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## Barry Sackin

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## Barry Sackin Oral History

Barry Sackin has more than 30 years' experience in child nutrition programs, including 18 years in program operations, such as school breakfast, school lunch, summer feeding, Head Start, senior feeding, and the commodity program. He is now president of B. Sackin & Associates, a child nutrition consulting business. Barry was staff vice president for SNA, a founding board member of Action for Healthy Kids, former president of the Southern California School Nutrition Association, and member of the SNA executive board. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the American Commodity Distribution Association and the CSNA Public Policy and Legislation Committee. Barry is the author of many peer-reviewed journal articles and is regularly asked to speak at state and national conferences. He also serves as a trainer for the National Food Service Management Institute.

JB: I'm Jeffrey Boyce and this is January 21, 2011. I am at the National Food Service Management Institute in Oxford, Mississippi with Mr. Barry Sackin. Welcome Barry and thanks for taking the time to talk with me today.

BS: Good Morning.

JB: Could we begin by you telling me a little bit about yourself, where you were born and grew up?

BS: I was born in north New Jersey and grew up in East Orange. I was there through high school when I went to Rutgers University in New Brunswick, and left the state in 1971 and have been gone ever since.

JB: East Orange – is that near New York City?

BS: As the crow flies probably fifteen minutes.

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

BS: No. I'm old enough that kids went home for an hour, and we lived literally on the same physical block as the elementary school and across the street from the junior high school, so I went home every day, even during junior high school I went home for lunch. Society was a bit different then. At junior high school they did have a cafeteria, and I don't think I ever ate in it. High school – there weren't a lot of options, but I didn't participate in the meals program. I would get rolls or bread, or I would bring my lunch.

JB: And after high school you said you went to - ?

BS: I went to Rutgers University in New Brunswick and did my degree in History, which is why I'm in school food service. Other than teaching and going to law school there weren't a lot of options and I'd always been involved with food, so it was sort of a natural migration. I did work on a master's degree at San Diego State University –

JB: In?

BS: An MBA, which I took 54 or 57 units of graduate work, and was just starting a company with somebody, and said, "Well, I don't have time to finish my thesis", which I guess happens to a lot of folks, so I never did that, so I don't have the MBA, but all the stuff I learned I've applied successfully, so I kind of think I've got it, but I don't have the certificate.

JB: So tell me how you got involved in child nutrition as a profession.

BS: I'd done, from when I graduated college until 1979, I'd done college and university feeding, some restaurant work, fast food and dinner houses, and when I wanted to work on my master's I was working as food service director at University of California, Davis, and the general manager on campus left to start a new venture, and the guy they hired to take over knew absolutely nothing about our business, but he had a master's in Marketing from Kansas City State and was pretty much of a fool. And I said, "The only reason he got this job and I didn't even know where to apply was because he's got a master's", so I wanted a master's, and you can't do that when you're working 70-75 hours a week on a college campus. I had a twin sister who worked in the younger child grades for

San Diego City, and she saw a posting for a staff person for the school lunch program in San Diego and I applied and was hired, and figured I would do that while I worked on my master's degree. As a matter of fact, it's kind of a funny story, I was on staff at San Diego for about two and a half years – I did non-food work, so small wares, marketing, some facilities design work – and that was an opening at a large high school district not far from there which I applied for. I found out three days before the position closes, got the paperwork, and I filled it out. They used directors from neighboring districts for a screening panel of the applicants. And the screening panel, who are people who I then was then a colleague with for many, many years – during the interview they said something about my plans or goals – and I said, “Oh, I'm just doing this until I get my master's and then I'm going back to the real world”, and that was thirty-two years ago.

JB: Like John Lennon said, “Life's what happens while you're making other plans.”

BS: Yep.

JB: So what's the first position you had with the school district then?

BS: I think it was called cafeteria specialist, cafeteria support, and they had back in the equipment grant days when there was federal money for facilities, and San Diego got a lot of it, the assistant director who was there, who I reported to, had been hired specifically to help redesign and remodel a bunch of kitchens. So they brought me in to help Ernie with that. Then as I said I did some marketing, did some really fun and interesting projects.

JB: Tell us about some of those.

BS: We did a video called Department on the Move, I think, and my notion was ‘people really don't know what we do here and what the impact is, so why don't we do a video that we can show to the school board?’ It actually aired on a public TV station in San Diego, and we went out and we talked to a lot of people. We found somebody who had worked in food service thirty years before and interviewed her - talked about the size of the department, the kinds of things we did, all the different activities – which is still have a copy of in my files.

