THE WORLD WAR II ORDNANCE DEPARTMENT'S GOVERNMENT-OWNED CONTRACTOR-OPERATED (GOCO) INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES: INDIANA ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT TRANSCRIPTS OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

interviews conducted by
Steve Gaither

U.S. ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND HISTORIC CONTEXT SERIES
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This report presents the transcripts of oral history interviews conducted as part of an effort to document the construction and World War II-era operations of the Indiana Army Ammunition Plant (INAAP), Charlestown, Indiana. This project was undertaken as part of a larger Legacy Resource Program demonstration project to assist small installations and to aid in the completion of mitigation efforts set up in a 1993 Programmatic Agreement among the Army Materiel Command, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Multiple State Historic Preservation Officers concerning a program to cease maintenance, excess, and dispose of particular properties. As part of the larger project to develop the national historic context of seven sample installations on a state and local level, the major focus of the project at INAAP was to document the impacts that the facility had on the state and local environments.

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INDIANA ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT TRANSCRIPTS OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

interviews conducted by
Steve Gaither

Principal Investigator
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Geo-Marine, Inc.

under
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This report contains transcripts of oral history interviews conducted as part of a project to document the World War II-era construction and operations of the Indiana Army Ammunition Plant (INAAP), Charlestown, Indiana. The interviews were conducted under United States Army Corps of Engineers Contract No. DACA63-93-D-0014, Delivery Order No. 014; the transcriptions of these interviews were completed under United States Army Corps of Engineers Contract No. DACA63-93-D-0014, Delivery Order No. 89. Both these projects were undertaken as part of a larger Legacy Resource Program demonstration project to assist small installations and to aid in the completion of mitigation efforts set up in a 1993 Programmatic Agreement among the Army Materiel Command, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Multiple State Historic Preservation Officers concerning a program to cease maintenance, excess, and dispose of particular properties. As part of the larger project to develop the national historic context of seven sample installations on a state and local level, the major focus of the project at INAAP was to document the impacts that the facility had on the state and local environments during the World War II period.

All the interviews were conducted by Steve Gaither of Geo-Marine, Inc. (GMI), under the supervision of Kimberly L. Kane, GMI Archivist-Historian/Ethnographer. The interviews were conducted during June and July 1994, and the tapes of these interviews were transcribed by personnel at Professional Transcription Service, Dallas, Texas. Duane Peter, Senior Archeologist at Geo-Marine, Inc., served as Principal Investigator.

Five interviews were conducted, one each with Julius Hock, Ed Howard, Charles McVicker, Harry Payne, and Christine Richey. Each provided invaluable information concerning everyday life and manufacturing at the two facilities (Indiana Ordnance Works and Hoosier Ordnance Plant) which were combined to create the present-day INAAP. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Four of the five subjects interview during the course of this project were residents of the Charlestown area prior to the beginning of construction. Three of these interviewees worked at the plant during World War II. Julius Hock, born circa 1911, first moved to the Charlestown area when he was two years old. He worked for DuPont during the construction era and as a safety inspector during operations. He continued to work for the various INAAP operators until he retired.

Ed Howard, who has lived near or in Charlestown all his life, was an excellent source of information. His clear recollection of his various duties during construction, which included serving as the mechanical engineer for the 100 area; of his work in the 200 area during operations; and of life in general within and without the plant was of great benefit to this project.

Since the scope of this project involved looking not only at the plant itself but also at the ways in which the plant affected life in Charlestown, one subject was chosen who did not work at the plant.

Harry Payne was the owner of Payne's Barber Shop at the corner of Market and Main streets in the center of Charlestown and had been a resident of the town for some years when the plans to build the facility were announced.

Charles McVicker moved to the area to take part in the construction if INAAP. McVicker was sent by Miller Construction, his employer at that time, to Charlestown to work as an electrician—Miller Construction had been awarded a subcontract for electrical work at the site.

Christine Richey provided a slightly different perspective of the facility during its early years of operation—during that time, she worked for the Ordnance Department.

The contributions provided by these individuals have been invaluable. The time and effort they took to participate in the project is greatly appreciated.

