

## Will And Al Gee: *The Old Gee Building*

Michael Noble Kline: Could you start by saying my name is?

Will Gee: My name is Will Gee and my father started the business of Gee Electric Company in 1899; and after World War II, I was here until my retirement. I want to point out a few things in the building that may help the architects and so forth. On that cover I showed you right there. That is a termination of the heat cable that's in that side walkout. It was never hooked up because we just "concreted" the entrance here. In Figure (1) we would put a new sidewalk in, we'd extend it on down. That's about all that I can tell you, right in here.

MNK: ... a heat cable?

WG: A heat cable to melt snow in the sidewalk and the garage approach. It is in there, but, never hooked up. We planned on putting it all the way around, then we sold the building.

MNK: What year was that?

WG: I don't know. Frankly, my brother can give you more information on years than I can. I was out on the road selling and I didn't even pay attention to price; I paid attention to working jobs.

Carrie Noble Kline: Is this where you took in all your deliveries?

WG: Yes. Well, the third floor was our motor repair shop. We drove our trucks right in this door, took them right up to the third floor with motors on them. We picked up motors from coal mines, steel mills, chemical plants all the heavy industry through this valley. Took them upstairs and completely rebuilt them and, frankly, to be honest about it, when we rebuilt them they were better than new---Because new, if they can save a dollar on every motor, that's a million dollars a year. We didn't care, we were working on an individual motor and always used the best material we could find. Regardless of price. So, if it made a difference of a dollar our customers didn't care, they wanted it right. So,

now this was put in later. This was turned into a door and again Chuck Steiner did that, who we sold the business too, and I don't recall the year. I'll give it to you close, it was about, oh, this is '94 it was about 1980, '81, back in that time.

MNK: That this door was built here?

WG: Yes, this one was put in. Now I have a picture, a blow-up, of this Main Street section that I'll be glad to give you---

MNK: Great!

WG: ---and it will show the way this whole thing was. Before this was done we used to have a walk-in door on the right, here, and then these were folding doors and we took the walk-in door out. Put the overhead in because this is where we loaded our trucks for delivery of merchandise, that sort of thing, loaded and unloaded.

CNK: What type of merchandise was that?

WG: Well, we, our whole stock, our whole promotion was heavy industry: steel mills, coal mines, chemical plants, glass factories and we stocked for this type of customer. We had very little stock for contractors and "do-it-yourselfers" and people like that. Because when we were working with industrial plants of that quality they needed nothing but the best and if there was something new that came out, that was my job to get it to them, if it would help them. And immediately we would start promoting that. Where it would be a help. I called on the, well I called mainly, I started out when I'd make a call. I started out with the maintenance department. And then from maintenance I'd go to engineering. And if I had a little time left I'd stop and see the purchasing agent. Other trouble I had with other salesmen, they would like to stop and see the purchasing agent, give him a catalog and talk about the ball game. I kept telling them he can't buy a thing. All he can do is write a requisition, fill a requisition. Go down to maintenance and engineering and write the requisitions. That's the way I worked. Well---

MNK: What year did your Dad acquire this building?

WG: We rented this building for many years and it was approximately, again my brother may be able to tell you, it was 1908 to 1910, in that area, but he may be able to tell you. We

rented this building and this part of it we didn't use. Our offices were on the other side of this building on 14th Street and the front door was about the center between the alley and Main Street and you would go in the front door and to the left, where the desks, which were the offices, to the right was the retail area. Oh yeah, we had a toaster you could put right on the kitchen table, put a loaf of bread on there and pull the switch up here. So, that was the---Then it was---The date is over there, it was 1926 or '28 when the owners was 26, okay. When the owners---

MNK: Would you say that again? You had---

WG: I said, "Yes, we had a crane up above here." That---Because we had motors in here that weighed a lot more than trucks or automobiles and we would have to unload down here. I remember one big MG set we had when you took the armature out of it you could stand up inside and put the coils in and we had to assemble that down here, had to bring it down in parts. But, I see they moved the crane, got it out of here.

MNK: ... Katherine?

Katherine: Yeah?

WG: It was taken. There was a water tank on top and there are pictures of that, too. Everything that I had you see, when Mull bought this he had his brother clean it out and they took everything. They took my catalogs. I had a whole set of catalogs, went back to something like '17 and I told Katherine that and she was going to contact Jim. I'll show you the upstairs. Well, about the middle of the building back this way. There was a big standpipe back in here it's still there. Two feet of water from the water tank down to the sprinkler system in case of fire. That was what that was up there for.

MNK: That was what the water tank was for?

WG: Yeah. Strictly for it. When Haas & Herman burned down they were across the alley and it caught fire, that is where the Central Union building is now. We had people on the roof of this building with garden hoses spraying that wood water tank to keep it from catching fire. That was a lot of years ago. That had to be back around '22, '23.

MNK: Tell me something about your Dad. When did he take up electronics?

WG: He didn't. He had a brother Gene who was an electrical engineer, graduated from Ohio State. My father went very little beyond high school, that was for business school. They started this business in their basement over on the Island and my Dad was a contractor and Gene was a motor repairman and then they moved up to north Main Street, and again my brother can give you more information than I can on that because I wasn't around to get that information. I still got it down.

MNK: ...?

WG: I was in here very little. If a problem came up on the building, why they call me. But,--- Now to give you an idea the way this use to be, that used to be glass over there and still is.

CNK: This wall?

WG: Yeah. Take that drywall off of there and you'll find glass underneath it. When you see this column. That is cast iron column. And all the columns back through here on each floor are cast iron. And they had been closed in with 2 inch lumber many, many years ago. Now something that he should show you; see if I can see it from here. Well, I can see this out here. Use to be skylights in each of these bays. Do you see that frame around there, on the ceiling? That is where a skylight was and on the second floor there was a skylight and one up on the roof. That was true of each of these bays.

MNK: So, light shown all the way down through?

WG: Yes, and there used to be a rail around them. If you look at the one in the next bay over, there may be a place up there that is exposed. I doubt it. There's a pretty big molding all the way around it because there is a gas pipe in there. That's where the gaslights were. This was lighted with gaslights.

CNK: Until when?

WG: Well, I forget when we took the last one down, it was over in the middle bay. There was one hanging in there and we finally took it out. Which is the same as the one up here. Of course, we took that out to put the cars in here.

CNK: A steep, what did you say?

WG: An incline that rolled this way until you get up to this level. This level use to be up here. When Steiner decided to put the overhead door there. Why this was always a flood problem anyway, underneath here. So, what I did, I got McKinley Engineering in here and we got a few concrete mixer trucks and backed them in here. And had them filled with gravel, clean gravel and some sand. And that is the way we filled this up. We just let that back -up and put the chute down and filled this underneath here. And put a block wall over there in the basement. That is easier than shoveling. Yeah, then we poured this floor. And that is when I put the heat cable out front.

CNK: Now what was your role in all of this?