JB: I was just about to ask you if you have a copy of that; sounds like something we'd love to have a copy of in the Archives.

BS: It was a lot of fun, and Jane Barrett, who was the director, Jane was a lieutenant-colonel in the Air Force Reserves, so everything was very structured, which is not my style at all. But she gave me a lot of latitude to do stuff - decided we wanted to do a newspaper thing so I reached out to newspapers, and there was a weekly sort of oddball newspaper that a lot of metropolitan areas have, that agreed, and they sent their restaurant reviewer to do it, and she came out, and she lived in La Jolla, which is part of the district, but very affluent part of the district, and we brought her to a middle school I think, and she was really impressed that, back then I think we were charging ninety cents for lunch or something, that for what we had to work with the meals were actually pretty good. And she was really positive and I was so excited, and then she wrote a restaurant review comparing lunch in school cafeterias to going to a high-end restaurant, and I was devastated, and my boss Jane [said] "There is no such thing as bad publicity unless you've done something wrong, and we've made people aware", because the article, even though it was somewhat negative about the food, it's not gourmet food, was positive in that we were providing nutritious meals to tens of thousands of children every day. We designed - I originally was going to call it the Buck Stop, but Jane thought that people would have fun with that - but it was called the Express Stop where kids could come by and pick up a grab-and-go kind of thing, and that was thirty years ago so that was advanced stuff. We had a lot of fun; did all kinds of stuff.

JB: You mentioned the committee that interviewed you. Did some of those people become mentors for you or was there a collegial relationship?

BS: Very collegial. San Diego's sort of a world unto itself in terms of the school food service community. Very few of the directors participate in the state association, but there was a county directors group and we would meet on a monthly basis and share ideas, so yes, there were some really good folks. One of the wonderful things about school food service, and it's probably part of what kept me in it for more than thirty years - we don't compete with each other. If

somebody has a good idea, they're happy to share it and work with you on it. They're not going to charge you for it. We all share a common goal, which in just about any other part of the food service business is not the case. You're competing for clients. You're competing for customers. Your restaurant's in competition with other restaurants on the street or whatever other group you're in. And so school food service is such a warm, welcoming bunch of people as much as anything else. And of course there's obviously the reward of doing things for kids.

JB: Exactly. And so where did you go from there? What was your next position?

BS: I went from San Diego to the Grossmont Union High School District, which at the time was the second largest high school district in the state. I think I had about nine senior high schools and about 23,000 students, which we were just talking at the NFSMI meeting that I'm here for about districts by size, and 23,000 is one of the top twenty percent of districts in the country. And when I got there, the woman whose place I took had just gone through the very difficult RIF process had just laid off a bunch of people and cut hours. With the budget cuts that happened in 1981 school districts did a lot of things to try and balance the books, and she had to do the difficult things. And it became hard on her. Even at 23,000, nine schools, 100-120 employees there's a familial relationship. Well that became difficult after she'd gone through this. So I came in sort of to pick up the pieces and did a lot of team-building kinds of activities so that the staff became very happy. I was there for four years. I got there and I think our gross revenue for the year was \$1.4 million and when I left four years later it was \$2.1. We grew the business. People were happy. Employees got more hours because we were busier. I learned an enormous amount about our business. You go back to San Diego - our business in very complex and it is far more complex than it was in 1979-80 - when you have a very large district, they have a very large central office staff with divided duties. My work was cafeteria support - small wares, inventory, repairs, design, marketing - but they had four people who worked in the nutrition section. They did menu planning. San Diego was the pilot for what became nutrient standard menu planning that used computers to do menu planning. And there were people who were in the labor section. There were people who were in

