

Pauline Patterson
Forty-three Years with Bloch Tobacco

Carrie Nobel Kline: ... by saying, 'My name is.' Say your whole name.

Pauline Patterson: My name is Pauline Patterson. I live at 517 Grant Street, McMechen.

CNK: Okay. And your date of birth?

PP: My date of birth was January the 11th, 1922.

CNK: Okay. So you just had a birthday not long ago?

PP: Yeah, yeah. I was just seventy-three!

CNK: And--Just start by talking about--Tell us about your people and where you were raised if you would.

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PP: I was raised out in Glen Easton, West Virginia. And I graduated from Cameron High School in 1940. And my family was farmers and, and my dad died when I was little. And my mother was left with four girls. And of course, times were hard. And we all had to get jobs when we got out of work, or got out of school. And--But my mother did put us all through high school. And I worked a year at the pottery, and I got, at Cameron. And I had broke out from the lead in the ware and I give up my job.

CNK: You what? You broke out from the lead?

(017)

PP: Yeah, uh huh. We--I worked in what they called jiggerware. They made big bowls and heavy flower pots and big things, you know. And it has lead in it. Now a lot of the pottery stuff don't have lead, but at that time, that jiggerware had lead in it. So I had to give up my job. Because where it lay on your shoulders from the dust where we cleaned the ware. And I broke out. So I had to give up my job because it was--I had an allergy problem with it, you know. And that's why--So then I went to Bloch Brothers in 1943, in January in 1943. And I worked there until March the 21st in 1988!

CNK: Nineteen forty-three till 1988. Well, that's forty-five years, huh?

(028)

PP: No, it was--Yeah, forty-three years.

CNK: Forty-three years?

PP: Uh huh, uh huh. So--When I first went to Blochs it was like a family. Everybody worked together. It wasn't 'my job' or 'your job,' it was 'our job,' you know. I mean everybody. People that never worked when it was like that, they probably don't understand exactly how it is, but everybody helped. If you needed help somebody came and give it to you. If you had time and somebody needed help, you gave it to them no matter what their job was. I mean it was like a family. But it gradually as they bought, you know, into other companies, why, the policies kind of changed down the road. Then it became 'my job' and 'your job.' So it took away a lot of the happiness and togetherness. And--I mean I really liked it, working there

when I was young and that. I, I enjoyed every year I worked there really because everybody was good to me and I

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had a lot of friends there. And we had a lot of good times. We used to have parties and, and picnics and that. And it was really, really a good time to work. I mean I, I think better than the children have it today.

CNK: How do you mean that?

(047)

PP: Well, I don't think the children enjoy one another as much as we did because they have too many other things to be enjoyed. Where we had friendship and love to enjoy then. Maybe everybody don't see it that way, but that's the way I see it! Because I always had lots of friends and that, you know. I mean--And--I really--And everybody was always nice too to me at Blochs, except the first boss I had when I went there!

CNK: Oh, yeah?

(056)

PP: I was the first little girl. I weighed about ninety pounds. And I--They mostly wanted bigger people, you know, and they hired me. And I got sick every day for about three months from the smell of the tobacco. Oh, it smelled terrible. Because we picked it, and it was hot. And--

CNK: Hot?

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PP: Uh huh. I worked on Ohio tobacco and it was hot. You picked the stems and any foreign material out of it. And I was sick every day so they transferred me to bag department. They made the bags that they put the Mail Pouch and that in, because they only made chewing tobacco when I first went there. And--Well, they made a lot of brands that isn't on the markets today. When the war was on they made one that they called Wow. And ... everybody, all the men that chewed, they really liked that tobacco. And of course they changed the tobacco through the years. I mean they cut up the stems and added so much to them. When I first went there they picked out all the stems they could. And it was all ribbon cut. And--So, I mean it's like everything that changes, you know. They had to probably change to make it more prosperous. Oh, here's my husband. He got--

CNK: You were saying about Wheeling?

(077)

PP: I said it was a busy town. They had all kind of industry. The, the pottery and glassworks and the stamping works.

Harry Patterson: ... Don't forget about Pollacks.

PP: Oh, yeah, Pollacks Tobacco. Marsh's.

HP: Marsh Stogies.

(081)

PP: Yeah. Oh, I don't know, there was, there was a lot of industry. I mean you could always get a job in Wheeling! ... talker than me! I'm not the talker of the family!

CNK: Well, I see two good talkers in this room! Now, you, you were talking about Pollacks, did you say

it was--

PP: Pollacks.

CNK: Pollacks.

PP: Yeah.

CNK: ... do you ... that. What's Pollacks?

PP: Pollacks Tobacco. Didn't you ever hear of it?

CNK: No.

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PP: It was up North Wheeling. No. Harry, where was Pollacks? It was on 16th Street?

HP: ...

PP: Was Pollacks on 16th Street or 15th?

HP: No, that was--Now, come on, just go on down below the, the--Remember where the train trestle went across?

PP: Yeah.

HP: You know where right, right now as you come up to ...

PP: Eighteenth.

HP: No, when you come up the ramp to get onto Route Two, you'll see this place, a big building that says about shirts, T-shirts. Right in there. They're tearing it down now, part of the building they're tearing down. And it's right out there on, on out 18th Street in East Wheeling. You'll see the building's being, part of it's being tore down, Pauline.

