contest out there I was in it. I was a very involved person. So

when I was in high school I entered an egg cooking contest. The National Egg and Poultry Board had a contest and it was through the 4-H in Tennessee, I guess throughout the nation. Well, I won for the state of Tennessee and went to the national cook-offs in Chicago. I had never been to Chicago, so my mother and I rode a train to Chicago, to this national egg cooking contest. And I won second in the nation by the way.

JB: Wow.

LG: But while I was there I met a Registered Dietitian who was just one the nicest, most congenial people that I think that I had ever been around at that point in time. Now I also had a fantastic high school Home Economics teacher – it was called Home Economics at that time – and she encouraged me constantly. And I knew that Dietetics was one of those professions in Home Economics. I wasn't sure that I wanted to be a teacher – so I was looking for something else – but I knew I wanted to major in Home Economics. So I met this dietitian that worked for the National Poultry and Egg Board and I just made my decision then that that's what I wanted to do. Now I know it's very unusual for a senior in high school to know exactly what they want to do, but I did. I knew then that that's what I wanted to do with my life and I've never regretted it. It's just been a fantastic profession.

JB: Was there a mentor, or someone who helped guide you in your career?

LG: Not really...my high school Home Ec teacher. I went back and talked to her. Mrs. Ledford was her name, and I went back and talked to her about what I wanted to do and she helped me kind of map out – she was a University of Tennessee graduate – she said you really need to go to the University of Tennessee, but that was just a little bit too big for me when I graduated from high school. So I completed my first two years at David Lipscomb and then I transferred to Tennessee.

JB: What was your first job after you graduated?

LG: Well of course I did my dietetic internship. When I applied for dietetic internships you could only apply to two places. So I applied and was accepted at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, came there and did my dietetic internship, and then out of my dietetic internship I started working at the Bessemer Hospital. I was the Chief Dietitian there so I did management as well as clinical work at the Bessemer Hospital. It was a 110-bed hospital. Doing everything I really learned a lot right out of my internship.

JB: How long were you there?

LG: I was there for about five years and while I was there, again, I was very active in the Alabama Dietetic Association, and realized that in order to grow in the profession I needed to get more education. So I applied for graduate school at the University of Alabama, and I actually commuted to Tuscaloosa while working fulltime and was able to complete my Master's Degree during that time.

JB: So you commuted between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa?

LG: Between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa; we didn't have a Master's program in Dietetics in Birmingham at that time – we do now, but we didn't at that time. And during this time also I met my husband and I got married and I joined the United States Army Reserves. I was working a health career booth for the Alabama Dietetic Association. The recruiters were right next to me. This was back in the early '70s. They did not have a dietitian in the Army Reserves in Alabama and really wanted one, so they offered me a commission as a Captain if I would come into the Army Reserves.

JB: You were a busy lady!

LG: I've had a great life. I'm one of those very blessed people I'll have to say.

JB: How did your educational background prepare you for the career in nutrition?

LG: At the University of Tennessee Dietetics really emphasized more management than it did nutrition. We had to take all the nutrition classes, but my undergraduate degree is really in Food Science and Institution Management. It's in Home Economics but the emphasis is in Food Science and Institution Management, so I have a very strong management background, and because of that I was just always very, very interested in management. My father also worked in a management position in addition to the farm. My mother really ran the farm, but my father worked in a management position for a local manufacturing company in my hometown. Just listening to him – we had a very close family – and listening to him all those years about the different management things and dealing with the union, everything that went into management, I guess I just picked up a lot on the fact that I wanted to work with people and I wanted to do everything I could for people. All of that; I think it just all goes together; it goes together in our profession.

JB: After the Master's Degree what was the next position?

LG: Well, the next position I had I taught at UAB. I was the director of the Dietetic Technician program and I taught the Management classes. And then I got kind of tired of academia so I decided that I wanted to go back to the hospital and I did. I went back to the University of Alabama Hospital. I was the Chief Clinical Dietitian, Assistant Director in that position. And then the position came open for the Assistant Director in charge of the purchasing and production area, the food production and all the purchasing that went into the Dietetics Department. And so I applied for and was offered that job. And that was the job that I just loved because a lot of people don't like working with food production people, and they certainly don't like purchasing, but that was just my niche. That's what I enjoy doing. I enjoyed working with the physicians and the patients, but my niche was the management part of it. I kind of always knew that but I guess I kind of fought it too. But then when I got there that's exactly where I needed to be. And now then I guess you're going to ask how I got involved in school nutrition.