this section and that section. And then you get to a small district – Grossmont – I had a secretary and I had cafeteria managers, but I was it. And in an even smaller district you do everything; you may even be the cook. So that was an interesting transition. In Grossmont I had overall responsibility, did not have an assistant director, which they added after I left. So, you know, you become a generalist. At San Diego I went to the head of the food section and I said, “What’s a meal?”, and she started explaining about five components and this and that and the other thing. Back then a tablespoon of butter was a requirement on every lunch. So she explained what a meal pattern was. I had no idea. And then you get to a district and you have to plan menus. So it’s a large learning curve. I was there for four years at Grossmont, and I’ve always been sort of an early adopter, and so I was doing stuff with PCs when they first came out. When I was at San Diego Jane introduced me to somebody who was coming in on sort of a sales call with her, and she asked me to come into the office and she said, “The two of you are very much alike. I see you working together.” And almost four years later Chip and I met at an industry conference, talked about computers, and started what then was Snap Systems and became School-Link Technologies today, and designed one of the first school accountability programs, PC computer based in the country. We did the design work in a year, and then in my last year at Grossmont we piloted and did all the test things. And at that point we were actually ready to roll this out, and so I left the district and went to work as vice-president of sales and marketing. There were three of us in the company, and one of the really positive things about that was that I traveled around the country and I learned an enormous amount, because our business, while we all had the same standards and the same programs, is very different if you travel around the country. Here in the Southeast the tradition of school lunch is very entrenched in the appreciation for it, and the kids that participate in the meals programs. California is ten years ahead of the rest of the world in trends, so we were doing a lot of a-la-cartes and a lot of fancy marketing, and the kids were more sophisticated. The tradition was much different than it is here. So I was learning this and meeting people around the country. After four years, one, my kids were into their teen years and I was traveling too much - I was gone about half the time – and I missed sort of the operational side of things, and there was a vacancy at Anaheim Union High School

District in California, which I applied for and was hired. Anaheim High School District when I got there was nine high schools, nine junior high schools and assorted other things. I think the district population was about 23,000 at that time. We also vended meals to one of five elementary districts whose kids came to my high schools and junior high schools, and we vended to those Anaheim city schools. It is a terrible program – they were cold meals, cold pizza, cold chicken nuggets. The elementary district ran their own program; we just sold them packaged meals. They were doing some things that were illegal in terms of the school lunch program, and they had a new board member who wanted hot lunches. I'd been there a week when the associate superintendent at the elementary district scheduled a meeting and I asked my boss, and she said, "He wants to talk to you about hot lunches. Go ahead and have the meeting on your own." I had never met the guy. I'd only been with the district for a week, and in my naiveté I said, "Why don't you just let us take over the program and do the whole thing for you, and you get out of running a school lunch program?" And he said, "Oh, that'll be just wonderful." And then it took a year to go through – I'm not a lawyer, but I ended up actually writing the contract - the county councilor did the legal writing of it, but I put the contract together. I think I probably put some things in there that they signed that they later regretted having signed, and a year later we took over the elementary program and started converting to hot lunches. When I got there, there were 14,000 students in the elementary district. We were doing about 3,500 lunches a day for them. I was there for seven years and when I left there were 17,000 kids in the elementary district and we were doing 14,000 lunches a day.

JB: That's great.

BS: My elementary kids had five hit entrée choices a day. Now what makes this – I get a little frustrated when I talk to some directors and they have wonderful facilities, but can't seem to find out how to run a good program – I had no kitchens and no dining rooms.

JB: How did you do it?



BS: I found a rethermalization oven, and it's interesting, it's a two-stage oven. One was warming, and then there was a higher temperature, so we put a limiter on it, because if you use the higher temperature it became an oven, and you needed external ventilation. If it was a warming unit you did not. So we took janitors' closets and utility closets, and we put in a milk cooler and a roll-in refrigerator and a rethermalization unit, and my central kitchen would make components as opposed to packaged meals and it was an interesting system. We would send out the five choices and the side dishes. We always had three or four fruits and vegetables, one of which had to be fresh. This was in the early '90s, so we were up front with a lot of the things that are happening now. We set up aluminum tables outside the closet we were working from, and there was a lunch bench area that was shaded by a netting. It was not a covered area, because in Southern California we didn't have very many rain days. When we did the kids would take it back to their classroom. There were no breakfast programs in the elementaries when I got there. We added twenty-two elementary breakfast programs over a three-year period. And I had to do it carefully, because the law back then said that you had to serve whole milk. And then there was a change in the law that said you served in proportion to what you served the previous year, and if you served less than five percent you didn't have to serve something. But we only got state reviews every five years, so I timed this so that I had two years lead and we went to a 1% white and nonfat chocolate back in '94, which is now the requirement of the new regulation that just came out – says that's the maximum that you can do, which we did 15-20 years ago, without any feedback difficulty. By the time the reviewers came in that's what we had sold, so we didn't violate the law – at least when we were reviewed. Sorry anybody from USDA who's watching. So we did fun things like that. I was president of the Southern Cal School Nutrition Association. I was at a national conference, I think in Anaheim. I'd been on the national strategic planning committee in 1993, and ran for national office for Major City Chair for what was then ASFSA, and got elected and I was on the board for a year, and I'd always been interested in sort of legislative stuff. And I was on the board for a year when the woman who was the manager of government affairs for the association gave notice. And I had some ideas about some things we might do, so I called the Executive Director and said,

“I thought I’d share some thoughts.” She said, “Well actually, when I think of this job I think of you doing it.” My younger child was just finishing high school and was planning to move out and so in three days time we negotiated. If somebody had asked me on Monday ‘Would you be a lobbyist?’ it would never have entered my mind. It was nothing even in my event horizon, and four days later I took as Director of Government Affairs for ASFSA for seven and a half years.