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PP: But that's, that's where Pollacks was. And they had tobacco. And Blochs bought them out, you know. And they brought workers from there down to our plant. I don't know exactly what year that was in though. But they did bring them down. I know Earl Summers and, worked out at Pollacks, and he came down to our place. And there's several girls that came down that worked there. And--But we didn't make no stogies. Now we made--At one time we made what they called butts. And they put that in with the chewing tobacco. And I worked, made butts. And you had to work and make so many pounds of butts a day or you couldn't stay in that department! One time I caught my finger in the machine. It came down through and the knife had cut off just enough to put in that stogie, you know. And it come out a stogie, but it had cut it before it, after it came out of the machine. And so I caught my finger in

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there. So of course I didn't get my production for the day, and they come and see why I didn't do it, you know, the girl of the office. And, oh, she was mad. She said, "Oh, you should have reported it." She should have had her finger checked out, you know. But I said, "Oh, it's all right. It will be all right." Of course it was just black and blue. I thought it cut it off though. Whenever I brought it out of the machine I wrapped it in my apron and run to the rest room! But when I didn't see any blood, why, I knew it was all right! But it--They didn't make butts too long. And they did away with them machines, and then I had--They brought in from St. Louis, they brought a tobacco company from St. Louis. And--It was called

Peepers Tobacco Company. Well, they brought in a lot of smoking, pipe tobacco. Well, then I transferred to the pipe

--Well, no, we made cigarettes first. We used to make cigarettes. I run

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cigarette machine. And it was very interesting. I mean I really liked that job. That the cigarettes would come out in big, long strings. And you had to hit it with your finger to cut it so it would thread through to the right place, you know. Sometimes we'd have big, round bunch on the floor from the cigarettes where we couldn't get it to thread into it, you know. The paper wouldn't be stiff enough or something; it wouldn't feed in! But it was a very interesting job. I really liked that job. And after they bought Peepers, then I was transferred down to take care of the stamps and the labels for Peeper Tobacco Company. And-- Well, of course it was Bloch Brothers, or Mail Pouch Tobacco Company then. And--But they had all, I don't know how many brands. I would say around 300 or more. I had big shelves full of labels.

Sometimes you'd make

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them in cans and packages and both, you know. And I worked down where they had, they packed it in seven ounce cans and fourteen ounce cans. And they made London Dock and Peepers Pouch. White Hall and--

HP: You said London Dock, didn't you?

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PP: London Dock. I said London Dock, I think. Well, we even put some of ours, we put KC Mixture for years in the can. And then they put it on a canister. But they always had these canister for Mail Pouch, for KC Regular. And they had machines with little packages, KC Regular. And they were upstairs, but ours was downstairs on, up over the warehouse. And, oh, the winter before when they first put us down in there it was so cold. The elevator was open from the warehouse, and all that cold air come up. I said it's a wonder--I worked with my coat and my hat, but then finally they got it so the, build around the elevator and shut off that cold air and that. And they had heaters and they left places open so the heat could, you know, circulate. And it was better. But for a couple of years, I imagine, it was really cold! And, oh--

CNK: It sounds miserable.

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PP: No, not really. We enjoyed it. Oh, you wouldn't believe some times. Those lines they had, they pack them. They--Way to the back they had--There's about ten girls on a line when they first started. They would have a girl that would weigh up. One that would run them through the machine. One would run them through a sealer and put them down a ramp. And then ramp, the girl at the bottom of the ramp, she would put them in a can. Then the next girl would put a stamp on it. We had government stamps. And I always counted out for the orders. Whatever the order was, how many dozen, why I counted stamps to have it ready and the labels ready for the girls for them lines. I had two lines working. And they would take the stamp, put it on each can. And then they'd go to the next girl, and then she'd put a label around the can. And then they'd put a piece of cellophane around that. And then a girl on the other side would be a

packer! It was really interesting. You'd have about

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ten girls working together. And you can imagine the good times they had. Oh, in the summertime they'd bring some Thermos bottles full of Kool-Aid and that. We, we'd really have a good time! And--

CNK: So you could talk while you were on the line?

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PP: Yeah, oh, yeah, we talked. Yeah, oh, yeah, we talked. I mean I have worked on jobs where they didn't like you to talk and that, but we talked then! And it was, it was good. I mean I worked between the two lines. Sometimes I get my work caught up, I go make bags for somebody if they didn't know how to make the bag right to put it on the funnel. Because if you didn't make your bag just right--You pulled it down over a funnel. That funnel was sharp; it was metal, you know. And you'd tear your bag. If you tore your bag, that wasn't any good. So, sometimes I'd, when I had time I'd run and make bags for some of the girls that had a hard time making them.

CNK: But this was all piecework?

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PP: No. No, it was always hourly wage. I--One time they did have--When they first put union labels on them, they used to have piecework. But after that, they never had piecework any more. You just--You was supposed to get so many out. You just kept trying to get faster, you know. And sometimes you had a lot of trouble. A stick in the funnel or somebody had put the funnel in the wrong way and it would get all banged up. I'd have to take it over to the machine shop and get them to straighten them out. But it was really interesting, I think. I, I really enjoyed it.

CNK: What was the best part about it?

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PP: Oh, I guess the friendship and that that we had. And the good times that we had together, you know, all the girls. Now, you didn't--Mostly we were assigned jobs, you know, the girls sign up for them. They stayed on them jobs. Whenever that job was running, they was there, you know, the same girls. So you got used to them. Well, if that girl transferred to some other job, well, then you'd get another girl. Or if they was sick and off, why, you'd get different. So, you gradually worked around. And then when they got rid of the government stamps, and after they bought in for Peepers, why, they had a little gift pack. And they made six little cans of different kinds and put them in a little plastic box like. And they had, oh, I bet you twenty-four weighers.

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We had little scales that we weighed them, you know. And I used to clean and work and take care of the scales. I, I think about all the jobs that was around there in them departments, I had did it. I even worked in the warehouse for a while, do paperwork. But I didn't like that because the men really wanted a man down there, you know, and I felt out of place. And so I asked if I could give it up. So this girl that had this job I was telling you about, the stamps and the labels, well, she said she would trade with me. So she went to the warehouse, and I came upstairs. And funny part was I had it about two weeks, and I told my boss, I

says, "Oh, I don't want, I don't think I want this job either." And he said, "Oh, I had a job for two weeks, I never wanted it either." And he made me feel so awful I stayed on that job for, till I retired! I mean it changed through the years. They got rid of it, all the tobacco for, pipe tobacco before, about a year before I retired. So--But I took care of the time for the

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girls that worked in our department. And made out the time cards and charged it, whatever job they was on and that, you know. And, and I went up to the lunch room and I'd make coffee and--But I got to stay there until I retired. And--So, I always thought they kind of took care of me. So, I--And I really liked it.

CNK: Well, now you say that you, you could kind of tell that the men wanted to work off on their own in the warehouse?

PP: Yeah.

CNK: How could you tell that?