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JULIUS HOCK
July 5, 1995
New Albany, Indiana
Steve Gaither, Interviewer

You were born here in Charlestown, right?

No, I was born in [inaudible] Indiana. That's up by northern Indiana. On a farm between South Bend and Michigan City, halfway, about three miles from the Michigan border. And we moved down here when I was two years old. At first we lived up in the area where the plant two, where the [*inaudible*] plant was.

Where plant two is?

[*Inaudible*] plant was. Then we moved down to where the plant is now. Then we stayed there [*inaudible*]. I was ten years old when we came to New Albany.

So you and your family had lived there for a few years when they announced the plant was going . . . ?

Eight years.

So you and your family had lived there for a few years when they announced the plant was going to be . . . ?

Eight years [*inaudible*].

Were you in school then?

Yes, I started to school. It was a little 74 building, a one-room school-house up on Charlestown Landing Road. We went one year there and then they let us go back go to Charlestown. And I went to Charlestown till I was in 5th grade. I can remember the teacher, Mrs. Cartwright. And I remember an incident,--I was just a little fellow, I was five years old. They started me early. One time at recess at noon we played hide and go seek, I didn't hear the bell and everybody was going in and everybody [*inaudible*] hollering "one, two, three," for me. Just little things in your life.

Did you get in trouble?

No. [*Inaudible*] five-year-old kid [*inaudible*].

So, how old were you when they announced the plant was going to be built there?

Oh, I was living here in town. I was, let's see that was '40, 1940 when they started. I would have been 30, 29 years old.

So your family . . .

I was either 28 or 29.

So you had graduated from school by that time?

High School here.

High School here at New Albany. Can you described Charlestown when you were growing up, what was it like, what was it like living there?

The old country town where people, after they got through farming, retired and come to live in town. About 800 people there at the time that this plant was started to be built and then there was a little church there. Walk to school and took off our shoes when we got out of school and we walked home barefoot. [*Inaudible*] all them's hand-me-downs [*inaudible*]. Seven, six children, we lived on a farm with my family. [*Inaudible*] come to town.

So your family sold your farm?

[*Inaudible*].

Did you still have the farm when the plant was announced?

No, no we had gone a long time . . . [*inaudible].* But I did hear later that they had surveyed the area during World War I. Didn't do anything about it back in those days.

They had surveyed it in World War I?

I think they looked at it that early. Possibility.

Can you describe anything else about Charlestown? What were the buildings and the roads like here?

[*Inaudible*] country roads [*inaudible*].

Inside the city?

[*Inaudible*] town. I was just a young fellow in school, I spent a lot of time in the library, read all the Hardy books, all the boy's books, you know. Nothing unusual. The only thing that it did break up on Columbus Day. I went to school that day and everybody was walking up and down the street beating on pans and making a lot of noise. I didn't know what happened, because in those days we didn't have radios or televisions or anything.

That was just how people celebrated each year?

[*Inaudible*] Charlestown. A lot of noise around town. I guess they did that in a lot of places.

In those days?

Yeah. It's hard to imagine no radio, no television.

It's hard to imagine now. It's hard for people to imagine what life would be like without those things.

We didn't get a daily newspaper either. My dad would buy a paper on Sunday sometimes.

Charlestown Courier or a New Washington?

Courier Journal.

[Inaudible] paper. [*Inaudible*].

Charlestown did not? That was later I guess the Charlestown paper.

I know I helped a boy carry the paper from Indiana to New Albany, I mean the political papers sometimes.

Do you remember what most people thought about DuPont or the government buying the land when they first heard?

I guess it'd be bewildering. They couldn't imagine what's going to happen when they brought 30,000 people in there, it was something. [*Inaudible*] between Charlestown and Jeffersonville, they still had the toll on the bridge, every time a car stopped at the toll, it backed up the whole thing all the way back to Charlestown and back.

Where was the toll bridge?

It was Jeffersonville.

At Jeffersonville?

Yeah.

I hadn't seen that.