JB: So you moved from Southern California to D.C.?

BS: Alexandria, Virginia. I was there for seven and a half years – went through two child nutrition reauthorizations successfully, and then for a number of reasons – six years ago this week – I left and started my own consulting business. I haven’t missed a mortgage payment so consulting is pretty good.

JB: So you’re back in California?

BS: We stayed in D.C. for two more years, and my wife said – we have five grandchildren now – “Well, I’m moving back to California. Do you want to come with me?” And after twenty-five years of marriage it seemed like a reasonable idea to move back with her. And for what I do, my clients are sort of national, so as long as I’ve got a phone and a computer and access to an airport not too far away, it doesn’t matter really where I am. The first reauthorization – I got there and we were in the middle of the 1998 reauthorization – and I think this is important because it really sets the stage for my time with the association –

JB: ’98 – that would have been the Clinton administration.

BS: It was the Clinton administration and there was a child nutrition reauthorization bill, and the association had already started its strategy. Marshall Matz is the Legislative Consultant for the association, has been for thirty-five years now I guess. We would go on these Hill meetings. People think you’re in D.C. and you’re a lobbyist – you meet with these members of Congress. It’s RARE you meet with members of Congress. During reauthorization we may have maybe two or three member meetings - most of the time you’re meeting with staff, which is absolutely how things get done. But I would go to these meetings and we’d be talking about issues and reauthorization. It was a contentious

reauthorization because we'd just gone through the block grant thing, which had ended well for us on policy, but politically there was a lot of anger about the advocacy community's position on it, so '98 was notable because we reestablished these programs as bipartisan – that both sides of the aisle really care about the welfare of kids. But I would go to these meetings and be negotiating the bill, sometimes with Marshall, sometimes without, and it was really scary, because if you say something wrong, or you offend – and some of these staffers are fairly arrogant and they really do – I won't go to any of the stories I could share about a staffer who basically got their bristles up and they actively worked against you because they were upset with you about something. And I thought 'If I screw this up – if I say something wrong – there are millions of children depending on what I'm doing. It was a tremendous burden, but it also kept me very focused. It was a tremendous learning experience and Marshall is a tremendous mentor. I can't even begin to calculate how much he taught me and what I know – but we were successful in re-centering the program – got a couple of small things in that bill. But it set the stage then for 2004. We had a very successful reauthorization, which I had a role in as a representative of our members.

JB: You talk about the complexity of the program and even how much more complex it is today. Tell me about some of the changes you've seen over the years in child nutrition.

BS: Well one of them I mentioned before. When I first started you had to have a tablespoon of butter on every lunch – I think every breakfast as well – so there's been a lot of change in nutrition. Looking at the historical pattern of what's happened, in 1981, as all of us who've been around for a while will remember, there was a very large cut in our budget. About one-third of federal funds that schools receive got cut, and we took a huge cut in participation. It took twenty years before we got back to the same level of participation that we had prior to those cuts, and we have never recovered the number of paying children that we had back then. But it was sort of easy. The funding was adequate and there were a lot of very, very good directors. You didn't have to be as good a business person because you just prepared meals, you followed a meal pattern. In '81, because of