WG: Well, I did their engineering and sales, of course I had other salesmen out on the road, too. See I was trained in aeronautics up in Carnegie Tech and when the war came along I went to work over at Curtis-Wright in Columbus. They were putting a new plant in there. I was the fourth man hired in that plant that went up over 3,200 people and, frankly, we designed a couple of airplanes, Helldiver and SO3, in the cattle barn in the old fairgrounds. That was the only building we had. They broke ground for our plant in March---

MNK: ...?

WG: Wanted me to come down here, which I did and I left that aeronautics.

???: ...

WG: I was telling them that after this picture was taken there was a water tank on this ceiling and there are pictures of that too. Did you contact Jim Mull?

CNK: No.

WG: I told you he should have all this stuff.

CNK: I will.

WG: Because he's the one that cleaned it out.

MNK: Jim?

WG: Yeah.

MNK: Who's he, Quay's son?

WG: Yeah, Quay's son, or, I think he's his son, yeah. But he's the one that cleaned it out and he had that whole group of catalogs I had and he also took those glass negatives that are up in the back room.

CNK: They were negatives, pictures that you had used... ?

WG: Well, they were used for making, way back when they used those to make up our catalogs and that sort of thing. I had catalogs that went back to something like 1917. They were in the office right above here.

MNK: Did you have the glass negatives?

WG: No. He took everything.

MNK: I may have them.

WG: I don't think you did.

MNK: ... ?

WG: Sure. Well, listen Howe, you take them through, no sense in wasting time here because I can't---

MNK: ... first floor?

WG: No. I'll wait right here. It's too much trouble to get up there. I'll wait right here and you take them through and you know where that down spout is from the old, from the water tank. And another thing too, you know where the square box is that goes up through the second floor and on up through the third floor by the, where the compressors were. That big square that was a vent for a fan for venting the kitchen of the bar that was downstairs on the corner, that was before Bob was in here.

MNK: Yeah. The corner of the alley.

WG: The corner of the alley, right. That was---

MNK: That was the name of the bar?

WG: No. It was---

MNK: Before Montgomery Ward?

WG: That's right.

MNK: Montgomery Ward took over the lease and Montgomery Ward went in there and later on bought...

WG: That was the Parrot Cafe! The Parrot Cafe. When they moved out of here they moved down on Market Street down by where the Elbow Room is and that fan is still up there. Lord,...

???: Howe was showing us where the skylight was.

WG: Yeah, I explained that to them and the one over in that bay. I explained to you that has a pretty heavy molding around it and that's covering the gas pipe that the gaslights were on. I think there is still a couple of nipples down there around the skylight on the second floor, on the second floor, no doubt the third floor too.

MNK: ...

WG: No that doesn't mean anything to them. You know you go back of the area there and when they rebuilt it they dropped that above the restrooms. And that fan was back in there. And you can walk the whole length of the building here. Right below the second floor, right above the restrooms. And we ran conduit in there for things.

CNK That is what the drop ceiling is above the restrooms.

WG: That's right. You can walk clear back through there and as I say we ran conduit through there. I put a whole new service in for the Ward lighting. Put it right up in there where you couldn't see it.

???: Now let's do a sequence of time here.

WG: He can give you a time sequence better than I can because I never paid any attention to time.

???: Does father's business start in... ?

WG: In 1899.

???: 1899. You were...

MNK: This is real difficult, if we are going to tape this we need to figure out how we are going to tape it. Can we talk to Will for a while longer and then focus on... ?

MNK: How many people worked in this operation during its heyday?

WG: Oh, I just have to guess, Al will tell you right on the nose because that was the end he handled, see? I wasn't in here. I'd say in the fifties, right around that. Right now I'm sitting on our big scale and we always had a calibrator here which heaven only knows where it is now. It was a 50 pound calibrator. You can see the size of the scale and I'm on the scale platform now. We used to have our counter clear back along there so people come in the walk-in door. We could handle quite a few. The shelves were back in this area, our storage. One thing you would want to take a picture of is the chute, back here. That's the way we sent stuff from the second floor down to sell at the counter. This whole area you are looking at now on the second floor was nothing but GE lamps for many, many years. We sold GE lamps out of this world. And we send those and other material down that chute. It run out. And our packing bench was right at the end of the chute. And that's where we would pack for shipping. And many times I carried packages across the corner of 14th and Main. The trolley line stopped there and we would put freight on the trolley and ship it out as far as Bethany. Our trolley here went clear to Bethany and we would ship by trolley. Now, back there where that wall is that was made into sales offices. And that was when the wall was put up. That used to be open. My desk was over there in the corner and we had a wall about this high and then glass. We used a lot of glass. I was explaining, I don't know if you were here, or not, behind this, around this office here where the front entrance is now behind the drywall, is glass and that's glass you can't buy anymore.

CNK: Over here?

MNK: Behind this wall over here?

WG: No over here. Where the entrance is. Yeah, we just put the drywall over the glass. My office upstairs, I did the same thing down to the warehouse. When I built my---I had built-in cupboards and shelving and so forth, there I just covered the glass. That was all handwork. They take that down carefully---Frankly, someone would buy the glass because that old glass is anything but perfect.

MNK: There was a counter here? This was a retail section?

WG: Oh yes. Counter clear up along here. Well, yeah, we had a lot of times in the early days, an industrial plant like Ackerman up in Warwood and Centre Foundry. And people like that. Instead of calling them they send someone down, get the material they want and take it back up.

MNK: So you were the major distributor for---

WG: Many years, yes, before WW II. Well, and after, although the early part of WW II. GE Supply moved into the area. And then Wesco, Westinghouse Supply. Before that our only real competition was Fred Electric which was up on water street. I think we best go on upstairs and see what you have. I don't know of a whole lot more to tell you here.

MNK: Okay. ... this header?

WG: This header right here, that 6 inch or whatever it is, that feeds the sprinkler system. There are two sprinkler systems, one for this part of the building and one for the 14th Street part. Yes, you can see the switches there, big valve.

???: ... history.

WG: ... I say he can give you the history. But see that comes down and feeds the sprinklers. There's a drive valve underneath here and the one for the other section is underneath where the Barber shop was. And we kept that pumped with air with a couple big air compressors upstairs. At times, and not just when I was a kid either, a lot of times that was a shortcut and we had experience at it.

CNK: If something was happening on the first floor you just come on down the chute?

WG: Well, we might, yes, we might get a call up there when we got some electronics. Why we had intercom in and may need someone else down here sometimes it was quicker to just jump in the chute, but it worked.

CNK: ...

WG: It was right in the middle of the clock?

MNK: What was?

WG: The 1936 Flood. The water was just about where that box is.

CNK: The electrical box about half-way up where the pole was?

WG: Yeah, that's where the '36 Flood went to.

MNK: That box wasn't there then?

MNK: No. There was a clock there.

???: Al said that you use to keep a line there ...

