**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Frances Peetoom**

Interview Conducted by

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

August 4, 2016

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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**Interview History**

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Frances Peetoom is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 4, 2016.

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**About Frances Peetoom…**

Frances Hightower Peetoom was born in 1951 in Vinita, Oklahoma. She attended public schools in Vinita and graduated from Vinita High School in 1969. Right out of high school Frances began working at the Glass House Restaurant as a waitress. She was hired by Annabell Southern and quickly came to respect her as well as earn her respect. Soon after high school Frances married and she and her husband began moving around as he found different work. The skills Frances learned while waitressing at the Glass House served her well in that she could fall back on waitressing no matter where they moved. Life brought her back to employment at the Glass House more than once. In 1974 both Frances and her husband worked at the Glass House before they relocated to California. Roughly ten years later and following a divorce, she returned to Vinita and to the Glass House. This time Frances “Annabell’s right hand” in that she worked wherever she was needed and could do whatever was asked of her.

Frances continues to reside in Vinita and has four children. Also of note her mother, Eunice Hightower, lived to be ninety-eight years of age and was a cherished member of the community.

**About the Glass House…**

At the half-way point on the Will Rogers Turnpike near Vinita, Oklahoma, stands an iconic landmark. The arched building opened in 1957 and was the first restaurant built over a U.S. public highway. Conoco (Continental Oil Company) commissioned the building with an aim to serve the needs of motorists passing in both directions. The building housed the Glass House Restaurant, dedicated in 1958, and included a cafeteria, snack bar, and sit-down restaurant. On each side of the building, motorists enjoyed full-service gas stations, operated by Conoco initially. Over the years other restaurants and fuel facilities have operated at the service plaza. Host International, Interstate Hosts and Howard Johnson’s have operated the plaza at different times. The Glass House and the Conoco stations employed many of the area’s youth through the years and served many, many travelers. Renovation began on the service plaza in 2012 and in 2014 it re-opened with a new name, the Will Rogers Archway.

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| **Frances Peetoom**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn  August 4, 2016  Vinita, Oklahoma |  |

**Nykolaiszyn** *My name is Julianna Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma State University Library. Today is Thursday August 4, 2016, and I am in Vinita, Oklahoma, interviewing Frances Peetoom as part of the* Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project *with the focus on the Glass House Restaurant. Today we’re going to learn a little bit more about Frances and Frances if you could, tell me the year you were born and where you were born.*

**Peetoom** I was born March 18, 1951, here in Vinita and curiously, I was actually born at my home here in Vinita, in the house where I was born. My siblings were born at the doctor’s office or the hospital, but Mom chose to have me at home with a midwife. She just passed in March at the age of 98 and was well known in the community. Her name was Eunice Hightower. I, having been born in Vinita and raised here, graduated in 1969 from Vinita High School.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Tell me a little bit about your parents.*

**Peetoom** Mother was born at a little community outside of Vinita called Narcissa, and my father was born down close to Stilwell in a little tiny community that doesn’t exist anymore called Baron [Oklahoma]. There’s a Barren Fork [Illinois and Arkansas Rivers]. There’s a little stream and a bridge there now. Just Baron, B-a-r-o-n, near Stillwell. He passed away in 1991 as complications from a car accident, and I lived always at the same place. They built a small house, and he began working in Parsons [Kansas] and later in Kansas City for the Rock Island Railroad, and he retired from Southern Pacific in 1982.

Actually the day he retired and closed down his home in Kansas City they were bringing his final belongings to Vinita, unhooked the trailer, and went right to Miami. One of their grandchildren was born at the hospital in Miami. They loved all their grandchildren and even babysit a lot of them and had what they called “Hightower School.” All the little ones there playing around and the older one would come home from kindergarten and teach the little ones, younger than her, what they learned at school that day. Anyway, my mother lived to be 98 and passed this March.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What did she do for a living?*

**Peetoom** She managed the school’s cafeteria so everybody that knew her in school knew her as the lady that cooks cinnamon rolls and hot rolls and chili. In fact as she got in poor health, primarily with her knees and things and was sedentary with home health care and different ones coming in, Senior Companions and such, anytime a physical therapist or anybody came into the house she always asked, “Are you one of the little kids that came through my cafeteria?” And so she always wanted to know if they were one of her little kids and many times they were.