the budget cuts, it was actually a paper that I wrote while I was working on my masters, 'How do you respond to losing that much of your funding?' I actually think that it is one of the reasons that we are in the nutrition position that we are in schools. Schools are not responsible for childhood obesity. It's a very large societal problem. We tend to get blamed and the reason is that it is one of the few places where politics and policy can intersect. Every member of Congress wants to be seen as proactive on issues of importance to their constituents, and so all of the concern about childhood obesity, which is a legitimate concern, one of the few places where they can actually pass a bill to do something about it is the school cafeteria. And so everybody and their brother and sister in Congress wants to have a bill, or be shown to be doing something about fat kids, and so schools get a lot of the focus, even though we know that research based, schools are the healthiest option for kids. We are improving – we still have a ways to go – but they are far more nutritious than kids' other options. So we're sort of caught in 'We'll fix schools and the problem will go away', and that's not what's going to happen. But I think part of the seed of how we got there was that in 1981 the way many districts responded was by extending their a-la-carte sales, and by selling other things. Some started getting into vending back then and making other things available, because with the cut in lunch reimbursements schools raised prices. For every penny we raised prices we lost one percent of our participation. So how do you make up that money? Schools got creative and started doing some innovative, creative marketing and a-la-carte sales. And then I think what happened was as that was successful and food was easy to sell, and student groups and principals and everyone else said, "Well, we want in on the game", and so you started seeing campuses expand outside of the cafeteria, competitive foods as well. So I think that's been a change, and we have '94 – the bill required the schools to meet the dietary guidelines, '95 they came out with new menu-planning regulations. Interesting legislative policy thing – the regulations that were passed required nutrient standard menu planning. You had to use a computer. I was president of Southern Cal at the time and wrote, both as the association and director, comments on it, twenty-seven pages each, telling them why this was a foolish idea. And it's nice to be validated with the new menu planning regs proposal and the IOM recommendations – I'm one of the external

reviewers of the IOM report – they’re doing away with nutrient standard menu planning for the very reasons we told them in 1995 they shouldn’t do it in the first place. All the things we said were wrong about it and right about food-based menu planning is what science now supports, which makes me feel good that we weren’t just being difficult. AFSFA went back to Congress and passed a law saying you had to have a food-based menu planning option, and we were very successful in doing that. We went through the a-la-carte program late ‘80s, blue ribbon panel, Shirley Watkins, past president of AFSFA, was on that panel on commodities, which are now USDA Foods – we need to make them more nutritious, and USDA started looking at the nutritional quality of the foods they were selling. Now the butter issue – as we learned about better nutrition, we’re seeing the meal pattern reflect that, we saw commodities – USDA Foods reflect that. USDA back then, the joke about the case in Kansas City – years and years of supply of cheese and butter that were surplus and they gave to schools and schools menued it – cheese became a big part of school meals because you could have as much as you want and it didn’t cost you anything. Well, that’s not the case anymore, so we focused a lot on that. We’ve improved the nutritional quality of meals. On the other hand we are still – and even more so because kids become more sophisticated as the media panders to kids – we are still in a competitive business. When I talked earlier about food service programs don’t compete with each other and we can share, that’s true, but kids are not a mandatory audience. You’re not the only game in town. They have lots of other options, particularly when they get to secondary schools. They make choices. Parents make choices. So you still have to run a quality program. You still have to provide food and food items that kids want to buy, and that’s part of the challenge that we have right now. All of the move towards organic and no processed foods, which people don’t understand what the term processed food means. There’s a group of people who think that the word processed makes it a terrible, horrible thing. That’s not the case. I’m actually working with somebody writing an article right now to try and help food service people respond to the parents who say, “We don’t want any more processed foods.” “Well, then we’ll take milk off the menu and we won’t serve bread anymore.” And school food service people need those tools for communications. So you’ve got these people saying, “We want onsite cooking.”

Well, we don't have the labor. I worry about having a staff that may revolve with some frequency and may not have as much training and ability as I would like handling raw chicken. So if I want chicken on the menu do I really want to bring USDA Raw Foods chicken in and have them cook it because my liability in this litigious world - if the kid gets sick and my staff didn't handle it properly – so I think we're in a very difficult place. And we talked – it's becoming more difficult. The regs are getting harder. When they couldn't un-fund us out of existence in the '80s - the administration and Congress was sort of trying to do that – they thought they could paper us out of existence, and they started exponentially increasing the amount of paperwork and the requirements, and you can justify some of it in sort of the general 'No, we need smarter reviews. We need to have all of these controls and accountability.' There are going to be bad actors everywhere, but school food service it's a very, very rare thing that that happens – but now you have piles. My friend Rick De Burgh testified in Congress once and he brought a stack of papers that was this high [indicating approximately two feet] to the hearing, and his daughter worked in an atomic energy plant, and he said that this is one week's worth of school food service paperwork and it's ten times as much as the nuclear plant has to fill out to control what it does. So we've expanded that and made it extremely difficult, so I think those are some of the changes. All also think one of the things – we're doing a better job of communicating it – I don't think within the school environment people don't understand just how difficult the job of food service director is.