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PP: Well, well, I mean, they'd, they'd say they did. I mean the men would say they did. I mean they would, they wasn't around the bush, they, they let you know that they wasn't. But you couldn't really blame them because the truck drivers come in, and you know how some of them talk and that. And really wasn't a place for a girl, I didn't feel. That's why I wanted to give it up because I knew they didn't want me, and I didn't feel right there in the first place. So that's why I wanted to give it up!

CNK: So then you went to the next job, which you didn't care for either. Now, what didn't you like about that job?

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PP: Yeah, but I did get so I did like it. I just wanted to work with the girls, you know. I--But then the more I worked at that job and got used to the responsibilities and that of it, you know, I did like it. I must have if I stayed there all them years. About, let's see, I went there in '51 and I retired in '86, so you know how many years I had that job! It changed as the years--They'd do away with one thing, and they'd add on something else for you, you know. And you was always busy. There's always work you could find to do.

CNK: Well, what would be a--Like paint us a picture of your day from when you'd get in in the morning.

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PP: Well, on what job? The one I had the longest? Okay. Well, when it was, when we had the government stamps and that, well, usually the day before I'd have counted out from my first orders of the day and the labels. And I'd have them already out on a long table where--When I come to work in the morning, I'd open my safe and take out my rolls of stamps for--And I had my labels already on the table. So I would put with each order the stamps that went on each order because you couldn't lose them stamps. You had to account for them. Whenever the inventory for the last of the month, you had to have the stamps you say you had, you know. And I'd lay them out, have them ready. And then whenever the eight o'clock whistle blew, or I think we went--Yeah, when I--We went to work at eight and worked till four thirty. And they did change it, and we went to work at seven and got done at three thirty. But I

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finished counting my stamps out and go get rags for the line because they had to wet them stamps and paste them with glue. And have everything ready at eight o'clock when them girls come down to the line that they would be ready to go to work. And we had a slip--My boss usually made out a slip what we were going to pack for that day. But I already had the schedule what we was going to pack so I could have it ready. I usually got the week's schedule, you know, and then I could work as I needed to. And sometime we may pack tobacco for Wally Frank for--You ever hear of Wally Frank? Well, I guess he's from New York. And he has a regular tobacco store, and they made special tobacco, you know, for him. Well, a lot of them was, had numbers, Wally Frank. And he'd send in the labels. And you had to print them. Well, I had little rubber

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stampers that I would stamp them labels if we had any of them orders, you know. But I had--I would, on the line, any of them want anything, if they had to go to rest room or anything, why, I'd run and work for them while they went to the rest room and, and I took care of all--If I was getting low on any labels, I had to send it across the street so they could tell the, to get them ordered, you know, when I'd get so low. Of course some labels you make them maybe once a year and maybe some of them you made every week or two. We made for Strauss, I think he was from St. Louis, but I'm not sure. He had two brands, Arabian Knights and, and Strauss Number Nine. And he was a big customer of ours. We packed a lot for him. And of course a lot of them, you know, private, private brands for different people that they--

CNK: What do you mean? Private brands?

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PP: Yeah. They, they made them for a private company, you know. They packed just your brand of tobacco for a private companies. Like for the Strauss and Petersons. What were some of the other ones. I can't remember some of them. Because when they bought out, evidently, you know, they just made a contract that they would pack these different brands for these different companies. But, oh, we had about, I would say about 300 different kind of labels, you know. And you'd have them in the eight ounce size and then fourteen ounce size labels.

CNK: And then what would these, these government labels say?

PP: The government stamps?

CNK: Yeah.

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PP: Well, they were little blue stamps. Did you ever see a little--Well, they were all different--They were different sizes. The big ones were big strips to go across the big cans. And then they had--We had fourteen, sixteen, whatever we packed in the weight. We'd have some customers wanted sixteen ounce in a can, some would want fourteen ounce. And about all of ours was fourteen ounce we made for ourselves, you know, for Bloch Brothers. And then they had seven and eight ounce. Well, some people, you know, would want eight ounces, some would want seven ounce. So, you had to be sure you changed your weights. A couple of times they caught for the weight was wrong. Where they'd put the eight ounce weight on and they had wanted seven. And they get told about it, you know. I mean we'd get the dickens

for it.

CNK: What do you mean? What would, what would happen?

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PP: Some--Well, your boss would--Somebody'd give him the devil, and he would come and give us the devil for, you know, not checking our weights good enough as we changed brands to change the weight. Then it got so most of them went to seven ounce and fourteen. And it wasn't so bad then. But then we made them little cans I was telling you. And they were one ounce cans.

CNK: One ounce?

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PP: Uh huh. They were wee little. I'm going to show you a thing of them I got. Oh, you got one. You went and got one. That's what--This is--We made this tobacco too. So, you--

CNK: Well, what does that say.

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HP: Scandinavia.

PP: This is Scandinavia. And we made two, two kinds for them. And you should have got the ones with the buttons. In there by my sewing box. The whole tray. I got buttons in it! We made use of everything they did, they got rid of, you know. They quit packing it. We got, we got to take them home. And I got plastic bags where they used to put a couple packages in a plastic bag. And whenever they quit making, they had them, maybe some plastic bags. Here they are. Now, that's how we packed them. Of course you had to have them all facing up front.

CNK: Now, read them. What, what does each one--

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PP: This one's Greenbriar, Brush Creek, White Hall, Donneford, KC Mixture and London Dock.

CNK: One ounce boxes?

PP: Uh huh. One ounce boxes, uh huh. And I took care of all the scales. Sometimes we had--When we usually made them for a gift, you know, Christmas time. And they really--They'd start about September. And start packing these. Well, usually they'd call a bunch of girls back to work for, to pack these. And, you know, at--When I went there and almost till I retired. It was just beginning to change when I retired. That girls did girl work, and boys did boy's work. But then they changed it, and the women had to--If they got laid off, you know--We had union, and they laid off the girls as their seniority came. The youngest ones got laid off first, you know. And the boys had a seniority list, and they'd get laid off when things were slack. The youngest ones first. Well, when I was getting ready to retire, they were

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changing that. There was one seniority list. And your--Wherever they came for layoff, why the boys could bump the girls and work on girl jobs. So, then it was just jobs. It wasn't any more the girl's jobs and the boy's jobs!