For her 98th birthday, we had three days of celebration. Friday was for all of the medical personnel that was coming in, and Saturday was for grandkids and family, and Sunday was open house for anybody in the community to come in, and so we had three days of good fun celebration. Which is wonderful to see all of the people that came out, to enjoy her time with them, and then she got pneumonia. We had twenty-one days then of all the family coming in and being with her those last days, spending time sitting by her, and holding her hand, and loving on her.

Having lived 98 years, and her being such a Godly woman and having had such a long fulfilled life, it’s hard to mourn her loss, almost. Because you know where she’s at, and she’s had just a wonderful, fulfilled and always encouraging others and giving and doing. It’s hard to know that she’s gone, but you know where she’s at and how much she gave and what she has left in the world so...

**Nykolaiszyn** *How many siblings do you have?*

**Peetoom** I have two older sisters and a younger brother. He passed away, tragically, from the results of having had a long bout of encephalitis. He had always been like her, well known in the community and a big, strong healthy man and just strangely got this infection that passed to his brain. He had been hospitalized from February to July, at times on life support, not knowing if he was even going to survive it. And when he come out of the hospital in July, he was weak but he recovered his physical health but it left him with short-term memory loss and eating-sleeping disorders. He had to be moved to a mental institution and then in boarding homes because not knowing when he ate last and where he was or everything. He had to be monitored at all times for where he was or where he’s going. Someone had to be in control of him at all times and as a result of this eating disorder, he became very obese and it crowded his heart and lungs. He fell dead of cardiomyopathy the day after Christmas, two years after he contracted this. So he died at a very young age of like 44, I think it was.

And my sister Lavon [Lewis] and I found ourselves comforting the community because it affected everyone because he was so well loved. As we’re doing this about the Glass House, my brother didn’t work there but my sister Lavon and I did. Our older sister married the day after her seventeenth birthday, and my brother that died and my older sister Lavon and I were like the younger kids with her marrying and moving. She came in and visited and everything but the three of us were a little closer than she was, and with Dad working out of town and coming home on weekends and things, Mom and us were a little closer family than with Dad. But my sister and I became waitresses when we were, I was thirteen and she was like fourteen and a half. We actually started at the Hotel Vinita.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow, you were young.*

**Peetoom** Yes, and in fact she called me on Easter Sunday at the Hotel Vinita and said, “Put on my uniform. Come down and help me.” I guess there was a flu going on or something, and they were short-handed and she said, “Put on my uniform. Come help me. I’ve gotta have some help.” So I found out that I actually liked it and could do it so that was the beginning of my career as a waitress. So right out of high school is when I began working at the Glass House.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you graduated in 1969 from high school. How did the job come about at the Glass House?*

**Peetoom** Well Lavon had been working out there, and things were just going different in my life, and I don’t know whether she had encouraged me to apply or not, but at some point I chose to go and apply. And the lady that had taught Lavon and I at the hotel was good friends with Annabell [Southern], and I found out later that they had both been on the Oklahoma Restaurant Association committee or association, however that was, a membership together. They both encouraged good technique in waitressing, the old original service techniques of say banqueting, of cloth tablecloths, silver and china and glassware and it being laid out in a certain way and being served in a certain way, and the employees acting a certain way in the dining room and not being sloppy when they order or hanging around talking or misbehaving in the dining room.

You didn’t stand around chatting or talking to one another or drinking a soda or something when the customers were having their dinner. You always took the coffee cup off the table to fill it. You didn’t put the coffee cup over the table and fill it on the table. You always removed everybody’s salad from the table before you served the main course. Anyway, Mrs. Gertrude Driskill, that had managed the hotel coffee shop and dining room, had taught us these things and this methodology. Because I had learned these things and techniques, Annabell hired me when I interviewed with her, because I was not just a truck stop waitress. She knew that I had been trained by someone that taught me well enough to know how to do these kind of things, and that I can work in a dining room serving with cloth tablecloths and doing this, and that I could be accountable to do this kind of work.

Later in years I worked in Tulsa and Oklahoma City and Riverside, California, in nice supper clubs. In fact one of the jobs I had in Tulsa and Oklahoma City I was hired because they knew her name and had been on the Restaurant Association membership committees with her. This one particular time, I was only twenty, twenty-one barely able to serve liquor in the restaurant, so I guess I had just turned twenty-one, and this restaurant was a steakhouse and it was down close to the capital building in Oklahoma City. Their staff of waitresses had been with them so long that they had not even turned staff over very often, and I was one of the first waitresses that they had hired in several years.