WG: Yeah. Yeah, that's where the '36 Flood was. We had --- the front door was wide-opened, that was a new door and Dad said, "I'm not going to let the flood get that." Pushed a button and put it all the way up. We had a ladder in the corner of the alley here and come out twice a day. I come down and get a boat there by the "Vic" Theater and row down to the ladder, go up and go through the building to make sure it was secure and go back close her up again. We had the steel shutters on that one window unlocked so I could get in. People don't realize how big that flood was.

???: What did you have in this room at that time?

WG: This was our retail merchandise. We had wiring devices and all sorts of stuff.

CNK: Did you lose all that?

WG: No we moved it out.

CNK: In time?

WG: Well, we knew ahead of time, back then. They messed it up now with the new dam and not leaving the marker where it used to be. But, we knew ahead of time just exactly where the water was going to come to. And we cleaned off the shelving here as high as we thought it was going to come. And actually it came just a little higher. The bottom shelf that wasn't cleaned off just got the bottom of the cartons wet.

MNK: How did you know?

WG: Huh?

MNK: How did you know how high it was going to be?

WG: By checking the river and previous experiences towards this sort of thing, yeah. We worked with Cappie Reed up at Wheeling Steel. He was in charge of Wheeling Steel's Fleet. They had their own fleet, and they had to know right on the nose too. And they would keep us advised. Because they could---People don't realize that Wheeling Steel---

Cappie could say well the water is going to come to here. And they clean that whole area out. And the water doesn't come to there. Now they lost all that production. And if they don't clean it out, there in trouble because they lost machinery. They had it very close, they had their own sections that they checked. They checked the Beaver River, the Allegheny and the Monongahela all that and they had their own calculations. I remember one time they expected it in the basement. He said, "I think your going to be clear, but I'd watch it, check it in the morning." We went down the next morning, water was up in that sewer but it didn't come on the floor. That's how close they were.

MNK: Do you think they gauged it by the amount of rainfall?

WG: By the amount of rainfall here, here, here, here. What's the water level there? How fast is it rising? What's going to take it so long to get from the mouth of the Beaver into the Ohio down to Steubenville and so long from there down? I mean they had it all calculated out. Lee Dickinson learned that from Cappie Reed when Cappie retired Lee took over. See now we lost all of that because they decided to put the measurements at the Wharf Parking Garage, that doesn't tell you much, all you can do is use it as an estimate. You see over in Martins Ferry, at the Waterworks, they agreed to keep it over there, but, oh no, our people didn't want it there they wanted it at the Wharf. Where in the dickens? Who do you call at the Wharf to say "How high is the river?" "How fast is it rising?" It was a big mistake.

MNK: So this floor and all of this is...

WG: Well do you notice this floor slopes? Oh, yeah see the slope on that floor? That's on purpose, sure to get floodwater off. The ones upstairs, no, they don't need it. But, what we would do, we would clear the area out of the merchandise and all. And put hoses in here, couple garden hoses, here and down in the basement, depending upon how high it was going to come. And when the water started in we would turn on the hoses. That kept the water circulating and kept the mud from settling. And when the water went down, we would put on hip boots and go in there and pick up the hoses. And hose down the mud off the walls. And then as the river came down. Since this is a slope, why we

just keep the mud right in the river. Just keep hosing it all the way down because it was bare up here and water down here. Every once in a while one of us would walk down through here with hip boots on. Stir up the mud keep it going down. By the time the river was out here we were clean. Things you learned ---

MNK: By living in a river town.

WG: Yeah.

MNK: How many times was the river up in this building?

WG: Oh, I couldn't tell you.

MNK: Several?

WG: Oh yes, several times on the first floor. Now the new dams and all are not suppose to be flood control but they do help because they are navigation control.

CNK: Were there any floods you remember that were just about as bad as the '36?

WG: No. Well, '37. '37 was---I have to look up the records, but the '37 was on this floor.

MNK: But not up to the clock?

WG: No. But it was awful close.

???: Will ...

WG: Yeah, that's the wall before the flood. Yeah, instead of fooling with it. Yeah, that was painted brown up to just about where that wallboard is.

CNK: Did you say you kept a record then of how much water was in and what years the floods were and different things that happened?

WG: I don't have that record, I've got a few unusual records. For instance,---

???: The City should have them.

WG: Huh?

???: The City should have them.

WG: The City should have every one of them.

CNK: Do you have unusual records though?

WG: Well, for instance, I've got a record there that shows Wheeling had a flood each of the twelve months of the year at one time or another. I can tell you what year it is for this particular month. People don't realize it even in July; July and August we had floods. So,---These barrels, no doubt, came from downstairs we used to take our scrap copper and put them in those down in the basement. See the holes cut in the bottom of them with a pick? That was to let the flood water out. Sure they were filled with copper. They weren't going to float. Anything that would float we had to get out of there because it could hit a lamp bulb and break it or something like that. So everything---We left this stuff in, too much trouble to move it. You just cut holes in them with a pick.

CNK: You had to be smart didn't you?

WG: No, you had to be observing so you knew better the next time and you had to be tired after it was over so you would remember it.

MNK: Maybe we could get you to give us a little history here. Could you say my name is?

Al Gee: Al Gee. This was for most of the years that we had the company warehouse through here. The offices weren't there. There was two offices up toward the front Main Street end. But, later this was remodeled and they brought most of the offices in that part, and this again when we had it. Practically this whole floor was light bulbs, we had quite a light bulbs business. Well, I don't know too much else to say about it. We had the restrooms on each end; the rest of the warehouses over there.

MNK: How did your father get his start in the business?

AG: He just started, simple as that. He just started it . He didn't know anything about electrical or what have you. But he started the business. And originally we were GEE Electric Construction Company. Where we did contracting work. And then later on he went into the strictly supply business and got out of the contracting business. And all through both of them we had the motor repair shop which was upstairs. And back in those days it was very crude and what have you. But, he had an interesting story he used to sell electricity to his neighbor because we had generators here. This was before the power company got going good. And one day the landlord came in to him and said

that he was going to raise the rent. And he said, "That's going to be tough". And he said, "Well we just have to do it, costs went up and everything you know and we have to do it". And he said, "Well okay." He said, "By the way, before you leave, he said, next month your electric bill goes up." He said, "What do you mean?" "Well, he said, 'you know costs go up and everything and we just have to raise our rate of crime.'" The guy says, "What are you doing to me?" He says, "Well, you know costs go up." So, anyhow, that's was just one of those interesting, way back before my time.

MNK: Umm hmm.

AG: But, I don't know how he happened to decide on that, but that's what he did. His father been with Singer Sewing Machine and they wanted to transfer him. And he said no this was the last transfer he was suppose to have and he wasn't going to move. So, he quit. So, Dad hired him as a "counter man" because he said he didn't know anything about electric either, but he knew everybody in town. So ,he keep them occupied until somebody knew what they were doing. Told him to take care of them and go on about their way. So, he worked for them a number of years.

MNK: Your uncle was in the business, too?

AG: No, no. My uncle was one of the Richland Corporators, but that was my grandfather that worked for him, here, yeah.

MNK: And what year did they come into the building then?