CNK: Well, which were the girl's and which were the boy's jobs?

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PP: Well, all this hand packing and working on any of the packing, little packing machines and that or making deals, the girls did it. And the boys did floor work, lifting, bringing in the boxes, heavy boxes. Like when we had them come in big boxes with 144 cans in a box, I think. And a big box of lids. And the boys would get them down for the girls. Then they'd bring them a box of cans and get a box of lids and open them so they--We'd usually take a little box and put the lids in them. And the boys would clean up, take the cardboard away when, cut up the cardboard and take it away.

HP: ...

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PP: Huh?

HP: Put the tobacco on the table.

PP: Oh, yeah. They'd put tobacco--They'd bring up the tobacco. And they'd be in great, big carts. And you'd just take your scoop and put tobacco or a box. We usually made a box and put our tobacco in. Then we'd set the tobacco up on the table and take our scoop, put it in our, or take your hand and put it on the scale to weigh. Because when it was a little bit, you take your hand. But like on my lines, they had a scoop. You had to take a scoop and you got so that you could almost guess what size to put in that scoop to make it for seven ounce or eight ounce or fourteen, you know, when you weighed up a lot. And you're surprised to how it would do that. And--

CNK: So, I wonder could it, could it work the other way when--You said a boy could bump a girl toward the time you retired. Now, if a girl had more seniority, could she bump a boy?

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PP: Yes. Yeah.

CNK: Take a heavyweight job?

PP: Yes, if she can do it, yeah. Uh huh.

CNK: Interesting.

PP: Um hmm. But I'm glad it wasn't like that when I had to work!

CNK: Because?

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PP: Because I couldn't do a lot of men's work! I shoveled tobacco all day, and it's hard, I'll tell you! We used to have canister, and sometimes older ladies would get on these jobs. And you had to move around, you know. And I would feel so sorry for some of them older ladies. (telephone rings)

CNK: Well, I want to know about this union.

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PP: The union. Well,

HP: ...

PP: Hey, I, I approved of the union. To me, it was fair and square. And I, I really, really liked belonging to a union. I felt protected. I felt like I had because if you had a boss that didn't like you, like I said, when I first went there, if it was my boss, say he would have thrown me out when I first went to Blochs.

CNK: Why is that?

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PP: Because he didn't want to put up with somebody that was sick every day. I just couldn't take the smell of that tobacco. It upset my stomach. I got so I couldn't even drink water. And--So, you can imagine how glad I was when they transferred me. They felt sorry for me! And transferred me to the bag room. And I guess that made me--Because I know the union fought for me, you know, the president of the union. Of course I cried. I was a big cry baby, I'll tell you. And everything hurt me! And I was sick and if you didn't get so many stems, why they didn't want to keep you. And I was--I'd vomit and that, run to the rest room to vomit. And I was crying, and the president of the union asked me what was the matter. Why, I told him I had asked my boss to trade me from the hot--There was cool tobacco. And I asked him to trade me, just for the rest of the day, for the cool tobacco. Well, Ohio tobacco was the hottest tobacco that you could pick with the stems.

CNK: What does that mean, hot and cold tobacco?

(500)

PP: When you touch it, it's hot. It was hot tobacco. The smell off of it. Could you imagine. If you ever smell, be around a factory where it smelled? I mean ours didn't smell the last few years because it was nothing much did there that was--Because they did at the stemery a lot of the dipping, not dipping, cutting and steaming and that, you know. Where ours, we got it when it was just steamed. And they'd bring it in, and it was hot, Ohio. Now, Connecticut tobacco and Wisconsin tobacco and cuttings, they were all cold tobacco, you know. Now, Pennsylvania tobacco was a little bit warm, but it was not as bad as Ohio.

CNK: So, some they would heat, they would steam, and some they would--

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PP: They steamed it, yeah. They steamed about all of it, but some of it must cool faster. Now Connecticut tobacco was, oh, it was a beautiful tobacco. It was real thin when you'd get it. It would just be little pieces, but it, they'd be real thin, real light and fluffy. And the stems was too heavy. You had to pick a lot to get, you know, a lot of stems out of it because the stems were smaller and that. But now Ohio was the bigger stems, but it was so hot it made you sick. You didn't pick as much because you was sick, and you'd run to the rest room! So, I said I really--But if--He'd have probably got rid of me if I, you know, if it hadn't been for the union. And the union went and told the superintendent. Mr. Patterson was superintendent. And he always called me Shorty. And he was always nice to me. And anyway, a girl from up in the bag room, she went to the printing room. So they let me go up to the bag room. And so I was so glad! So--But, I mean if you got a boss that didn't like you, why they're going to get rid of you. And I always felt protected with the union when I went to Blochs, you know. It was like a security blanket! And-

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CNK: Did you have to join it?

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PP: Yeah. Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, you had--After you worked thirty working days. I'll tell you, I went there in January, and I didn't go in the union till April. So, you know how many days I got. And me and two other girls, we went there the same time, three of us. My--One of the girls was from Glen Easton with me,

and the other girl had lived in Wheeling. And anyway, she had an apartment, so we all split everything and lived together, you know. And we rode the old streetcar down to the factory. And we lived uptown. And it was nice, but I really, my girlfriends, they both got married and left. They didn't stay much longer; they quit before the war, I think. My one girlfriend did; the other one worked longer than that, yeah. But--So-- But I had two children when I worked there.

CNK: You did?

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PP: Yeah. I had, I had one--Harry and I was married. Diane was--I quit work in March, and she was born the 10th of April! I had--I was working in the printing room then when I had her. And they called me to come back to work in July. And my mom, she kept my daughter. And then Harry's mother, she got sick and we had to move in with her, take care of her. So when Diane was about eighteen months old, why I brought her back home. I'd run home at dinnertime and Harry's mother was sick. And I'd get us a bite to eat and take care of my baby and run back to work! Run home. I said good lord saw me through it all!

CNK: What sort of hours were you working then?