JB: Exactly! That was my very next question.

LG: Well, my involvement in child nutrition was kind of through – I guess I was led to school nutrition kicking and screaming. My sister, who is a Registered Dietitian also, worked in school nutrition in the state of Georgia. She called me one day and she said, “Linda, I just have been talking with a superintendent in your area and he is very interested in hiring a Registered Dietitian. His director of child nutrition is retiring. He knows about Registered Dietitians through a friend and he really would like to talk with you.” And I said, “I know nothing about child nutrition. I’m a health care person.” I was really involved at the national level in the American Dietetic Association through some of the health care reform, and so I said, “I just don’t know.” She said, “Well just go talk to him. You owe him that, just to go talk to him.” Well, I did and so I mean I will never forget, it was with the Bessemer City School System and I walked in and talked to the superintendent and the assistant superintendent. They offered me the job on the spot before I left the office and I said, “Well, I just don’t know about this. I’m going to have to pray about this and I’m going to have to talk to my husband about it. I’m just not sure this is where God wants me to go.” So they said, “We’ll give you two days to decide about this.” I said, “That’ll be fine.” I’m pretty much a decision maker anyway, so making decisions very rapidly, that just doesn’t bother me. So I went home and I talked to my husband about it and we had – at that time our son was four and had just started to pre-kindergarten classes. My husband traveled a lot; he is an engineer and he was traveling so there would times when I would have to get up out of bed in the middle of the night when the weather was bad and go to the hospital. When my husband was out of town one of the neighbor’s children would come over and stay with our son...we started talking about it and he said, “You know, this might be what you really need to do” because of Joseph, our son. So we kept talking about it and praying about it and you know that was just where God wanted me to be, I mean it just really was. And that has been the best career move I ever made. I will say that without any question was where I needed to be. I’ve taught three-year-olds Sunday School class for years – I mean like twenty-five years – and I just love working with children. I think somewhere in all this decision making I realized that I had worked in health care – I was taking care of people after they became ill – and what I needed to do was start working with children and prevent a lot of that illness. And so that’s really been my career goal ever since I started working in child nutrition.

JB: And so this position was called...?

LG: I was the Director of Child Nutrition for the Bessemer City School System. It’s a school system that’s right outside of Birmingham and it’s an economically deprived school system. At that time, when I was there, we had about 5500 students and 78% of them were free and reduced students. And many of them are – and they still are, because I still do some work with the now Director – many of them come from single-parent families. They just need a lot of help and support. And I saw that – I saw that the first week I was there.

And then my next position after I left Bessemer, I was asked to by the retiring child nutrition program director in Shelby County in Alabama, to come and talk to them about her position. So I went and talked to them about her position and to make a long story

short, I joined the Shelby County School System. My position was called Coordinator of Child Nutrition, but I was really the Director; that was just semantics in that school system. That's the fastest growing school system in the state of Alabama. In four years we built fifteen new schools because we were growing so rapidly and could not and still cannot keep up with the rapid growth in that school system.

JB: Is that also in the Birmingham area?

LG: It's between Birmingham and Montgomery. Bessemer is between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, so I was just going in the opposite direction really in this. And we live in the Vestavia area, which is right outside of Birmingham so it really wasn't that much different for me. Shelby County is a huge county. We had 34 schools and our student population was growing by 1000 each year; when I left I think we had 26,000 students. That was a great position too. I have worked for wonderful superintendents and Boards of Education that I just cannot say enough good about. And I think part of that is just keeping them informed and communication. I'm one of those people that I like to let people know what's going on and I think that's very, very important for directors to do; and also to be supportive of their employees. I always felt like I was the go-between between my employees and the administration, and I fought for my employees all the time, anything that I could do to improve things for them I would do.

JB: What were some of your biggest challenges in this?