AG: I can't tell you. They were up street on Main Street farther up, I can't tell you exactly when they moved into this building. But, that was strictly on the Main Street side, that's where all the first floor stuff was. I think they had part of the second and third floor at that time, but they were strictly limited to that. Then in '28, I think it was, the owners of the building, which was the Standard Corporation, decided to remodel and set up the storerooms on the 14th Street side. So, we moved over here. And they put the elevator and everything up for us. And then they put the storerooms in over there. And the Standard Corporation also owned the Palace Furniture Company, which was right up the street here, at the far end of the north end of the Dollar Bank area. Well, about

13th Street and the Hubb Department Store. And at that time all the traffic came down Main and up 12th and up Market. Well, they figured if they could get retail stores over here, they come down to 14th, go up to Market and go on up Market, and that put them past their other places they owned. The only problem was the Depression hit in '29 and that sort of played havoc.

MNK: What did that do to the business here, Depression?

AG: You mean our business?

MNK: Yes.

AG: Well it was tough on it, but we stayed, we were able to survive it. These other businesses, some of them still stay there. Bob Oak Typewriter Supply was one of them. It was in, his father, I think, ahead of him, and they were over in that area. McGhee and Company had the corner room down there on 14th and Main, they were there for quite a few years before they moved over there on Market Street. The others have been in and out.

MNK: How many people worked for the Company?

AG: Well, when we, umm---I guess they reached about forty-five something in that neighborhood, between the shop and the warehouse and everything.

MNK: In their peak year?

AG: Yeah.

MNK: What would the peak year have been?

AG: Umm, about, oh, '70, probably about the time we sold it, '73. '74, no, I can't say that, oh, afterwards he, probably five or ten years, five years or so afterwards he probably did better than that, he went on up, but he still probably didn't employ more, he just handled more volume.

MNK: Umm hmm.

CNK: What was your job here?

AG: Well, I was Vice-President for a few years, a number of years, and I was President for most of the rest of them. I was only here thirty-three years counting the service.

MNK: Thirty-three years?

CNK: Is that all?

AG: Well I was in the service a little over four years.

CNK: What did you start as?

AG: What I started as? Well, I came out of college and started up in the shop. My Dad said you can start work up there at 35 cents an hour, that's what we start everybody else that's sweeps the floors and drives the pickup trucks. So that's what I started at.

CNK: Did your college degree, did it have anything to do... ?

AG: Heavens no! Heavens no! Why would that have anything to do with it. He didn't have one, why would I? But, anyhow, when I came out of the service why then I came out of that and came down, I had an office with him and I was ---We kept, had the same office about as long as he lived, as long as he came back to work. He came back to work until he was in his late eighties.

MNK: Mmm. Yeah. Quite a man, huh?

AG: Yeah, he was, yeah.

CNK: What was your father's name and your grandfather's name?

AG: Harry Gee was my father's name, the same as mine, he was senior, I was junior.

CNK: Your grandfather's name?

AG: Well you shouldn't ask me that.

CNK: You'll think of it later?

AG: Yeah. I never knew him actually, he died before I ever knew him, lived on the Island.

MNK: Mmm.

CNK: So you gradually went from sweeping the place up to being Vice-President of the Corporation?

AG: Yeah, in a few years. It pays to have the boss your father.

MNK: It pays to know the boss.

AG: No, I had---You know, part of the thing I picked up---I learned about the shop; that was the big thing and that was a good part to know something about. And so then moving in

with him, why I was in on everything that was going on and just gradually took over things.

MNK: Will was telling us that you often used better parts than were originally in the motors.

AG: Oh yeah, yeah.

MNK: So they were better rebuilt than they were new?

AG: Oh yeah, no question about that, yeah. Yeah, we had some that, like a customer complained about, "Well you charge us more than we could go buy a new one for." We said, "We agree with you and we don't really want them that badly, go buy new ones." And they said, "Well, you mean that?" And we said, "Yeah." They said, "Okay." So for about three or four months why we didn't get any of that business, then all of sudden we started getting it again. We called up and said, "Hey! They sent in some motors here the ones you were buying new ones on." He said, "Fix them, they're no darn good!" So we started rebuilding them and went on with it.

MNK: These were big motors for---?

AG: No, they were---Those particular things were not big, they were what they called drills in the coal mine, but they were oh, about yea big armatures. But a man handled them, the drill. But, then we actually repaired up to 300 horsepower. We couldn't handle anymore because the weight involved, we couldn't get it up the elevator.

CNK: But, most of the motors you dealt with related to the coal industry?

AG: Coal and steel, but then we also did some for the chemical.

MNK: ... big motors?

AG: Oh, General Electric and Century, umm---

CNK: Did you deal with the Wheeling Steel Corporation?

AG: Oh, we dealt a lot with Wheeling Steel, we did a lot of work for each of the mills. We also did a lot of--We sold them a lot of supplies. We had contracts for all their light bulbs, the biggest, a lot of the time. Oh, offhand I don't know, those companies---you hit me by surprise, I can't tell you.

MNK: Did you ever have any sense of what this building was used for before your family took it over?

AG: Not really. No.

MNK: Or, what it was built for?

AG: Well, it was a warehouse type building, that's all I could tell you. I don't know what was in it though because I never knew anything about that.

MNK: This was the days before the forklift, wasn't it?

AG: You're sure right. Absolutely.

MNK: Imagine stacking stuff up---

AG: Yeah, well, today on a one-floor building why that be, that's where they stack them, they don't usually do it on these multiple story buildings.

MNK: So the skylight---

AG: That's the next floor up.

MNK: But your brother was saying there was skylights on all the floors?

AG: I don't know.

CNK: Yeah, he said it was on the top floor, of course, you can see the sky directly, but then there was one right under it on the second, one under that on the first?

AG: I can't tell you that. I don't know. ... "Let those kids go down the chute, he said, how can I stop them?" He says, "I turn around they're coming down the chute."

MNK: This was your brother's office?

AG: Yeah. He had that and I was over here, and there was a partition through here which was primarily glass and then all of this area through this part was all where the accounting office was. After we sold the business, Mr. Steiner came in, why he put all of those offices out in there and made this his big office and conference room and then had an assistant over here. At the time we were here, we were open clear to the windows. We didn't have any of the walls on there. There you go.

MNK: Mmm.

AG: ...

MNK: ...desk.

CNK: This was your brother's?

AG: No, that was Steiner's.

CNK: Oh. This was your side. Your office was on this side, wasn't it?

AG: Yeah, it was through here, yeah. But, see , we went clear to the windows and everything and this was about where the partition ended and we went. We had our door out here and then the accounting office had their door down there, but this was basically glass. What I say glass, about three or four feet high. My Dad was worried about things back then like they worry about now. He had somebody in his office he wanted to be sure the girls next door could see it. He could never get accused of fooling around; they could see what was going on all of the time. Yeah, see he put in a shower and a bath and everything.

MNK: Uh huh.

CNK: This is since your family left?