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PP: Eight hour--We worked eight hours all the time. Of course I was working steady then, you know. But when we were first went there--Well, of course a lot of the girls--As you moved up the seniority list, you know, they, the ones at the bottom would be laid off when business was slack, you know. And--But most of them would come back again, you know. They liked it there. They'd come back.

CNK: So, you--That happened quite often where business would just slack off?

(611)

PP: Oh, yeah, um hmm. Like you'd have your Christmas specials. Like we made these little cans. Golly, they'd have about twenty-four or more girls. Yeah, because they'd have the ones that would pack them, you know, after they weigh them up. And they shrank wrapped them and, or put sleeves on them and pack them. So, they really had a big crew. Well, that--When it, job wasn't doing, why them girls would get laid off, you know, if there wasn't no other deals with any kind or anything. Now, the later years when my job was kind of slack, they made Mail Pouch and different chewing tobacco deals, you know, three for one and that. They taped them together and, three packages, and then they'd put them in a box and pack them for a deal and have a display carton, you know. Well, I'd--When I wasn't busy there, I'd come upstairs and

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work on that. And you'd just go wherever, you know, you was really needed. I did anyway because I was like a floater. I mean I could probably gave up that job, but I liked it and it was, you know--I mean I liked doing all different things. And I'd have my own work, like putting the time cards in everything, why I always had time for that.

CNK: For what?

(646)

PP: Time cards. I made out the time cards for all the girls and that. The ones, or fellows, that worked in our department, why I took care of their time and that, made out--You've seen them little time cards. For

years--No? I'll show you one.

CNK: You can maybe just describe what it looked like too.

(656)

PP: I got it right here. It's just a little--I think it's in this one. Yeah. Here's where I retired. That's-- These was the time cards. At one time they were this big. And you put your number, that was the number of my job. I worked eight hours, and I made seven seventy-seven an hour.

CNK: When you left?

(665)

PP: Uh huh. When I went we was making forty cents and hour. Hey, but we only got them bigger wages the last ten years I worked. Because we got pennies when I first went there. We went from forty to forty-two or forty-three cents. In 1975 I was making about \$1.75 an hour. We raised a family like that, penny to penny.

CNK: Now did the men get the same rate as the women?

(679)

PP: No. No. Women got lower than men, but they didn't get a lot more. Seven or eight cents more.

CNK: Now why would that be seven or eight cents difference?

PP: Well, they thought the men was worth more than the women I guess!

CNK: Is that the way you looked at it?

PP: Yeah, that's the way I looked at it. They thought that was harder, so they give the men a few more dollars!

CNK: Well, now sounds to me that you, you had an awful lot of responsibility. You, you were the one who made sure nobody ran out on the line or went and filled in somewhere.

(692)

PP: Well, yes, it was a little, a kind of important job, yeah. They called it a floor walker or a floor clerk, you know. And that's what they called the job.

CNK: How did they decide, what--I wonder what they saw in you to know that you'd be able to handle all that responsibility.

(700)

PP: Well, I, I probably was the first one that worked there that had a high school education. I don't know, I don't know of anybody that was above me that had one. And--So, that's the reason, I imagine, that they chose me. I don't know why they chose me; they never told me why they chose me. But I can tell you a little story, but you don't need to put this on there if you don't want to.

HP: Switch it off a minute, honey.

(715)

PP: I mean, I, I--

CNK: Say that again.

PP: It was a joy to me. I--

CNK: Your husband says there's more to the story of why you were selected to have all that responsibility.

(720)

PP: Well, I--They all knew I liked to work. And I guess--But I was going to tell you a little story about the day they asked me to come down to the office. We had been making cigarettes, an oval cigarette. And I was running cigarette machine. And I--They told us we wasn't allowed--

(Side Two)

PP: ... they'd go to the office. My boss come over and said, "Pauly, they'd like to see you down at the office." Why I knew the day before we had made these cigarettes for this Mr. ... They were kind of an oval cigarette. We'd never made any of that kind before, so we all took one or two. And I thought, well, Harry might smoke them, but he never did. But anyway, I took two, and I thought, well, they know I took two, you know. Oh, I was so scared. I was, let's see, about thirty years old. Yeah, because I went to Blochs when I was twenty-one. But anyway, I was about thirty years old, thirty-one. And I was so scared. Will I go down to that office, or will I just quit and go home. Anyway, I went to the office. And I got in there, and Mr. McElarney's office was before Mr. Beneke's. And so I says to Mac, "What did I do?" And he said, "I didn't say you did anything." Because I was just shaking. I couldn't even write my name,

(014)

that's how bad my hand was shaking. Because I thought I was going to be fired! And so when Mr. Beneke, he said they had this job and would I be interested, I said, "Well, I guess I will." And so I, I said I would take the job. But I never gave you--I always wanted to tell them that, you know, why I was so scared is because I took those two cigarettes. But, you know, I'll tell you, some of the girls took them home by the handbags! And I was so scared with two cigarettes! And--But I never took nothing without asking okay to take it after that!

CNK: Gosh. I bet they all smoked, didn't they? Didn't everybody smoke or no?

(025)

PP: Oh, a lot of the guys chewed tobacco, didn't they, Harry? The first years we worked there anyway. And they always get the, well, they allowed them to have a package of tobacco to take home when they got done at night, the men, when I first went there. And they, they--About all of them chewed when they first went there. And I don't know how they could, but they did.

CNK: How they could?

(031)

PP: Yeah, how they could chew it. Oooh, it stunk so terrible. But Harry used to chew once in a while when he first went there.

CNK: So, it--There was just several years that they were making cigarettes, or how did that work?

(033)

PP: Yeah, they only made them, oh, I bet you about four years, something along there. They made a lot for South America and that. I don't think they sold many in the United States. I think they were about all shipped out of the country. But I guess they probably had to fill the contracts that when they bought that company out that they, from St. Louis, that they had to make so many cigarettes and fill these orders so long. And so that's why. But--No, I mean I, I guess it was an important job, I--

HP: Sure was.

(041)

PP: I set up the, for the girls for each day and canner, we set it up. When I would get ready for the canner, we had to date every container. We always dated all our containers when they were made and that, you know. Sometimes we had to stencil the names on the containers because they just had have plain--They made such few, you know, they just--You'd have to stencil. So you had to stencil all them containers.