Of course I was the youngest waitress that they had hired. They actually put their tips in a locked box and two waitresses would go and count the tips and then divide them equally with everybody at the end of the evening. So when I was hired, the first week I got to keep my own tips and not share with them, or that was the plan. After just maybe three days or four they allowed me to go ahead and contribute and share tips with them. Later I found out that they were impressed with my ability to wait tables and…

**Nykolaiszyn** *Speaks to your training.*

**Peetoom** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Absolutely.*

**Peetoom** And then they had talked to me and told me that they actually had known her and that that was why they had gone ahead and hired me was because they had known her and that because they knew her, they knew that I had been trained by someone that was quality training…

**Nykolaiszyn** *Absolutely.*

**Peetoom** They were into their third generation of family and the first generation, the lady that had opened the business had actually been like a secretary to some of the, like senators or congressmen. She had actually started the business because the congressmen, whoever they were, had encouraged her to start the business. She had catered some kind of dinner that they had had at some time, and because she had done such a good job of catering the dinner, they had encouraged her to set up a restaurant, because she had done such a fine job of cooking meals and preparing it.

And so that’s how she had gotten started with the restaurant. Therefore most of her clientele at the steakhouse were senators and congressmen and doctors and lawyers, and that’s the kind of people that we served in that restaurant. They had later opened up a second restaurant in Tulsa that I later worked at when I had moved later to Tulsa. I worked three separate times for Annabell during my life, at different stages in my life, because she was like, it was like a community of family.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well let me take you back to your early years. Your first time working for Annabell, and so that was 1969 at the Glass House.*

**Peetoom** After high school.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Tell me about your uniform.*

**Peetoom** It was a bright yellow. It wasn’t a really yellow-yellow. It was more of an orange tint of yellow, and they were satiny, kind of polyester and they had full skirts and buttoned all the way up and down the front, and the sleeves had kind of a poofy, with a band around it. And it had a collar, and you felt like you needed a crinoline can-can under it because it was kind of full. So it was like a belted waist, and we had a black [inaudible] ribbon that we tied under the collar in a bow, and we had big, white aprons, that were cotton that we starched. They buttoned with a black button.

So you had the bib here, and they buttoned on the shoulders and then it covered most of the skirt, and then you had a square of the white cotton that you—it was pretty big, not quite as big as a dinner napkin. You ironed it really stiff and then you pinched it together with a pretty good sized piece of white, and then you put it around you and made a bow out of it and you wore that in your hair. And of course, there was as many varieties of height, weight, shaped people wearing these uniforms, so you may have someone six-foot tall and skinny-mini, as there was someone short, five-two, a hundred and ten pounds or someone five-ten weighing two hundred pounds. So this same uniform on everybody looked different on everybody.

And of course, during the ’60s there were people wearing the bouffant short haircut with the bow on the back of their head or someone with a big bouffant, fluffy hair or someone with—and of course we were supposed to have it sprayed so stiff you couldn’t lose a hair in the food. I wore mine tight, like in a ponytail and wore my bow on the back of my hair, and sometimes the girls would wear a wig, just sprayed stiff. So you can imagine every hairstyle in the world and everybody wearing a bow, so, you know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What were you making? In terms of your salary?*

**Peetoom** Probably a dollar and a quarter an hour.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And your range of tips?*

**Peetoom** Good. You might make maybe twenty-five dollars a day.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow!*

**Peetoom** In fact, back then you figured that your wages paid for your taxes on your tips, because you had to pay—you had to declare your tips. The way people did, basically, was just keep like a notebook of how much you made each day and then declare that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *So describe for me, there were different food service areas inside the Glass House. Tell me about the different areas.*

**Peetoom** Okay. You come up the escalator and they had a little snack area with booths and a bar. I never worked that area very much so I don’t know a lot about it but I know mainly that they got like fast food, kind of like hamburgers and French fries and maybe bacon and eggs or something. They had toast and cereal or something that they could do real fast. I knew some of the people there just in passing, because having grown up in Vinita, and 90 percent of the people that worked there were either community people or classmates, you either knew them in passing or they were friends, relatives or parents. I may have not known their names and everything, but I knew them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *They weren’t strangers.*