The old bridge, the old bridge up in Charlestown. I think it was built in '29. (Pause in tape.) Boy that was something. They had 3 trains in the afternoon to pick up the people and one train went to Louisville and one to [*inaudible*] and one to New Albany. In about five minutes, that train was loaded. Oh my. People [*inaudible*] you just can't believe.
How many cars were on the train?

Cars?

Yes sir. What kind of train was it? Was it a train with an engine and passenger cars?

Passenger cars.

How many passenger cars?

Well, Louisville had several, maybe five or six cars.

Maybe five or six on that one?

Maybe more than that. They were big trains and then [*inaudible*]. They have an overpass over the roads [*inaudible*] to get to the trains.

The walk-over that people . . .

Just that one lane road. [*Inaudible*] parking lot.

Do you think people were happy or sad when they first heard that the government was buying land, or were they like you said, just bewildered? They didn't know what to think?

I think they [*inaudible*] bewildered. Probably couldn't understand what was going to happen. It was a big thing and I can't answer what the people [*inaudible*], but yet it was a bust for them too. They didn't have

any room for that many people up there. If they found a place to sleep, there would be three people sleeping in the same bed, different shifts.

I have heard that. That's amazing.

Oh yes, it is. They worked all around the clock. (pause)

Do you think people's feelings about the plant changed during the time it was here and in operation during World War II? I mean they were bewildered at first, but . . .

I don't think they understood what was happening, how big it was going to be.

Right, but after they started building it and they knew people were coming in and there were 30,000 people here, what were their feelings then?

I don't really understand. See they bring people in here by train loads from Tennessee and far east as New York, they came in for work at that plant. Just brought them in by the train loads. Just like a beehive. You could watch the building go up. I was in security when I first started up there and then I transferred to safety and I finished up in safety. So [*inaudible*] have three [*inaudible*] to go any place on the plant.

Because you were in safety?

Yeah. For the last ten years I was superintendent of safety office. [*Inaudible*] 20,000 people up there. [*Inaudible*] 55 people working for me around the clock.

What were your feelings when you heard the plant was coming? Were you bewildered too, or . . .

I don't know [*inaudible*]. I just thought it was a chance to make some money. My family has a roofing company and I was working with them. I went up there in January with my first [*inaudible*] and worked roofing [*inaudible*] can't do much in the winter time. And so it was a challenge for me to get to make some more money and be a full time job. And help me with my family, I had a big family. I had seven children, I had six at that time.

You had seven children?

[*Inaudible*] I have seven children.

You may not know this, this would just be your feeling. Did land prices in the area rise because the plant came in? [inaudible].

I don't think so at that time. I don't believe they did. People weren't buying land up [*inaudible*]. I don't know even what kind of price they had to pay for the land [*inaudible*] the [*inaudible*] area. People didn't gouge you like they do now. [*Inaudible*] speculate I guess. I [*inaudible*] probably hear something coming now. Prices go way up, don't they?

(Pause) Did you actually work during construction or . . .

Yes, guard force and safety [*inaudible*] on construction.
[*Inaudible*].

You were on the guard force?

I was on the guard force when I first went to work. Then safety.

Did you say that it was safety maintenance? Or safety . . .

I was safety for the whole plant, I was, I had several different titles up there according to who I worked for. [*Inaudible*] DuPont was safety inspector, then the [*inaudible*] I was a safety officer, then [*inaudible*]. I was safety engineer and then finally with ICI I was safety superintendent. (Pause in tape.)

So on your first job, we'll talk about that first on the guard force. What did you do? Can you describe the job for me?

Well we had different things, we had at that time they had towers around the plant [*inaudible*] line and go from tower to tower. They had towers, guard towers. And [*inaudible*] somebody was always walking between towers down to the river, they have towers down there too. And that was a bit away from those towers. [*Inaudible*] realized it wasn't [*inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*]. I was on the area across from the [*inaudible*] plant.

They had German and Italian prisoners?

Yeah. [*Inaudible*].

What was it?

Do you remember Hosspeth (SP?) Guy Hosspeth. He was a preacher [*inaudible*] at one time. He was in charge of the [*inaudible*] prisoners. [*Inaudible*] all they would let them do is clean up our areas [*inaudible*] nothing strenuous. [*Inaudible*]. (Pause in tape.)