CNK: The label, each label you'd stencil in?

(047)

PP: No, not the labels, the cartons we put them in. We had to stencil the name on them. Now, the ones we made a lot of, they were all printed, but the ones we made little orders of that you only made once or twice a year, why they'd, you stenciled their names on the outside, you know. And--But--I mean anybody--I was even the nurse. I even took out the splinters and took the tobacco out of their eyes or dust that would get in them. Oh, I don't know. One time there was a girl got a splinter in her finger, and she went down to the lab. We had our lab there, you know. And Dr. Matthews was--He cut her fingernail and, to get the splinter out. One day there's a girl, she--Helen ... She used to live at Warwood. And she got a splinter, and she come down to me. She--I think she was working on those little cans, and they had boards between each layer, you

(063)

know. So I don't know if she got her finger against the wood, but anyway, this splinter, it went from her fingernail clear down to almost her knuckle. And she come down to me, and she said, "Oh, Pauly, get this out for me. I don't want to go to Doc Matthews to get him cut my finger. I can never stand them cutting my nail." I says, "Oh, Helen, that's bad. I don't know if I can ever get that out of there or not." I said, "I'll cut your nail, and I'll try to get it out with the tweezers." And I got my needle and my tweezers and the mathialade and the nail clipper, and I cut her nail. I thought, 'Oh, lord, let me help get that out of there.' And you know, I got a hold of that and that come out of there just as slick as could be. From clear down in here. I even had men that come and let

(076)

me get things out of their eye. They'll say, 'I heard you was good at this, Pauly.' And I'd take care of any kind of little cuts and the scratches and upset stomach. I always had--We always get--We had great medicine in them days. Oh, what kind of pills was they. Some kind of--

HP: ...

(082)

PP: Soda mints. Soda mints. They had little soda mints. Well, anybody had stomach ache or upset stomach, you give them soda mints. And we did have paregoric for cramps and stuff like that. But then when the law got so you couldn't have paregoric anymore, well, that was one medicine we didn't have. Then we had--The lab give us wintergreen for, if you had sore muscles and aches and pains. We'd put that on it! And--Anything else that I--

CNK: And they'd all come to you though, huh?

(090)

PP: Oh, yeah, uh huh. Yeah, I was the doctor. I said I only, I doctored scales, I doctored people!

HP: ... bet the company didn't know what they had.

CNK: Did you hear him? He said, "I bet the company didn't know what they had in you."

HP: ... upstairs in the office didn't know what ...

(095)

PP: It was usually, you know, something pertaining to my work. I mean--But I did keep records. Like these newspapers from Bloch Brothers. I always kept them all in my office and on the back shelves with the labels. And if anybody wanted to know something, why we'd look up--You know, one time Mr. Beneke called me, and he said, "Pauly, you remember the year that we got rid of the stamps?" And I says, "No, not off hand I don't remember, but you give me a little bit of time, I'll try to look it up." So I went back through the newspapers and that and looked up the date that we got rid of them. I think it was 1959.

HP: ...

(104)

PP: No, when they got rid of the government stamps. Then they paid the government, you know, for each pound of tobacco that they sold, not as we packed it and that. Why we had to pay the, I think penny on the pound, I'm not--Or penny on the ounce. Because we had our sixteen ounce stamps and our fourteen ounce, and I think that's how they paid it. I'm not sure, but they--So when the government probably changed the price that they had to pay taxes on that tobacco, they probably did away with the stamps rather than make a new stamp. And, for a new price. But, yeah, several times different ones would call. If you want to know anything or if you want to know about anybody that worked at Blochs, you go ask Pauly!

CNK: The, the company knew this as well as the workers, huh?

(117)

PP: Well, most of the--I don't know about the really high up ones, but the ones that I had in contact--That's like Betty Hamm, her and I--I mean we were good friends. She came to Blochs, I think in early '50s, maybe before that, you know. And she was in personnel. And then I was on newspaper, reporter for our department, you know.

CNK: You were?

(123)

PP: Uh huh. And I had contact with her every month when we put out our newspaper. And she was really good, you know, I mean she--That's why I thought they'd give you her name because she was, she was a wonderful person. And she, I would tell her any news for our department or anybody would give me anything.

HP: ...

PP: Oh, I can't help it she snores.

HP: ...

CNK: Amy, you want to go lie with your daddy? ... this newspaper.

(132)

PP: When I--We really had a nice newspaper. The one they have now, well, it's got all of Swishers and that news and that in it. It's--And we only get it about once or twice a year, where we had it--She had it every--Every month we had a newspaper. And, like I showed you the one, you know, the seventy-five years.

CNK: What's it called. I'm sorry.

(137)

PP: It was called Bloch, *Building Blochs*. Now, this is my life story books. Here, here's where I worked when I went to--I was the worker of the month. They put different workers in for the month, you know. They wrote your history up. They got a few mistakes in that one, but--

CNK: Now what were you doing that month?

PP: I was working in the cigarette department. This is cigarette machine.

CNK: And how'd they pick you? What were you doing right?

(145)

PP: Well, I don't know, they just picked me! And--

HP: ... Pauly. ... cigarette machine.

PP: Here. I, I guess I was always a friend to everybody. I mean, you know, everybody's not like that. But I was born and raised in a little town, and we were like all family. Times was hard, everybody was poor. And mostly widows with children lived there. And we all stuck together, you know. And we had little two room school. And--I mean, we really was like one big family. We all loved one another. And when I come out in the world, why I thought the whole world was the same way! And--But, oh, we used to have picnics and that when the Blochs had it. Now this newspaper--

CNK: Picnics?

(159)

PP: Here it is, *Building Blochs*. And this has got the history of the beginning of Bloch Brothers. If you want to take this paper and copy it, you are allowed.

CNK: Well, thank you. Now, a typical week when, or how often did the paper come out when you were doing it? Every--

PP: Once a month.

CNK: Once a month.

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PP: Yeah, we had it every month.

CNK: Well, what would, what would you find--

PP: Well, this one's July and August.

CNK: Um hmm. What would you find as a, as a reporter? What would you put in for your department?