**Peetoom** Right.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yeah.*

**Peetoom** Yeah, you knew that they were either kin of somebody you knew or you knew them kind of in passing.

**Nykolaiszyn** *So you have the snack bar.*

**Peetoom** And then you had the main, what they call the Broiler Room and that’s where I worked the first timeframe. That was during the Vietnam era. And during that timeframe I had met my first husband. He was a classmate. We graduated together. We had kind of dated some, knew each other. I had gone after graduation with my mom and my younger brother to farm up in Kansas City, right after graduation. I was up there from, say, the middle of May to the middle of June. The first thing I did when I got back was—like I said I had started working when I was thirteen. The first thing I did was buy me a car. When I was fifteen I took my driver’s test in my own car. I basically had my own money, and Mama wasn’t a hard-nosed person. Even my brother began to work at a fairly early age. He began sacking at a grocery store, Warehouse Market. Then later worked with Safeway and he ended up being assistant manager with Safeway. That’s where he was working when he got sick.

So anyway, like I said earlier my oldest sister married at seventeen so mainly it was my older sister Lavon and I and my brother Ross and Mom managing the cafeteria, so the three of us kids and Mom just kind of worked our routine out and come and went to our jobs and whatever. We would bring in groceries and eat and whatever and just kind of come and went. So after I got back from Kansas City, the first thing I did that Friday night, or whatever, Sunday night was get in my car and drag Main. And I met up with my first husband John and he said, “Do you want to go to the movies and drag Main?” We’re in two cars, talking out the window and I said, “Sure. Meet me at the house, I’ll drop my car off.” So we went to the movies, and that was the beginning of our dating, and then in July was when I went to work for the Glass House. And so we began seeing each other, we got married, I got pregnant right away, and I was going to college at Miami [Oklahoma] and also working. I was just taking one or two courses and he was living at college, going full term classes.

When I found out I was pregnant I went to a doctor in Miami, cause we had an apartment over there. The doctor knew I was working at the Glass House, so he stopped one day and asked one of the employees how I was feeling, because he knew I was pregnant, and that blew my cover of being pregnant. I had to quit because once they knew I was pregnant, the insurance didn’t cover me because of the liability. It wouldn’t cover you because of insurance liability, because if anything were to happen to me while I was pregnant, you know the insurance wouldn’t cover me so I was going to have to quit. Which I did anyways because in January my husband and I moved to Warner [Oklahoma], down by Muskogee [Oklahoma], to go to Connors [State] College.

But that winter during November, December timeframe, I don’t remember all of the details, but that was a very memorable time for me at the Glass House. I would be working the early morning shift coming in like five o’clock in the morning, and that was when busloads of soldiers would be coming from Fort Sill [Oklahoma] to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and there’d be like five or six buses stopped. We would have on the dinner, it wasn’t really a buffet thing but where you would pick up your orders, we fixed it kind of like a buffet for them. We would fix up a lot of scrambled eggs and toast and Danish and sausage and bacon and ham and had it already fixed out. They would only have a short period of time to go to the bathroom, come through the line, pick up what they wanted, pay for it, eat it and they were gone.

And that was also during this timeframe that I was having morning sickness and first thing coming through this, smelling all this meat cooking and everything—I had a short timeframe that I was having to go to the bathroom and throw up because of the morning sickness. It was also a unique timeframe, because you were hearing all the news reports about the war and people being killed and seeing these soldiers so young, being trained, going through here and wondering whether they were going to go to Vietnam and possibly never come home and knowing that some of my classmates were going to war. As far as I know there was only one young man from our community that died over there. It was really important poignant because it was a really strange time of life, because it was a lot of fear for the changes of what was going on in the world.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well after you left, because you were pregnant, when did you come back to work for Annabell?*

**Peetoom** It was a few years later because this was my first child, and then we went on and worked other jobs and things. He was working for a man doing office machine repair, and then one of the other jobs he did was hanging drywall, doing construction work. One of the first jobs I’d had besides waitressing was working for a man who was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant] named Bob Prince. I had done that during the last semester of high school, and I had worked for him during tax season, January to May of tax season and so my two career options had been doing accounting, taxes and things for a CPA and then waitressing. His two careers had been hanging drywall and working on office machine repair. So these tended to be the two things that he and I did, and we moved twenty-one times in the first seven years we were married. So I, like I said before I was able to fall back on the waitressing.