So they didn't work on construction in plant two, just cleaning up?

No. Only the *[inaudible]* clean up the yards or pick up dirt, or trash and do anything manually. (Pause in tape.)

So for your work on the guard force, you walked between the towers, that was your main job?

No. [*Inaudible*] we had several, we had 300 guards in one night.

Three hundred? During construction or later?

Both. [*Inaudible*] talk to the men later during construction time [*inaudible*] besides they'd have 400 watchmen. And *[inaudible]* have the jobs the guards did. [*Inaudible*] have a lot of *[inaudible].* Had somebody patrolling the areas all the time while the construction was going on.

Twenty-four hours a day?

Yes. I was out there in the night-time, like to freeze to death some times.

Did you work the same shift all the time or did you . . .

Oh, [*inaudible*] but first they had rotating shifts and later I was just on the straight day shift.

Straight day shift. When you changed shifts, was that a swing shift, did you work two weeks on one shift and then the next two weeks on another shift?

No. Rotating shifts only. There was a lot of jobs that rotated shifts besides the guards.

How often did you rotate shifts?

I think it was what every eight or ten days or something like that. *[Inaudible]* went to the next shift. About eight or ten days.

Do you know why they did that?

Well, they didn't want you to get familiar and let the people get familiar. That way it was always changing . . .

They didn't want you to get familiar?

Yeah, I guess that was the reason [*inaudible*] everybody got pretty well treated equal [*inaudible*]. But I ended up on the post on the last *[inaudible]* on the guard *[inaudible]* which was what they called important *[inaudible]* I was on that straight day shift.

On the straight day shift. Was that still during construction? Or was that into the war?

Into the war. Well if it went so easy, you'd never know when, it was still construction on the manufacturing.

Right, they started manufacturing before it was finished?

Oh yes, they *[inaudible]* building the plant in the fall *[inaudible]* powder.

It went up quick, didn't it?

It went up and they did things quick. They had some of the equipment brought in from Tennessee where they [*inaudible*] during World War I. So a lot of the equipment machinery were World War machinery, presses, things like that. (Pause in tape.). I don't think we got too much new equipment most of it had been around before.

Most of it was used equipment?

Had been in operation some place else. May be another operator *[inaudible]* (Pause in tape.) (cough)

So could you tell me what a typical day was like when you were on the guard force?

Well, it's hard to remember. That's *[inaudible]*. [*Inaudible*] assignment to patrol certain areas during construction. A lot of time you have to patrol certain buildings because of the machinery in there make sure no body tampered with it.

(Pause in tape.)

Put on hip boots and start out in the area *[inaudible]* step in a mud hole.

You wore hip boots, what other clothes?

Well there was times you would put the boots on. We had uniforms.

Were the uniforms just standard uniform or did they have certain kinds of safety . . .

They were *[inaudible]* uniforms. Outstanding, it was a nice uniform. Brown. Well, looked good *[inaudible]*. That's the reason I got into safety. [*Inaudible*] each day it would line up someone had to make a speech to the guards *[inaudible]* safety. I guess I did such a good job for the short time I was in safety. Oh my. All the boys I worked with in safety are gone. The last one died last week *[inaudible]*.

Is that the funeral you were telling me about?

The last one to die was *[inaudible]* a guy that *[inaudible]* he worked with me in safety he was the last one from World War II still living. I'm only 83 myself.

When did you change from the guard force to plant safety?

Well, let's see *[inaudible]* in '42 I went up into safety, I stayed in safety until the end of the war.

So it would be August of '45?

Ah-huh.

How did you job in safety differ from your job in the guard force? Or did it?

[Inaudible] you had the responsibility, I did a lot of orientation talks for new employees, that was one of my jobs. [*Inaudible*] safety was different from the guards, responsibilities was different.

How often did you give orientation talks? Was it . . .

Every day. They were bringing people in there every day, all the way from ten to hundreds of times.

Was turn over high out there?