LG: Well, the first school system I went into, the Bessemer School System, I found out after I had been there about three days that four of our seven kitchens were not air-conditioned. And I just couldn't believe it, I mean it reminded me of my military kitchens that I was working in when I was on my annual training, my two weeks active duty. And so I went to the superintendent and I said, "You know, this is almost inhumane treatment to expect" – I mean Alabama's hot in the summertime – and so I said, "We really need to work at air-conditioning these kitchens." And he said, "Well, do you have the money in your budget?" I didn't know if I had money in my budget; hadn't really even looked at by budget after the first two or three days. And I said, "Well if I don't we'll figure out a way we will have money in this budget." And he said, "My guess is that you will have money in the budget just from the determination here." So, what I found out is that if I operated a summer feeding program and really operated it well, then I could make money. And I was able to take the money from our summer feeding program – that year and the next year I grew my summer feeding program – it was the second largest in the state of Alabama, because there were surrounding systems that didn't want to have summer feeding so I just – I was able to have the food transported from our school system to their school system – but then I made a profit on it., so we were able to air-condition all of those kitchens. That was a big challenge and I just felt really good about it. It's just kind of assumed not that kitchens are air-conditioned, but they're not; a lot of them still aren't. I would challenge directors to take care of that problem, I really would.

JB: So what was a typical day like?



LG: Oh, goodness. Is there a typical day? I think that's why I enjoyed it so much, because there was never a typical day. I'm very much a list person, and so the night before what I would usually do is make a list of the things that I wanted to accomplish the next day; or maybe I would do that before I left the day before. But most of the time it would be at night after things had kind of quietened down at home, I would make a list of the things that I wanted to accomplish, and usually by the next afternoon I might have accomplished two of those twelve things, because you just never know. You go in and there's a meeting scheduled for this, or maybe an employee is sick, or I might end up at the emergency room with someone that got hurt, or a parent wants to come in. Every parent cares about their child, and whatever happens to that particular parent's child is very traumatic, and I might spend time taking care of those types of things. The news media would call and say, "We've just had this recall of something. What are you going to do about it? We're going to be in your office in five minutes to have you on the TV station tonight." All of those types of things, but I guess a typical day would have been going in and working maybe on bids, or working on new menus, or working with the Institute on some project, that type of thing. And then going out to the schools; my favorite thing ever was to go to the schools and talk to children. If I got to build that into my day I had a good day. Just being with the children was important to me.

JB: Is there anything unique about Alabama in regard to child nutrition programs?

LG: Well, Alabama is really kind of like Mississippi I would say. We have a statewide purchasing program in Alabama and it's really patterned very much after the one in Mississippi, so Alabama and Mississippi work together on that. The other unique thing about Alabama I will say is that our Child Nutrition Program at the State Department of Education is so supportive of the local directors in our state. There's a lot of training that goes on. There was never a time when I had a problem that I didn't feel comfortable picking up the telephone and calling the state director, or the administrator over the breakfast and lunch program, or even when I was working with summer feeding I had very close contact with the people who were over the summer feeding program at the state level. In Alabama the Commodity Program is operated out of the State Department of Education Child Nutrition Program. I was on committees in all of these areas, because there is very much a team approach to the State Department and everything that was done involved people at the local level. If we wanted to get involved then we could get involved. Now, if we wanted to sit back and complain then I'm sure that we could have done that, but if we wanted to be involved they wanted our input, they wanted our involvement, they wanted products tested at the local levels; so the State Department in Alabama is a little bit unique with their ability to communicate constantly, and also to involve the local child nutrition program directors. It's a great feeling.

JB: Sounds like a good working relationship.

LG: It is. It's a great working relationship.

JB: What are some of the changes you've seen over the years in child nutrition?

LG: Oh my goodness. If there's anything we don't do, we don't give ourselves credit for all of the positive changes. I think sometimes what we do, we concentrate on all of the 'Oh, well, we need to do this or we need to do that'; we don't look at the kitchens that have been air-conditioned, the employees that now are certified with the School Nutrition Association, the fact that [employees] are now considered part of the educational process, that we have a wellness plan in every school system in the nation and that has involved the community; we have more people that are knowledgeable about what we do. And I say this to people all the time. I love doing training, and I did when I was a director, and I still do; it's just a passion of mine. We do a very good job of training professionals in child nutrition. As you can tell from what I've said, I've worked in really all aspects of food service, and I do training in restaurants now, serve safe training for restaurants, I do consulting work in a couple of correctional facilities, and what I can say without a doubt is that the people who work in school nutrition are the most dedicated people I've ever been around in my life. And I think they need to know that. They need to know that they're professionals; that they're not just a cook that's back in the kitchen. They're child nutrition professionals, or school nutrition professionals and I think they need to be referred to like that. You feel good about yourself if you think other people respect you, and there's a lot more respect in school nutrition now than there was several years ago. The fact that we're very involved in legislation – I've been involved at the national level; I was Secretary/Treasurer of our national association, the School Nutrition Association, and I happened to be on the board when we changed our name from the American School Food Service Association to the School Nutrition Association, so I'm proud of that.