AG: Oh yeah, yeah. ... Yeah, this was a very fancy office and it went clear to the outside wall and about to where the doorway is. Then this office was an accounting office in here and that was my brother's office back there.

CNK: So the walls of the light fixtures were here when the Gee Electric Company was still here?

AG: Yeah, this was all put in after we left, or after I left, after we sold. They put that in there and moved accounting out of here and the offices how they, entrance down there in the front, where the counter is and moved those offices all upstairs here.

CNK: Okay. I see how the counter is.

MNK: ...

AG: Steiner bought the business.

MNK: That's the big "G"?

AG: Yeah, he wanted a logo. He took the same name, he used the Gee name, Gee Electric. He, I don't know where he got it, but he got somebody, a high-priced guy probably, and he developed this logo. Very simple when you get down to it, Gee, it's a big "G". He's the guy that developed the big "G" logo and he used to have it on the sides of his trucks and as you see he put it on the wall and used it in all of his catalogs and advertising, what have you.

MNK: Did your family have a logo then, too?

AG: No, didn't bother with any, that was before those days.

MNK: I don't know if I ever known anybody by the name of Gee before, is that a shorten form for something else?

AG: Oh, there's all kinds of stories, maybe so, but I don't know of any---Yeah, there's plenty of them, in fact there's one that's very well known and that's what used to be the President of the University of West Virginia. He called it Gee. But it was still spelled G-e-e. Over at St. Clairsville there was a man, he called it Gee, but it was G-e-e. He was treasurer of the old Hanna Coal Company over there who was one of our customers. Then the ex-President of the University now he's the President of Ohio State University. The Gee's and Gee's get around. We always said we only gave General---My Dad was in business before General Electric and he only gave them one "E".

MNK: Umm hmm.

CNK: Would you like to cover the...

AG: ... three buildings. The one we were in is the one building where the entrance is. This is the second building and the one on 14th Street is the third building. And you probably seen the things on the post down front there, Wheeling, Virginia and Wheeling, West Virginia, both side by side.

MNK: No, I didn't see that yet.

AG: Well, we'll show you that. These big doors were put up here and simply for fire purposes. So, if a fire got coming from one, it would block the fire, and these, there was, of course, a difference in level so they used the, we put those little ramps in. All of these things are

hardwood just like you use in your home, but, because it wears out otherwise, the trucks just wear it out.

MNK: Umm hmm.

CNK: Was there ever any kind of a fire that you knew of here?

AG: Ah, nothing that amounted to anything. After we sold the thing they got one going. But, it was over on the other side here and the sprinkler system basically put it out. We had one small one upstairs there, it was under a piece of equipment. It was gas fired. We had, on purpose, called the fire department and said what should we do to help protect everything. Now it was built so it should be all right, it was built---The flames were probably six inches or eight inches above the floor and they said, "Well put some sheets of asbestos under it." Which makes good sense, and we did. A few years later, just lucky there were a few people working overtime. One of them smelled some smoke and they went out there and felt it was around there. So, they got a crowbar and lifted this machine when that flame dashed out. And, so ,they dropped it back down again and called the fire department. What had happened over many years, the heat on the asbestos caused spontaneous combustion in the wood underneath it, so actually the asbestos is what caused the problem. The fire department did a great job. They shot it underneath. Came down here and caught most of the water with their tarps and didn't cause any damage down here and everything worked out fine. But, if no one had been around, it could have worked into a pretty bad fire. But, there again, we were completely sprinkled so we probably have limited, more water damage than anything else.

MNK: You mentioned the Virginia and West Virginia posts downstairs?

AG: Yeah, I'll show you on the outside. It has a company name, those are cast iron posts. The company name on one it says "Wheeling, Virginia" and right next to it says "Wheeling, West Virginia" same thing. It was right at the change of when West Virginia became Virginia, I mean when Virginia became West Virginia. Same company made the posts.

MNK: Oh, okay. So, but the one post must have been put in before then?...

AG: Oh, yeah the building wasn't necessarily built at the same time.

MNK: Uh huh.

AG: ... are different. ... Mean much of anything to you, but there's all kinds of pipes. Some of them were compressed air that we ran through, some of them were gas, some of them were just plain plumbing and some were the sprinkler system. So, ahh, there's---You had to be careful what pipes you were using for what. But we used a lot of compressed air up in our shop, so we run the pipes down here.

MNK: Is this the---This is the third . . ?

AG: Yeah. This is one on Market, on 14th Street. You are right here at 14th Street, yeah, and this again is just a big open building. Those stairs came down from the shop which were basically a fire escape thing in case they got blocked, why they could come down here and go through, or out one of these windows. But, the closest building---Well, particularly under here, we're on the second floor, yeah we're on the second floor, between here and the storerooms on the first floor there is a lot of heavy steelworks. We had this placed appraised by American Appraisal Company many years ago for insurance purposes. And they asked for permission to tear up some of this floor. And we said, "What for?" And they said, "Well we think there's things there we don't believe." We said, "Well be our guest." So, they did. Well, when they remodeled these storerooms about 1928. They knew we had all of this heavy equipment. So ,they put a whole bunch of steel in above the storerooms to help support all the things above it. And that's the reason you see some of these posts here, like temporary type posts. See the big heavy stuff up on there, those big beams, to reinforce things when, for the place, so they wouldn't go down in the storerooms, it helps. There was a stairway up in here, I think. See you can tell a little bit right in here. I think there was a stairway or an elevator that came up into the place down below. That was before it was remodeled.

MNK: Was this the oldest of the original of the three buildings, do you think? Or, did you ever know which was ... ?

AG: Never knew. But, we could---By looking at the Wheeling, Virginia and West Virginia we can get a pretty good idea.

MNK: Uh huh.

AG: But, the third building doesn't have ... only for two buildings, would tell us that.

CNK: Did you say it was remodeled at one point then?

AG: 1928 all these storerooms were put in. I think it was '28. It was '27 or '28, I know it was just before the Depression. This is the fixture where we were talking about in the records room. That's that old ... That's the old wire mold. Talk about you get wire mold, today, that's all wooden wire mold up there. Which is perfectly good. I mean it does the job. Nothing, huh? Mmm. I'm going to switch us back here and see if I get anything. Will referred to, and it has all that wood work you see. All the walls were built like that and they use to have pictures hanging in all the ceiling. Part of that ceiling, I noticed, they've taken out now. They use to have a railing, one of those rails that went along the wall that you saw in the old warehouses. That had the staircase fastened to the rail thing and then they could wheel that thing up and down and go up and down and fix their stock out of the bins. They use to have that along that wall there. But, this was just the one point when we were actually based on 14th Street. Why they had this as fixture display room and people, umm---They bring people up here and show them all the lighting fixtures just like they do in other places today. It was at that time a pretty decorative sort of place and what have you.

MNK: That's why it's all nicely paneled?