No, I don't think so. People needed their jobs them days *[inaudible]* during the early '40s, the depression wasn't over yet and it was when they first started over there, they would start operations, all the jobs were men, then they first thing you know men were gone to service they had been called in for the war and then the women were given the men's jobs. Of course I was at the time *[inaudible]* deferment, then I was 28 or 29 years old by then.

What kind of jobs did the women do, were there certain jobs for women, or did they do all the jobs?

They *[inaudible]* presses and they did everything. [*Inaudible*] they had to do everything. Push the wagons and push the powder from place to place and then the presses, they did everything. Of course they could cut the powder better because they had *[inaudible]* put the strings of powder into a *[inaudible]* and their fingers were more *[inaudible]* to doing that. But men did it first, but you'd be surprised how that *[inaudible]* woman up there. Women were driving the trucks, the buses, they were doing everything. The men were gone, went to service. (Pause in tape.)

Do you know if the women were paid the same? Say if they did the same job, or even other jobs?

No, they were paid the same.

Paid the same as men.

Every job had a price on it.

So it was . . .

It wasn't high. Laborers was sixty cents, the next step up was 75 and mechanics was about $1.50 for *[inaudible]*. That was big money back then days. I was a guard I got seventy-five. That's what they were paying the guards. But in safety a dollar, dollar ten or something like that. (Pause in tape.) Then they started building the rocket plant *[inaudible]* sent out to Kansas learn how to do that. He stayed out there a couple of months.

You were one of the ones that went to Kansas?

I went to Kansas. Learn how to make rocket powder. Then come back here and work on a operating plant *[inaudible]* the war was over before it got in operation (Pause in tape.) Yeah, actually *[inaudible]* several rockets were built. That was part of my job to learn everything that the men would have to do so I would know what safety angles are.

Right so you had to know all the different procedures. (Pause in tape.) So you had training for everything that's done up there?

Yes. To a certain extent, yes.

Basic training, not the details?

No. Actually I had to train other people *[inaudible]* being in safety was short on people for training, substitute sometimes (Pause in tape.)

During construction, can you describe the construction area?

Yes, it was a beehive, [*inaudible*] 40,000 men were on construction. Every place you look you see these cranes putting up steel. At the time that plant was erected, it had more steel than any other *[inaudible]* plant or *[inaudible]* in the country. *[Inaudible]* mile and miles of piping, steam pipes *[inaudible]* operations. I can *[inaudible]* steam all the way up to plant two *[inaudible]* 14 miles *[inaudible]* up the hill like I said didn't really *[inaudible]*.

Was the work efficient in order? Or was it too many people and everybody running over each other?

No, everybody had assignments. I don't think there was any over rush. When there was construction, there was so many buildings been built at the same time, there was plenty room.

Plenty of room for people to work?

Yeah. About over several thousand acres. (Pause in tape.) DuPont was very efficient. They knew how to do things. They brought their engineers in there. [*Inaudible*]

Could you tell a difference between how DuPont ran things and how Good Year ran things?

No, I wasn't familiar with them, I never worked for Good Year.

You were all up on the north side, the DuPont?

DuPont. I had an offer to work for Good Year, but it didn't pay the money that DuPont did. Same jobs. (Pause in tape.)

Was that true for a lot of different jobs such as mill rights and carpenters and electricians? Was there a difference between Good Year and DuPont's pay?

I don't know what Good Year paid.

It was just for your job?

Uh-uh. (Pause in tape.) Just kind of *[inaudible]* for *[inaudible]* like that. [*Inaudible*].

Well things were less expensive then. Where did most of the workers live?

All over North *[inaudible]* Lousiville, Jeffersonville, Charlestown was just like I said, three people to a bed in different shifts. Some of them lived in trailers, some of them lived in *[inaudible]* Charlestown *[inaudible]*.

Did that cause problems for Charlestown or for New Albany?

No *[inaudible]*.

No problems?

Not that I remember. Charlestown had problems because there was too many people, the streets was full of people day and night. That was just small town at that time. Now it's a town of about 4,000 people. It got up to 8 or 9,000 one time.

So the streets were full of people day and night there. (Pause in tape.) What kinds of people worked there?