JB: Was that '04?

LG: It was '04, right. We've come so far professionally and we don't give ourselves credit for it. We just don't, and so we just need to get that word out more and more and more I think. We have more marketing programs than we've ever had. And we take it for granted – 'Oh, yea, well, we do this and...' The history that the Institute has, I show that all the time when I'm training because I want people to be proud of where we are and what we've done.

JB: Our timeline?

LG: Yes. It's just great.

JB: Well thank you. We're proud of it. Any memorable stories as you think back over your career – a special child or employee.

LG: Oh yea, yea. I'd like to say something about a couple of situations.

JB: Sure.

LG: The first school system I worked with, like I said, was an economically deprived school system, so I'm pretty compassionate about things; passionate and compassionate I

guess I would say, and I can remember a child walking up to me before Christmas one year and I said, "Oh, what are you going to have for Christmas, or what are you going to do?" He said, "I'm not looking forward to Christmas because I won't get much to eat while I'm out for Christmas." I mean it just about tore my heart out and I went home and told my husband. And he said, "One day I'm going to look up and you're going to have a truckload of children bringing them home for the Christmas holidays." And I said, "That might be true." So that day we decided that our family would adopt a family of children every year. And so I went to one of the school counselors and – I mean you can't do for everybody, I'm the type person I'd like to do for everybody – but you can do for a few people. If everybody does for a few the world would be a better place. So we did, we adopted a family through the school counselor. I said, "I don't want the children to know where any of this came from. This is what my husband and I want to do." I said, "We want a family that has three children because my husband wants to buy presents, our son wants to buy presents, and I want to buy presents for these children." So we did that, and I will never forget taking the list home and our son, who always had more than he could ever need, and certainly almost everything that he ever wanted, he looked at the list and he said, "But Mom, there are no toys on this list. They're all clothes and food." And so I was able to teach that lesson. I said, "This is what happens when you don't have; and of course we're going to buy these children toys, but that's not their primary reason for making this list out. They have needs that are very basic needs that you take for granted." So we've been able to do that and we still do that. We will probably do that the rest of our lives, I hope, I hope we're able to do that the rest of our lives. Then there was another student, and this happened when I was with Bessemer, this is what's so strange about this, there was a student that needed a mentor, and so I worked very, very closely with the people in our school system who coordinated that program, and I said, "Sure I'll be a mentor to a student." Well, this little boy did not have a good home life, and he was missing school a lot. I got to know him, his name was \_\_\_\_\_; he was an elementary student at the time. And so I got to know him and I said to him one day, "\_\_\_\_\_ why are you missing school so much?" His grades weren't good – all the things that go into a child that has problems. And he said, "Well really the only reason I look forward to coming to school is to eat." He was in fourth grade and he said, "I really don't know how to read and I can't do this math." So I said, "Well, then we'll start concentrating on that." And so I met with him three times a week and we really worked on all that. His grades started improving but his attendance still wasn't good so I said to him one day, "I don't understand why you're not coming to school. The bus comes right by your house." And he said, "Well, my mother doesn't wake me up in time." She was an alcoholic. And he said, "She doesn't wake me up in time and I miss the bus a lot." And I said, "Well, we'll solve that problem. I'll come by your house and pick you up every day." I got permission from the superintendent and I said, "I'll come by your house and pick you up every day and if you're not awake I'll wait until you get up and get dressed. And so he wanted that. He needed that attention. Of course I left that school system and I left \_\_\_\_\_ and he was doing okay. And then one day I walked into the high school in the Shelby County School System into one of our high schools and this boy came up and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Aren't you Mrs. Godfrey?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "I'm \_\_\_\_\_" And he was in high school. And I said, "How are you doing?" And he said, "Oh, I'm making good grades." And he had plans to go to college. I thought, "This is what life's all about.