I had my twin sons in June of ’74 and that fall, the restaurant that I was working at in Oklahoma City—I had quit that one nice one because I was pregnant with my twin sons. Then in November after that we came home for the winter, because construction had kind of closed down. So he and I both went to work in the Glass House that November of ’74. He was doing maintenance and I was a waitress again. And that was another thing, Annabell was always having part-time workers, like summer help from college kids coming home for the summer or kids coming out from schools needing jobs, part-time jobs and so it kind of become like a family. In fact, Annabell never had any children so the Glass House staff became her family

So we were there that winter. In fact we moved in with my mother that winter, and we were there from November to like Easter timeframe is when we worked. In fact, when we moved Thanksgiving weekend, we got caught in a blizzard. There wasn’t any snow all winter until the weekend we moved to Tulsa, and we got caught in another blizzard. (Laughs) And my mother got stuck with the three children, the baby twins that were eighteen months old and the older son. We moved into the new house in Tulsa, and overnight there was a blizzard, and she got stuck with the children. We moved everything in that night and planned on moving everything back. We got an overnight U-Haul trailer and when we woke up, it had been sleeting. Woke up and there had been like five inches of snow so we couldn’t even get the trailer back any further than Claremore to Vinita. We had to leave it at a station in Claremore.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And so what was the third time?*

**Peetoom** And the third time was in 1984 when I had had my divorce in California and I came back as a single mother with four children. I needed a job to support my children. My youngest son was handicapped and I came home with him, and my teenage son was fourteen and in California, he was already starting to maybe be drawn into some gangs or something so I knew I needed to get him…

*[interview pauses]*

**Nykolaiszyn** *All right. So we were talking about your third time working for Annabell, in 1984.*

**Peetoom** Actually probably was early 1985, and at that time I was doing part-time with her and it wasn’t always as a waitress. I was kind of her right-hand man, you might say. And I worked, really, any place she needed me, either hostess or gift shop. Actually I would work in the kitchen helping out with the food or downstairs in the office, if she needed me to help her there. I even cleaned the bathrooms if she was short-staffed there. We had gotten to that point in our life that she just knew that she could depend on me wherever she needed me.

**Nykolaiszyn** *By then was McDonald’s in the building?*

**Peetoom** No. Actually it was Howard Johnson at that time, and it was toward the end of Howard Johnson before Marriott took over. I guess maybe she had heard that it was in-the-wind that Howard Johnson was going to be sold out or whatever and that Marriott was going to take over. I was doing part-time two or three other jobs in my life and of course taking care of my handicapped son. I think at that time, really, I was doing a lot of hostessing in the dining room and the gift shop primarily. I did a lot of the gift shop. It was really a nice place to work, in the gift shop. At that timeframe they were selling—I don’t whether you interviewed anybody that worked in the gift shop. In fact I made a note about some of the things that they had. Of course, a lot of people from the postcards could tell that we had the giant lollipops, and they had a variety of bags of licorice and lemon drops and things like that.

They sold a lot of nice jewelry. Some of it was turquoise and some of it was from the Black Hills of Dakota, and during that time they were selling nice gold chains, and you could buy your initials. I did have an opportunity to get mine but it was heart shaped, your initials in gold filigree. It was real attractive jewelry, and it was real nice gold, and you could put long or short gold chains. It was fine jewelry, because mine’s lasted for a long, long time. See, my son now that was three then has just turned thirty-five, so I’ve had it now thirty-two years. They had charms and they had a variety of arrowheads and a variety of rocks on little boards, cardboard, that were labeled. Like for the beginners that were rock collectors, so it was labeled what they were, like quartz or certain kind of rock or whatever. And then they had a little rocks that were shaped like roses.-

**Nykolaiszyn** *Rose rock.*

**Peetoom** Rose rock, yes. And then of course they had all kinds of Oklahoma and Glass House and Vinita souvenirs, like little whiskey jiggers or cups and saucers or plates or whatever. Then, because it was Indian Territory, they always had little drums and flutes and bow and arrows and things for the kids to collect, like cap guns and things like that and sometimes the little holsters with guns and Indian princess dolls, and so you know…