JB: It sounds like you spend a lot of your time in education and training – educating your audience, and staff training – both really important.

BS: Yes. And communicating, and giving people the tools to do their jobs better, whether it's a director being able to answer a press question, or a member of Congress who doesn't quite understand our program, and wants to do something – and hopefully something positive – and they'll listen to you. I had the opportunity several years ago, after I started consulting, to write a bill for Hillary Clinton which was actually introduced in Congress. It's because they knew what they wanted to do, but they had no idea how to do it. It's such a specific set of knowledge and skills – personnel, human relations, accounting, nutrition, food

safety, marketing, and on and on, the number of hats that a food service director wears. Principals think that they're the most important person in the school district, and their level of responsibility is. I would put a food service director up against them any day in terms of what they need to know and be able to do on a daily basis. Fun story – back in my Grossmont days I walked onto a campus, and I always stopped in at the principal's office when I came on campus, and the principal said, "Barry, you're doing a great job." I said, "Thanks Art. I appreciate that. Why are you saying that?" "I haven't had any children in the office complaining about food for two months", which is the principals perspective of what you do. If he doesn't get a complaint, if food service is running smoothly, then you're doing a great job, nothing about the quality of the meals or anything else. It's 'I haven't had a complaint. You're going a great job'.

JB: What would you say has been your most significant contribution to the field so far?

BS: I've had the opportunity to do things that there are other people who are equally or better able to do, but I've been the one who's had the chance, and I say that, although I'm not the most humble person, I do say that with all humility. I've just been given opportunities. I think the 2004 reauthorization was for me a high point. I had a significant role in creating what has become a national movement. The Local Wellness Policy was something I worked out with congressional staff initially, defensively, because they wanted to do something that I think would have made it difficult for the cafeteria, because they would only address the food service line. I said, "You can't do that because you'll just drive the kids somewhere else, so if we're going to do it we really need to do something that affects the whole campus", which was politically difficult to do, and we found a way to phrase the language, which originally was local nutrition policies, and through negotiations on the Hill became local wellness policies. And we anticipated, we really did anticipate, given what was going on around the country, that this could be the seed that could be used locally to really start change. We couldn't get what the recent reauthorization did, which was give the Secretary the authority to do it. That wasn't going to fly in Congress. But not being specific about what the policies were, but making school boards think about their wellness environment,

we thought that local advocates could cause change. And it succeeded beyond our wildest imaginations and has started a revolution. It was difficult at first. There are probably some people who aren't happy about that, but among other things it coalesced industry people who were opposed to it behind the idea of having national standards, because we've got this patchwork around the country. So now the Secretary has the authority that we couldn't get in 2004, but Congress has now given the Secretary to regulate all foods sold on campus during the school day. And I think that one idea has sparked a revolution that has caused a lot of very positive changes. I'm really pleased. There are a lot of small things that I'm happy about, but I think the one large thing that I feel some responsibility for sort of having changed the world is local wellness policies.

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

BS: Do it. As difficult as it is, the rewards are greater. When I was in Anaheim and we grew our business a million dollars a year for seven years, sometimes I felt I was on the horse holding on for dear life, and whenever things got really tough – we did summer food service, and I did a couple of the year-round summer food service – that's because I had year-round schools – and we did a cooperative project with the City of Anaheim Park and Rec, and they had a community center in a very impoverished area, and when things sort of got challenging for me I would go over and watch these little kids go through and eat, which is rewarding. They wouldn't be eating if we didn't have this program here. So it's difficult, it's challenging. I would say to new people who probably wouldn't have an opportunity to see this or hear it, get involved with your association, and I'm not saying that as a skill for the association, but the collegiality and the ability to learn from peers and people who have been in the business for thirty-two years, which makes a huge difference to be able to have people you can call and ask for help, who will give it to you freely. Do it. The rewards are far greater than the challenges you'll face.

JB: Anything else you'd like to add?



BS: I was on a couple of panels for the Institute back in the early days. I am really excited about where the Institute is right now and where it's headed. I think Katie brings a sense and an energy and a creativity that was desperately needed, and I'm really happy. I'm here now doing some training to be a trainer, and we've talked about some of the stuff she's working on and it's just really, really exciting. I think there's a great future for where the Institute fits into our whole business. And don't lose hope. I think the next few years are going to be our biggest challenge yet. But then again the kids depend on us.

JB: Thank you so much for your time.

BS: Thank you.