This is exactly what life's all about." Of course I hugged him, which embarrassed him in front of his buddies, and I just said, "I've just known him for a long time" and kind of smoothed it over like that. But that's a really, really special thing and it happened because I was working in the school system, he was coming to the cafeteria, and he was always dirty and didn't look clean. We even washed his clothes a couple of times in the washing machine and dried them in the cafeteria. Things like that are the things that we have the opportunity to do. And then let me tell you this funny little story. In one of our schools, an elementary school, of course this has been several years ago, but naturally I've been promoting good nutrition and cutting down on the fat and the sugar and salt in our menus for years, even before it was mandated, and I was in one of my schools, and I work very closely with the principals, I think that's important. So I was working with this principal and she said, "Linda, I really would like for us to serve cereal without sugar; un-sugared cereal. After all the nutrition you've taught and the things that you've talked to us about that's what we need to do." And I said, "Well, that'll be fine." That was before we had the state bid in Alabama. And I said, "We have un-sugared cereal on our bid so that's not a problem." So I went to the manager and I told her, "Carolyn this is what Judy, your principal, wants to do. She said, "Oh, that's a great idea." So Carolyn ordered the cereal without the sugar and I was there, I'm also a very, very strong proponent of [the] Breakfast Program, so I was in the school for breakfast maybe a month later, and I noticed that all these children coming through the line had a little Ziploc bag of something white on their tray, so I said, "Okay, what is this on their tray?" and she said, "They're all bringing their sugar from home." So we had educated the children and we had educated the teachers and we had educated the principal, but we had NOT educated the parents. We had to start doing some marketing to the parents and explain WHY we were doing this. We just died laughing; I got the principal and I said, "Judy, I want to show you something." And she said, "Oh, my goodness!" We had great intentions, but we didn't do that final piece, including the parents in that information.

JB: What advice would you give someone today who is considering child nutrition as a profession?

LG: That's pretty easy. I teach - now that I'm retired from the Shelby County School System and I also do consulting work - I also teach junior and senior Dietetics students at Samford University, which is a private university in Birmingham, about fifteen minutes from my house as a matter of fact; I teach their Food Management classes. So as a part of those Food Management classes I have them rotate in child nutrition. This had never been done until I started to work there. And I work very closely with the Dietetic internship in Birmingham at the University of Alabama. Because of that work with the internship when I was working as a Director, we were able to incorporate rotation in child nutrition. So not only do I talk to people about child nutrition, I get the students in the schools and let them see #1, my students at Samford cannot believe how clean the facilities are when we go visit, and I'm not being negative about this, but we can go visit a restaurant, or a college cafeteria, or even a hospital kitchen and cafeteria, and there is a difference in the cleanliness level. The schools are by far - I mean they are just clean. So that's one of the first selling points I use with my students. We have more Registered Dietitians in Alabama working in school food service just because they've been exposed to it. So, first

of all I tell my students that you have to go where God leads you, and I do believe that, but the other thing is that if you want to serve people, and sometimes not receive a lot of credit for what you're doing, but you have to feel good about what you're doing, and there's this wide-open profession out there, there are all these children out there that really need somebody to care about them, and to make their life better, and I use the same scenario that I used with myself – “Are you more interested in preventing diseases, or are you interested in taking care of it after it develops?” And if you can save two children from having twenty days of healthcare, think about the amount of money we are saving our healthcare system. So I approach it like that. It's an area where you have to work hard, and I'm very honest with everybody about that, working in school nutrition is very, very hard work. A Director may be helping unload a truck one day; they may be speaking to the Board that night; I just think back about my career, all the things that I had to do; you might be in the emergency room with an employee that got their finger cut because they weren't being careful. And then you may be up in front of a whole group of people telling about things that go on. So I tell them that if you want a profession that's very, very fulfilling and also that you'll feel good at the end of the day about, then this is the profession for you. And I do it all the time; I'm constantly recruiting, and not just the Director level, but every level. I've been to the dollar store and I see somebody who's really good at cashiering and I'll ask them if they've ever considered working in school nutrition. Some of my best cashiers were people that I recruited like that. Or even in a restaurant if you see somebody that offers really, really good customer service I'll say, “Have you ever considered working in school nutrition?” And sometimes they just haven't even thought about it. I just think it takes all of us constantly recruiting good people.

JB: Anything else you'd like to add?

LG: The one thing that I would like to add, and I'm very passionate about this, it that we need to constantly be training the people who work in school nutrition, whether it's at the director level, or the manager level, or the associate level, or assistant, whatever we call the people that actually do the work – the line work – we need to constantly be training them and helping them feel better about themselves. I'm a firm believer in the more training you have the better job you're going to do, and after all, it is all about the children.

JB: Thank you so much.

LG: Thank you.