**Nykolaiszyn** *All kinds of stuff!*

**Peetoom** It was just all kinds of a variety of things. Of course simple little things too, like the little paddle balls and coloring books that were cowboys and Indians. And of course they had any kind of a variety of postcards you can imagine or maps of the areas. All of the postcards would be of the Will Rogers museum and Will Rogers and the Glass House and other sites.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well what type of woman was Annabell?*

**Peetoom** Oh she, she was, she was a character. She expected you to do your job, and she would correct you if she saw you doing something wrong. But she also would be fun-loving, but she expected you to—you know, customers first and customers were right. But she could be, she could be strict but she could also be fun-loving, and she treated you like family. And as long as you treated her fair and honest, she’d back you, she’d back you up. Of course you didn’t cross her deliberately, but if you were honest with her, she’d back you up. As long as you were fair with her and honest with her about whatever your situation was, she would work with you on anything.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Were there other managers or employees that you recall that had an impact in your daily work?*

**Peetoom** They all worked together. I know that a lot of the—I knew them. I knew all of them by name at the time and everything. Anita was the primary main cook, at the time, on my shifts. Most of the co-workers were either like classmates or community people that I knew, and you became real close to them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Sounds like a good family atmosphere.*

**Peetoom** Yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *A lot of comradery.*

**Peetoom** Yeah and the guys downstairs at the gas station, they’d all come up and have coffee, and you’d joke with them, and they all just become part of the buddies, you know. They were as much the part of the atmosphere as your co-workers because y’all just worked together on a daily basis and you were just like family. And if someone was having problems, you just kind of helped each other out or you know you covered for them or whatever. You shared the issues in their lives.

In fact, let me see if I can find it here in my notes. One of the things that I hated—you hate the messiness of the job. Like if a big family with a whole bunch of kids, who never made their children mind, you hated having to clean up that mess after them. But sometimes it taught you how to make your own children mind in a restaurant. For instance, I now will never let my own children or grandchildren act like that in a restaurant or I have more compassion on waitresses. You know, I won’t let my children, grandchildren act up in a restaurant because I know what it’s like to have to clean up a big mess, because a family come in and just let them run wild and make a mess and not manage their children and just let them go wild.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well with the customers that were coming through, was there a question folks liked asking all the time?*

**Peetoom** I can’t say that there is any one specific thing that was a certain question or anything, but you enjoyed it because you got to see all the variety of the world.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Different people.*

**Peetoom** Yes. You saw the different make-ups of people from around the world.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you see a lot of Vinita town folk visiting the Glass House?*

**Peetoom** Not really. Because we found that as a whole, we never brought our families out, because it was usually a very special, special occasion if we were to—yeah, we might do it like an anniversary or a real special family get-together. Like you wanted to celebrate your twenty-fifth anniversary, you might come and eat in the Broiler Room and have steak or shrimp or you know. You felt like you had to dress up and come have a very special occasion or something.

My own particular occasions was that before I actually worked there, I had my senior prom banquet. We had our prom dance at a high school, different place, but we had our banquet there which was a fancy, sit down dinner with napkins and china and all that. We came in our gowns, and it was fun to be in your ball gown or whatever and ride the escalator down with your date or whatever and years later remember that it was at the Glass House and then have a class reunion or something there.

I remember as a child having out-of-town company coming in from Wichita or someplace and all of us coming as a family, all of us little kids coming out, and showing them the Glass House, because it was someplace special that had all of the fancy designed foliage in the planters and everything. You got to ride on the escalator and…

**Nykolaiszyn** *It was unique!*

**Peetoom** It was, it was! And we had it in our town and we got to take our out-of-town relatives to go see it, and we got to go see the big lollipops. And our cousins would buy this great big ole’ balloon that you could blow up and pop around with your cousins and have fun.

**Nykolaiszyn** *It sounds like there was a sense of pride about having the Glass House in the community.*

**Peetoom** Yes, and it was somewhere special that you could go have a wedding reception or take a special date or something, because it was someplace that was nice enough to do that. Like you said, you worked there and you knew that it was a special place to have these kind of dinners and things. But rarely were you, as a worker, financially able to take your little family to go and do that. Maybe you would plan for months and months and months to do something special for your family.