(165)

PP: Well, we'd just put what the news that--The girls would give you news. Somebody's had a birthday party or somebody, their children was in dancing school or they got married or went on a vacation. And--Oh, we just had the news about all the different people. Each department had news from each one, you

know.

CNK: And you'd write it up?

(170)

PP: Yeah. And I'd write it up, and I send it over to her, and she would--If I made a boo-boo, why she'd correct it and fix it and put it in the paper. But she laid out the paper and that. And she was very good.

CNK: So the management paid to have this come out?

PP: Yes, I would imagine so, yes.

CNK: Why do you figure they did that?

(175)

PP: Oh, make it more like family probably. I mean because it was really--Well, like I told you, years ago it was really like a family. And--Or that's that way I felt about it. You talk to other people, you'll--My husband don't even have the same ideas about the place as me because I guess I liked it better than most people did!

CNK: I wanted to ask you one other thing. You were talking about the, the butts that you would put in. Now, is that what they were called?

PP: The what?

CNK: Were they called butts that--

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PP: Butts. Oh, those butts we made on the butt machine. And I--They put them in the tobacco. And the name of it was O R Butts. That was the name of the tobacco that they put in the package. And they'd cut-- They'd take about four or five of these little butts, drop them in the package, and then they'd put the tobacco in there.

CNK: Now, what were they, these butts?

(190)

PP: Chewing, chewing. They were like a stogie cut, you know. And, and then they--It was for chewing. But they'd be like a piece of a stogie in there.

CNK: Gosh, interesting.

PP: Oh, I said I had a lot of interesting jobs, I guess that's why I enjoyed it so much, you know. I, I didn't just do one thing, I did a lot of things. I mean some people went there, and they worked one job for years. And maybe then they'd change to another job and work it for several years. Where I usually had something different every day almost to do. You never knew what I was going to be doing by the time the day was out. Nursemaid or, or worker or--But everybody--You know, I think--Because everybody was nice to me. Now, Jimmy Dool, he always, he was a, estimated how much it costs to make all the brands and that. And he, he was a good friend of mine. And Earl Summers was a good friend of mine. And--

HP: ... You're not telling what their jobs was, honey.

(209)

PP: Well, Jimmy Dool was an estimator and Earl was--

HP: Purchasing.

PP: Purchasing, yeah, that's one reason I ... with Earl because he always purchased everything. And if we needed anything, why we get in touch with Earl. And he would get it for us, you know, if we was allowed to have it! Sometimes the common man wasn't allowed to have different things, you know.

CNK: ...

(216)

PP: Yeah, used to be. This was funny. I'd want pencils. Sometimes they'd sent over from the office a bunch of little pencils with a rubber band and they'd be about this big! So if you'd tell Earl, why he'd get you a dozen of good pencils. And--

CNK: But some things you weren't allowed to have, such as?

(222)

PP: Well, I don't know what we wasn't allowed to have, but--

CNK: Sometimes your list came back with a few things missing?

PP: Yeah.

CNK: What would they have crossed off maybe?

(225)

PP: Oh, I don't know. I mean usually I'd send an order over like, you know, for pads or pencils. Or we got different kind of paper that we had, they used in the lab for different kind of tests and that. And I took care of them too, you know, with my labels and that. And if I'd get low on any of them I had to write to tell, to order them because I'd be needing them pretty soon, you know. And--I mean always had good relationships with any of them that ever, I had to work with. It was really good.

CNK: Did you ever come in contact with Mr. Bloch?

(237)

PP: Oh, once in a while. I'll tell you, I can remember Stuart when he was young, you know. And we had these lines, and he'd--

CNK: Who?

PP: We had these lines working, you know, two of them. And he'd come and he used to sit and read the funny paper, funnies to the, the girls on the line!

CNK: Who would?

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PP: Stuart. He was young, you know. He'd sit and talk to the girls on the line.

CNK: Kind of like entertain them?

PP: Yeah, I guess. I wasn't always around, you know, because I had my work to do and that, but he'd come sit on the line, talk to them. But I never had a lot to do with Stuart, you know, or Mr. Bloch, either one other than speak to them, you know.

CNK: Well, now we heard that the stogie workers, was it over at Marsh, they actually, the union paid to have a reader all day. Is that right?

(251)

PP: I don't know about that one. I never heard it before.

HP: ...

PP: Huh?

HP: That would be in North Wheeling.

PP: I don't know.

HP: Yes it ...

CNK: But now Stuart, he would just read a little bit every morning, maybe?

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PP: No, he'd just come over now and then, and it wouldn't be too often. But he'd come over and sit and talk to some of the girls and that. They had a lot of young ones there, you know. Of course he was just a young boy too. Going to college, I think.

CNK: Well, do you think the young girls appreciated that?

(259)

PP: Oh, yeah. I think they enjoyed it!

CNK: Well, I was wondering if you would, if you would tell me two more stories. If you would tell me, in all the detail you can, about your very first day at work and then your very last day.

(264)

PP: Well, my very first day we came in, we reported for work. But we had to stay at the superintendent's office. And it was a little office. It was just a little cubbyhole. When you first--This was when the war was going on. And you came in the front door up the front steps and that. And you came right to his office there. We stood there until everything got started. Then he'd take you to where you was going. Well, he took us to this here picking room it was called. And it was a great, big long belt. And these here big boxes of tobacco was dumped on a table. Like it was built along the belt. And these--They came out where you could stand right by the belt and throw this tobacco onto the belt as you picked the stems out of it. And they was about twelve girls. More than that?

HP: Fourteen.

(280)

PP: Fourteen on each side. And--I mean, you know, one on one side, one on side, then the next box would be one, two to each box. And it would be about seven different boxes of, because they'd put like one, one Ohio, one Pennsylvania, maybe two Connecticuts, two Wisconsin, a couple cuttings. And they'd be along that line, you know. And so anyway, why of course I was put on Ohio tobacco. And oh, it was so hot. And I had to stand on a, a box because I couldn't reach up on the table to pick the stems. So they had to get me a box to stand on. And I stood there all--Oh, it was almost dinner time. Boy, I was so sick I didn't want no dinner. I didn't want no drink of water, no nothing. And I didn't even think I'd make it through the day. But that's what you did all day long. You'd empty that box, they'd bring you another one and dump it. And it would be hot. Your other ones was starting to cool down, then they'd dump

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that real hot one. And of course all the girls was nice. They'd tell you to look, you know, for certain kind of--Maybe sometimes it would be orange peelings, little pieces of paper. Oh, they found all kind of things

in it. One time somebody even found a ring. And--Yeah. And, oh, they found all kind of stuff.