AG: Yeah, they put all that nice paneling in, the ceiling was the same, the whole thing. I don't know what you call it, hardwood paneling or something like that. We had been over the many years after it---We were out of the picture business for many years. We had used this place as storage place for records because we could easily lock it up and have all storage back here and no one had any reason to come back in here.

MNK: So, it was used as a fixture room up through about what year?

AG: Oh, probably around, umm, oh, I'm not sure, probably early '30s something like that.

...had all the walls like this wood is here, the normal. On the ceilings were the same and this was a fixture display room, like you are seeing now. So, we had a lot of fixtures hanging up on the ceiling in there. They had the elevator, I think it was an elevator, right over there so they could bring people up and in and out of here. But, all the stuff in those days, when it was wire mold, why they used the wooden molding like that one. Then they went to, later, metal molding, in which you are all familiar with. And now of course it's plastic. They still use some metal, but also use a lot of plastic. So, it reverts from time to time.

MNK: Is that---?

AG: The greasy wall she was talking about.

MNK: Uh huh.

AG: What they are saying is probably right about the generator and everything. Also, over top of it was a hydraulic press and the hydraulic---I don't know whether it's up there now, or not, we'll look when we go up. The hydraulic press would push 150 ton and it had quite a span. Oh, I think at least 10 ft. you could put it. It was all hydraulic; it was hard to keep it from leaking oil and although we had a pan over it; people would neglect it, then come busting down there. That was all that was.

CNK: What's on the wall over here then? Eighteen NC, eighteen OC?

AG: Oh, that was probably a wire, some wire. A size eighteen, and the NC and the OC were probably the type of insulation. That is so old, I wouldn't even know what they are now.

CNK: Is this an old piece of equipment, too, then?

AG: That's an old mimeograph machine.

CNK: So it is.

MNK: Now this is one of those rolling ladders you were talking about.

AG: Yeah, that's it, that's the one. You just fasten it up the top where it rolls down the track and then you have these wheels on the bottom and you push it down the way, get on and go up and get whatever you need.

CNK: Are you going to demonstrate so we can get that on video, then?

AG: I don't think so. There's probably so much dry rot in it it's not even funny.

CNK: So you shut these at the end of every day then?

AG: Nope. This door and that one in case of a fire they were held open by chain links and the link in it would melt like on sprinkler heads. So, if it got too hot from a fire, something like that, it would melt and close itself. That's on all the stairs. That goes to that roof up there. There's the main skylight on the third floor right up above there that we covered over. It was glass and we had too much trouble with it---The leaking, you get leaks in it all the time. In those days, there again, we didn't have the plastics to keep them sealed; so you put in something, roofing material, or something. And in cold weather why that would crack out, and warm weather it run out and all this kind of stuff. So, after doing it for years. Why we decided to just do it and put it over it. You know you can't keep them clean anyhow. So, you don't get that much light and what we actually did, we put up two fluorescent lights that we left on 24 hours a day and got the same amount of light out of them. So, we figured we were just better off.

MNK: The elevator came up---

AG: Right there. Right in front of us there, that's the elevator. Then we would bring our cars and trucks up and then wheel the stuff right on. Usually do the checking of it and so forth, right here. I say checking, mainly tagging and marking and then take it for wherever it went for working on it. This is the reason for all the double floors through a lot of this because of the trucks we wheeled around on it.

MNK: This is where you started working right after the war in '35?

AG: Before the War.

MNK: Oh, before the War?

AG: Before the War. Before the War, 1940.

MNK: '40? For 35 cents an hour?

AG: Sure. Yeah. I got room and board though.

MNK: Oh, room---

AG: I was living at home it made it easy.

CNK: What would you have done then in the course of a day's work when you first started out?

AG: Well, I did a lot of things. I sweep the floors sometimes; I take the pick-up truck out to a customer and pick up a motor or deliver one to them; I started "re-doing" their record forms and so forth that they had in here, which my education said were a little ancient. So, I did, "re-did" a lot of that stuff and, of course, I was only here a year. Not too much over a year, maybe a year and a half before Uncle Sam said he wanted me, so, that took care of that.

CNK: So, your first year working here was what year?

AG: 1940. Went in the service November of '41 before the War started.

MNK: Then after the War you came back?

AG: Yeah, yeah, I planned to all along, my education and everything else.

MNK: What did you do when you came back then?

AG: Well, I went down---I moved in there with my father. I became his right hand and his errand boy. (There goes the compressor.) Now, the far end, here, is that bench down there going way back, this was before I was ever in the business. We use to sell radios, primarily in those days the old "... " which hasn't been made probably since the Depression. They closed up in Philadelphia and that plant laid there, empty, almost until war time and then they leased the plant out. But, they just closed up. They use to repair them down there.

MNK: Radios?

AG: Yeah, well we sell our radios and then any repairs needed they do them down there. Also, new models would come out, they take them up there and check them out. So, otherwise, since after Ike was out, by the time I was in the business, radios were gone. We weren't messing around with that anymore. And we park cars over here and plus store things from the motor repair shop over in here. You probably like that thing turned off. ...

MNK: Say that again please.

AG: This is where we had the big hydraulic press and that was the hoist where we use to, use to hold---Get the things up in place for it. Then over here were a couple lathes and boring machine and milling machine. This was the machine end of the thing. In later years we didn't do a whole lot of machining. But, we would press out shafts and so forth. And later got some of the local machine shops to do our machine, the shafts and type of ... Bearings just got so that you would go out and buy them.

MNK: Um hmm. But originally you made all that stuff here?

AG: Made the roller bearings, but, the sleeve bearings, they called them. But, the roller bearings, ball bearing type of thing, why you always bought them. But, there were more and more of those being used instead of the sleeve bearing. But, on the bigger motors you get, why the sleeve bearing was the main thing, which would wear out. Maybe I can find the switch someplace. We did this---What we refer to as "dipping-baking" the motors. When you finished rewinding a motor, then you dip it, and had a tank here, and then there were other types besides. After you finished dipping it and letting it drain then you put it in the oven and bake it dry. You have to go a certain number of hours then you knew it was all right.

MNK: What did you dip it in?

AG: Well, we dipped it---Later years it was epoxy, before that it was a paint of some kind. Varnishes and so forth. But they kept improving to where most of them became epoxies. They were the tanks like this, but we had several different type of tanks. We had the one here and then we had the one or two portable ones over in here. They all had different types of varnish depending upon what type of insulation we were using on the motors.

MNK: I bet this place was really humming in its hey day, huh?

AG: Well, yeah, we had a fair number of people here and the area down below here where we made coils for all of our motors. That was done, primarily, by the women. We had about six women that worked on that the biggest part of the time.

MNK: Why? Why women there?

AG: Well there fingers---Good finger dexterity.

MNK: Hmm.

AG: Yeah, and it wasn't a heavy job, or as heavy a job. Yeah, we had a few women come from Martins Ferry and different places. One time we had a mother, daughter and granddaughter all working here at one time. Mother worked until she died of cancer. I think she was well past 70's. The daughter was only here a few years; then she was looking for something else. Not the daughter, the granddaughter. Yeah, we had a lot of people in this company work many years. Forty years was not uncommon here.