I think I remembered one of the ladies that was here a while ago saying that they called her in to work a special party for one of the banks. It was really nice to feel that you were capable of, like I said before, that you had been trained and knew the etiquette of how to serve one of these nice dinners. Because it took a little bit of talent and technique to know how to serve coffee and not spill it on someone.

**Nykolaiszyn** *It was an art.*

**Peetoom** It really was an art, and that’s a lost art because very few restaurants can you go into today that they know how to serve you correctly. Some of these fancy restaurants that I worked at, you had to be very careful because you didn’t want to spill gravy or coffee or tea or something on someone’s fancy new coat or their fancy clothing, because you were liable for their cleaning deposit if you had done this. And it would be very embarrassing if you were to spill hot coffee on their trousers or in their lap, because you didn’t want to be responsible for ruining their night out by spilling gravy on their nice suit or their fancy dress, because that would ruin their whole evening if you were the one responsible for destroying their evening out by spilling their dinner on their fancy ball gown or whatever they were wearing.

You do become a family when you experience the things that—you become part of a unit, working together to make someone’s business dinner or their event successful, because they’re depending on you to do what you’re supposed to do and be behind the scenes and take care of the dinner and make sure that it’s all done effectively. They want to make sure that everybody gets their piece of meat and their potatoes and their bread or their dessert and that it was all prepared correctly and that everything was served efficiently, effectively. That everybody got what they were supposed to get the way they were supposed to get it. That nothing was left off, that everything was cooked appropriately, that the speaker could continue to speak while you were doing what you were supposed to be doing, that you didn’t interfere in any of their presentation and that you did everything behind the scene without any interference in their meeting and that you just did what you were supposed to do without any hiccups.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Very seamless.*

**Peetoom** Yes. That you were only there to do what you were supposed to do, not interfere with their meeting, not disturb any process that was going on. That everybody was taken care of, that everything went seamlessly, and that everybody was taken care of, everything was there, everything was removed, everything was taken care of and everybody got what they needed. That it was there, it was removed, and they got what they needed and you were in there, you were out of there and they got what they needed. Then you were out of there and as far as they were concerned they got what they needed and then you were out of there. Nothing was left to even show that you were ever there. And if that was done and they got their meal, and then you were out of there, then that was a perfect experience for them. You did what you were supposed to do, and as far as they’re concerned, that was a perfect experience.

**Nykolaiszyn** *It was a success.*

**Peetoom** It was a success, and that’s what everything was supposed to be. And that is how it was supposed to be, and that you worked together and it was a success.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And I think a lot of that speaks to your training.*

**Peetoom** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yes.*

**Peetoom** And you don’t want it to be somebody got spilled on and something got messed up and there was a disaster.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You wanted them to have that Glass House experience…*

**Peetoom** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *…they expected.*

**Peetoom** Exactly. And you want someone to say, “I had my class reunion there. It was a remarkable experience, and I would refer it to my friends. I would like them to have the same experience that I did.”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well when you look back, as we start winding down our interview today, what’s one thing you want to make sure we know about your Glass House experience? When you look back on your three different periods of working for Annabell, what stands out in your mind?*

**Peetoom** That I would want my own children to have a summer experience like this. That they could work for somebody like Annabell and have the enjoyment of a summer job, the family experience, and be able to say, “I learned something that I can take with me throughout my life. That I could go to any restaurant and get a job and do that job with quality experience.” And “That no matter where I go, that I could take that with me and get a job and do a job, because somebody trained me and taught me how to do the job. And that I could always be able to do it, because you need to know how to work as a team and be part of something besides yourself.”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Good lessons.*

**Peetoom** Yes. And “Be something other than just me, me, me, etc. Give me something, give me something. Be able to learn how to give to others, be part of something and give to others and have been part of something.”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you were definitely part of something special.*

**Peetoom** Yes, and Annabell was somebody special that you could always count on.

**Nykolaiszyn** *We’ve heard that quite a bit. Frances, thank you so much for taking a little bit of time to sit down with us. I know we’re just scratching the surface, but we really appreciate you sharing your memories working for Annabell and at the Glass House.*

**Peetoom** Thank you for doing this. It’s going to be something special that we can share, and I’m glad that we’re going to have it to keep as a memory. Thank you for doing that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Thank you.*

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*