HP: ...

(305)

PP: And--So, anyway, that was my first day. And I was so glad to get home. I, I almost felt like walking home because I was so sick I didn't want to get on that streetcar because that motion! So my girlfriend-- They say--Oh, they're going out to eat. And there used to be a restaurant on the corner from Stones there. On the other corner where Kaufmann's is. And I can't remember the name of it, White Front or something. I forget what it was named. But anyway, it was a nice little restaurant. It was white. It was old fashioned with the little white blocks, rugs on the floor and little high booths, you know. And they had some tables around. But it was real reasonable. And we could get our suppers for forty-nine cents. And you got a good, good meal. Like pork chop and a potato, mashed potatoes and gravy and a vegetable for forty-nine cents. And--But I didn't go out to eat that night because no way. I was too sick. And my last

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day, well, my boss was good. He was always real nice to me. And we had a party, and I had a cake and I had--I don't know, I don't think I got them in there. I think I got them in another album. This one was filled up too much for my party. Anyway, I had--Oh, the girls got me lots of gifts. And I got music boxes. And I got a pair of pajamas and a robe and slippers. And my boss got me a, a Fenton glass basket. And--Oh, Betty Hamm got me a, a, it was like a beach bag made in Hawaii. She had been to Hawaii, and she brought that back to me for my retirement gift. And, oh, I--And I don't think I did any work that day hardly! We had probably shed a lot of tears! Kissed and hugged everybody good bye.

CNK: You didn't really want to go yet, huh?

(345)

PP: Oh, yes, I, I wanted to retire. In fact, you will laugh if I tell you the way I felt about retirement. I said to my boss a couple years before I retired, when I was sixty-two, because I knew I could retire at sixty-two, you know. And I says--I want to retire because, you know, there's so many young people without work and that. And I says I really felt so sorry for them because I can get a pension and they didn't have anything. And he said, "Pauly, you don't have to feel like that. You can stay here as long as you want to." And I said, "No." And so, anyway, when I retired I was glad because I thought I was giving up that job that somebody would, you know, have a job. That the girl, one of the girls below was going to be laid off wouldn't be laid off because I wasn't there, you know. And, and I've enjoyed my retirement too. I mean I, I make crafts and, and I enjoy crocheting. I'll show you some of the junk I make after a while!

CNK: That's wonderful. I'll bet you saw quite a few changes in working conditions over all those years.

(367)

PP: Oh, lots, lots. You couldn't believe the difference.

CNK: Tell me.

PP: Last--Well, there was a lot less jobs, you know, because they sold the pipe tobacco. And that was-- Lots of girls worked in that. And Mail Pouch was left because they had machines that made a lot faster. When I went there, they had the old Mail Pouch machines that they, things went around and, with the

packages in them. And the men run the packing machine. And the stamps went on it, and the union label stampers went on it. And they had two machines that fed into a wax wrapper. That was a nice job too. I used to think, 'Oh, boy, when I get old enough to run that waxer, oh, I'll like that.' But, you know, I never got to--They got away with that before I got to run any of them! I worked on them now and then if, when they made special jobs and the girls would move over on--They had run--Like I told you, they made the butts and the Penn tobacco, why they'd move over and make that. Well, we'd get to move up and run them wax, their wax wrappers, you know. And I always said, 'Oh,

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boy, this is really a nice job.' You just put the tobacco down the shoot. And sometimes you'd let the, the wax paper--It would be in two pieces in the roll, and if you wasn't watching, you didn't know it. And they would holler up from downstairs that--The packages went downstairs on shoots, you know. And they holler up and say, 'Put some jackets on your packages!' And--But that, it was a good job. And they had had, they had about thirty, thirty of them machines running at--

HP: Oh, yeah.

(401)

PP: At, those packing machines. And when I retired, they had four machines. So you see what a difference with the workers. And it--I, I don't know how many strippers they had when I first went to Bloch. That was down at the lower building. At one time they had five hundred strippers that just took the big stems out of the tobacco at the stemery. So you figure all the workers that they had years and years ago. And now then they have nobody that--They don't--They put so many stems in their tobacco today. They crush them and mash them, you know, and chew them up, I guess, on machine as they cut them. And they're not like--They don't ribbon cut it anymore like they used to years ago either.

CNK: What does that mean, the ribbon cut?

(416)

PP: Well, it was kind of like on the bias of the leaf. And it was like a, a ribbon. You could just pull it out, you know, in a long strip. It would be folded like. It was real nice looking. I mean it was different looking than what it was when I retired. It was just little hunks now, little pieces.

CNK: I wonder how many workers there were when you started compared to when you finished.

(424)

PP: They was--Oh, I don't know, about 150 up at our building, workers. But then when they bought-- Well, they bought up at Wilkensburg the Penn Tobacco. They bought it first. I think it was around '48 they bought it, but I'm not sure of the dates. And then in '51 they bought out of St. Louis Petersons. And whenever Petersons, they had that, I bet you they 250, maybe 300 workers there then. I mean a lot, a lot took place, you know. And--But it was, it was nice when I first went there, I'll tell you. It was--We just had so much fun. Everybody helped one another. I mean you never had to worry about nobody helping you, because if you got stuck somebody always come around to help you. Even sometimes the bosses helped you! Yes, they did. I'll tell you, they had a boss in the packing room when I went there, he was the most wonderful, the fairest person I ever knew in my life. His name was Barney Barnhart.

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And he, he treated everybody the same. I never knew anyone that could treat--Because you know mostly we have people we like a little better than the other one and that. But he treated everybody--I always admired him so much because he could, could do that with everybody that worked. And if he saw somebody do something wrong or push the other guy a little bit, he'd tell them about it because he didn't go for that at all. And he, he was really a wonderful person. I think I about told you everything I know!