MNK: Really?

AG: Yeah, we had two salesmen that worked forty years, couple of girls in the offices that worked thirty-five to forty-five years. We had quite a few people worked---Up here there were several of them that worked a long, long years like that.

MNK: That's a big swallow, the Company's labor relations, huh?

AG: Yeah, whatever you called them then. We tried to treat our people decently and they reciprocated, that's all.

MNK: Uh huh.

CNK: Did you have most of the different ethnic groups represented here?

AG: I don't know. I don't know. We needed somebody. We asked. Ether put an ad in the paper or go to the employment office. And they sent people in and we picked what seemed to be the best qualified people and that's what we hired.

CNK: Do you remember having a lot of Irishmen or Italians?

AG: I haven't the slightest idea. I haven't the slightest idea. Religion, why we used to put that on the form and took that off of it. Which none of us agreed with anyhow. Why we should worry about it. I almost fired a secretary one time because I use to tell her to interview the people and then let me talk to them, that is the secretarial help, I interviewed one, or interviewed several of them, and then afterwards I called her in and I said, "Which was the best?" She said, "Well, those two, they both are all right, that one of course is Catholic." I said, "What does that got to do with it?" She said, "Well, we got

enough of them around here." And I said, "My question is, which is best qualified?"

"Well if you put it that way, she is." "I said, "Then hire her." Then that took care of that.

But, it was just one of those things. She never---She seemed to get along with everybody all right. One of the women later, after she left, took over the office and who happened to be Catholic. But she didn't, ahh, never spoke badly of the other woman at all or anything like that, but...

CNK: You use to have something like that on the form, did you say... ?

AG: Well, we use to have a place that said religion, you know. An old form we had for years and years and we thought, "What do we got that on there for, we aren't paying any attention to that?" So, we just took it off. We didn't go to fancy forms. We made our own up. Of course, then you had to worry about the government in later years. And be more careful about what you put on where, and what you asked them, you know. You're not allowed to ask a person color, why Hell you look at them. You know I mean it gets ridiculous. Anyhow, down here's where we did these other things. Before here we would test run most of our motors. And we had various voltages according to these different switches we have on the wall there. You go to 500 volt on down to 120 volt. This is where----These pipes here... there was a generator there and that fit the generator so we could test DC motors as well as the AC. Because we took care of both. Hoses where the air came up and we had air around those places. When making the coils we had to press them and we worked up a new deal. The pressing was always a hydraulic deal which was a dirty deal and hard to keep accurate. So, we worked up a deal. We got air vices and rigged forms to go in them and then you could control your pressure absolutely because the pressure valve, your gage would tell you what your pressure is going to be. So, those presses were all right in there. We took the hydraulics out and put the air in. These were all benches here for the winders on most of their stuff. They worked right along these areas here and the office in there. So, that's pretty much the ballpark.

MNK: And the women worked down at this end on the ... ?

AG: They were in this part right here. We had them in this area here because they have to check coils and things like that with the motors. Well, these people were working on them right here, so it was easy for them to check. Or, them to come over and get something done to it. So, they were sort of in the middle of the cleaning operation, the winding and everything. Over there where the coil machines where you wound the coils, they're all gone.

MNK: You said your Dad didn't know very much about electronics, but he was a good business man.

AG: Yeah, he learned it the hard way, but he learned it. Yeah, no problems. There's a picture you talked about taking right there.

MNK: Oh, yeah. What use to be across there?

AG: Umm. At that corner there was an old, at one time a firestone place and it burned. We watched it from here. The firemen up on the roof of that thing, I think one went through it as a matter of fact. Then there was, oh, I don't know, nothing very good along here. I think it basically all got torn out when the Dollar Bank decided to go in there and build the bank. But there wasn't a whole lot of any, anything that you might call first rate. Across the street, why you had the old Naler Company, dried goods. Below, that was, it was wholesale radio outfit. What was their name? They moved back to Pittsburgh, or moved to Pittsburgh. Then below that was the old W. A. Wilson, which of course is out the way now. Naler's are out of business I think. Shully Taylor was just down a little piece.

MNK: I guess you saw a lot of changes in Wheeling during the years that you worked here?

AG: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, we seen a good many over the years.

MNK: A loss in population?

AG: Yes. Yes. Too bad, but that's the way it is. Some places are growing, but here it's been going downhill.

MNK: Why is that?

AG: Well, part of the reason is heavy industry. You know when steel goes down, Wheeling goes down. Steel went down during the Depression, came back. Now steel went down again. And I don't know how much of it will come back because we closed up a lot of those because of the efficiency of the operations. Glass went out of business because they couldn't compete. So, that's a lot of our problems, purely economic problems. Well, coal, of course, was the other one. At one time, my father could go to Cleveland and spend a week and he would call on a hundred different coal company offices in Cleveland. And everyone of them had mines over here in eastern Ohio or northern West Virginia that were our customers. It's boiled down to the point now where there's probably two of them over there, if any. They have either sold or consolidated or gone out of business.

MNK: And no coal mine in Ohio County, I guess, somebody said?

AG: I don't know. I can't say. They got the stripping up there, near the airport, I read. But I don't know for sure if there are any deep mines around here or not. I'm not sure how many are over in Ohio, now. Consol, I guess still has some. But a lot of that is all strip mine now. Well down the river, Shoemaker, I think is still operating and they have a entry out in the "Grove" and that's Ohio County, or, well, they would be Brooke County.

MNK: Do you remember Wheeling in its sort of "wide open" days?

AG: Oh, sure, sure.

MNK: What was that like?

AG: I was just a kid then. Well, it was just "wide open" that's all, yeah. Which some people would like to see it do it again. There were casinos. It use to be illegal for Mr. Elias to have numbers racket, but it's all right to have a lottery because that's state. It has changed, things changed.

MNK: What's right this year may be wrong next?

AG: Not politically correct. That's the new language. Okay...

MNK: Tell us about your last day at work here, do you remember what you did?

AG: I don't think I did much of anything. Ah, no I don't remember what I particularly did that day. See, when Mr. Steiner bought the business and then he moved in the same

office with me. And, so, we were together there for a year, a little over a year actually. So, we worked together on things. He wanted me to stay on, which I said no it wasn't fair. It wouldn't be fair because I had a lot of good employees around here. They would bring their troubles to me. A new man they weren't going to take their troubles to. And I told him I said "You won't know what's going on if I stick around here." He said, "I'll worry about that." I retired.

MNK: But you stayed on a year to show him the ropes?

AG: Yeah. He had no experience in the electrical business. He was CPA and done a lot of work with corporations, efficiency and that type of thing. Now since he sold this. Why he had, at that time, he still owned the place Ronsford, West Virginia that he didn't sell. And since that time he's up through Maryland, Pennsylvania and places like that. I think he has sixty or seventy branches up there now. He's done very, very well, very well. Hard worker, works his tail off. But he's smart and he does a good job.

CNK: A lot of times on that last day of work you really have to scurry around a lot and pull a few things together and...

AG: I have been, I have been retired for a long time.

CNK: You retired ... ?

AG: I have been---You know, I mean after all he and I were in the same office together and he was doing most everything. He just asked me about things from time to time

CNK: Well what does it feel like being back here now, after how many years has it been did you say?

AG: Well, it was '75. So, it's almost twenty years.

CNK: Twenty years. Do you still hear the motors humming in your head?

AG: No, it looks a little empty. I see over there there's the old paper machine that we use to tape the coils with. Those, incidentally, those were made up and it was originally set up like a sewing machine with the tape, or the thing on it. Where the hydraulic press is. See the treadle is just like a sewing machine. From that they controlled the speed of this, which was the taper you see. Here's your tape and you hold the coil in there so it's

taping it right around. We had a salesman of this equipment come in one time and he wanted to sell us new taping machines. Frankly, I thought they looked pretty good and they seemed fast and everything else. So, I finally said, "Well leave us one, we'll try it for a few months and if we don't like it you take it back, fine." So, I told my head girl here that did all that, I said, "Now I want you to give that a fair trial." She said, "Oh, that's no good, it won't work." I said, "Look, I want you to give it a fair trial. I don't want you to use any other machine but that one for the next month. Now you can get in all the problems you want and you can tell me all about them, delays and everything else. But, I want you to use it and try your best." She was very conscientious, she said, "I'll try it." She came to me and she said, "They just don't do as good as ours. We can do it faster with our old machines." and then she showed me. So, the guy came back, I said, "Take your machine, we don't want it." So, we were using these all those years. We developed these things.

MNK: Well this was a machine that you invented here?

AG: Oh, I don't know whether they actually invented it or not. We had them here for years, the two. See the other one was at the other end here, the girl sit there and ... Over here is where they pressed the stuff when we had the old hydraulics. See we had the pan underneath to keep, pick up all the oil. All the time that would leak out of them. But, we eliminated that and started using air. Which---

CNK: What kind of coils were you taping, I'm not sure I quite understand?

AG: Motors have coils in them and the motors that burned up. If you want to call it burned up. If you smell it or they quit working they burn up. The insulation comes off the wires and then the wires get across each other and they don't work. So, you take those coils all out and make new ones.

CNK: You were taping ... ?

AG: Then you tape the coil. Well, you see you have several wires together and you have to tape them and then fit them in these slots in the motors.

CNK: ...

AG: Yeah, both armatures and stators. Armatures are for DC and stators were for AC. But, you have to have one to show you to really explain it correctly, it's not that easy. It's easy if you can see it, but it's not otherwise.

CNK: ...

AG: Outside maybe. I don't know whether you can tell it from here, or not. But under the corner of each sill, you know each---

CNK: Each window sill.

AG: Yeah, here and here. Under the corner of that stone sill, I think it's stone, was a block of wood that went back in the brick. And that's what held it there. And it looked like it was holding up the sill and it was very ornate on the outside.

CNK: Did it have like a circle on it?

AG: Yeah, yeah something like that. I don't know if there was any pictures of it available. Or, not close up that you can tell. We took them out. And the reason we took them out, that wood was drying up and what have you. And one would drop out once in a while and they were pretty heavy. If they hit you on the head down on the sidewalk you weren't going to be happy.

CNK: Okay.

AG: In fact you probably wouldn't walk away. So, we just took them all out.

CNK: Did you fill them in at all?

AG: Brick, we just stuck bricks in the wall, yeah.

CNK: Right in here.

AG: Yeah.

CNK: Was the building ever painted a different color?

AG: Oh yeah. All of it has been painted different colors at different times, yeah.

CNK: Do you remember like maybe the earliest color scheme that you can recall?

AG: It's been gray, it's been red, it's been all kinds of things.

CNK: Okay.

AG: I think I painted it red.

CNK: You painted it red, favorite color?

AG: No, I just thought it would look better. Brighten the place up a little bit.

CNK: To look like red brick, maybe?

AG: Yeah.

CNK: ...

AG: Well it was bright red.

CNK: Okay.

AG: Now the shutters on the back, that's pure and simply fire and theft. They were on there on all the windows, all floors. They were closed, always at nighttime and at daytime, why it depended on where they were, they might be opened for ventilation. But, most of the time they were kept closed. Like when the Club Diamond burned across the alley from us, why that was very handy because you didn't have to worry about fire hitting those window frames and starting fire over here. Had to worry about them near the roof. But, the firemen came over and let them up on the roof and they were fighting the fire from our roof over there.

CNK: That was quite a fire ... ?

AG: Yeah. Also on the back of the building our sprinkler system which turns on/off manually. Well, at that time the fire department said, "Don't turn them on, you'll flood us out of the alley." It was to protect the building but it will flood them out of the alley. They said, "We'll protect your building, don't worry about that." So they fought it from our roof. But, before that, Will said there was a water tank up on top of the roof there. That was when the Haas & Herman fire, it would catch fire once in a while and the firemen just turn around hose off the tank a little bit and go on about fighting the other fire. That was before my time. ... Workers out there.

MNK: You said that was the same glass ... ?

AG: No, that was---The other was just great big clear glass.

CNK: So, each of these boxes had a different part?

AG: Yeah, oh yeah, well, we had, there again you get into things like wedges. And there's a million different sized wedges to hold these things in. And, so ,these were mainly wedges in these bins over here. You have wooden---Some made out of wood, some made out of fiberglass, some ... I mean there's all different kinds and different sizes and they could vary all over the lot. Then some of them are sleeveings and wire and you know, there are so many different facets of this thing.

MNK: ...

AG: It's a great big bottle about yea big. I don't know how many gallons it is.

MNK: ... you were doing what?

AG: I was just out here cleaning up. And trying to see what should be cleaned out and get rid of, gotten rid of out in that storage there. But, they were in like crates and big bottles, oh say a number of gallon. I don't know how many. And they were all sulfuric acid. There were two of them back in there. Because years and years ago we use to replenish sulfuric acid and stuff in batteries. You see the old wet battery. And hadn't used those in years and I said, "Let's find a place and get rid of that stuff." So we got it all hauled out. I don't know how long it been there. There's a frame something there. I don't know what that is. ... Old Committee of Apprenticeship-Gee Electric Company. The Trade Classification Electrician. Oh yeah, this was...

CNK: ...

AG: Huh?

CNK: ...

AG: Department of Labor. ... membership...

MNK: See those things?

AG: Hmm, that's for testing.

MNK: Uh huh.

AG: There you use the voltage, whatever voltage you want, see? You touch those you get some real big fire. You use them for testing motors, for testing against ground and things like that.

CNK: Did you use to do that yourself?

AG:No. Then here's another for different type. Same thing except smaller stuff. These were test benches

Those were ovens for the old soldering iron. Where they, you know, it's just a big copper soldering

you put them in the gas flame in there, take them out and do your soldering, stick them back in, put

another one out.