Gosh, I don't know we had everything. Like I said they'd bring them in by the train loads from Tennessee and New York and put em to work, I don't even know where they all lived at, but that's what they did.

How did people get along during that time, say the people who'd lived here for a long time with newcomers?

I don't remember any trouble. I think people accepted what was happening.

Were there other people besides Whites, non-Whites, Mexican-Americans or African-Americans coming in as well?

No. We had Blacks, but no *[inaudible]* but I don't remember any Mexicans or any foreigners.

The Blacks were the Blacks that had already been living here?

Yeah. It was a mixture of Blacks, not too many. (Pause in tape.)

Were Blacks hired out on the construction site, or do you know?

Yes, they did construction too. They needed everybody could handle a hammer. Or *[inaudible]. [Inaudible]* busy time in Louisville, trucks a going and coming. Had construction *[inaudible]* people helped get the trucks moving steadily.

What did people do on the evenings and week-ends?

(Pause in tape.) I don't know what, I came home to my family. I don't know what the other people did really.

You had your family then?

[Inaudible] to town not here but another house down the road.

But still in New Albany?

Yes.

What did you and your family do for entertainment?

Gosh, back in them days *[inaudible].*

Not that much entertainment?

[Inaudible].

Not that much.

[Inaudible] bought our first got first television in '52, of course television didn't come out much before that.

Did you go to the theater or movies or something?

We went to movies once in a while, all our kids was little, we had our fun. I'd take, I had a truck, family truck and I'd take them on picnics and . . . kept busy going a lot *[inaudible]*

Were a lot of people too busy to do much for entertainment? Or was there plenty of time?

Different time. I don't *[inaudible]* worried about such. May be go to a show, about the only thing they had them days. Didn't have television yet. Didn't have television until later after the war. (Pause.) (cough) (cough)

Do you want to rest for a few minutes?

[Inaudible]

(Pause in tape.) I don't know how much this was possibly talked about, but, there was some profiteering during World War I, companies making a lot of money, getting rich from the government. Did anybody talk about that when the plant came here? Whether DuPont was making too much money?

I don't remember *[inaudible].* Of course places *[inaudible]* eating places, places to rent to sleep, you know, like, for a while.

During this time did they charge more money than they had before, say eating places?

I don't know, wouldn't know. I don't think they did. [*Inaudible*]. I think people were more human then.

Yeah, I think you were probably right. It solved it.

. . . (Cough) (Pause in tape.) *[inaudible]* a lot of changes in people in the last years. (Pause in tape.)

Was your job union or non-union?

Non-union. I was never a union man in my life.

Never was. Was there a lot of union employees out there?

I didn't remember union during the war, afterwards there was, it got pretty rough out there. Had a couple of strikes up there. I guess was in the '60s, I guess (Pause in tape.). No it was *[inaudible]* '70s I guess the last strike. Couple years before I retired, I didn't try to get in. My boss got kind of mad at me because I didn't. I tried to get [*inaudible*] when they hit my windshields. Put nails all over the roads so it could flatten your tires. I finally got in. It was a mean strike.

That was the one in the '70s?

Yea, about '72 I guess.

About 72. (Pause in tape.)

You just can't imagine how mean people can be when you work with them every day and you see them everyday *[inaudible]* boy when they go on strike they get mean as the devil.

Who was striking, do you remember?

They were striking against the company for I don't remember just what they wanted, if it was more money or what it was. It was settled. They got what they wanted I guess. (Pause in tape.)

What did you think about your work, you said that before your family had a roofing business, but now you were doing something quite a bit different, what did you think about it?

Well, it was an improvement for me. I wanted to better myself, I could be an old man and still not have anything. I had more ambitious, I was pretty well *[inaudible]* so it give me a chance to better myself really.

Was this the first time you had worked for a big company?

Yes. The first time I worked for DuPont.

Did you like that? Did you like working for a big company or not?

Oh yes. It was so much better. I had some benefits you had your insurance, but you didn't have couldn't afford to carry yourself. I don't know just the thought of *[inaudible].* (Pause in tape.)

Was the work stressful?

No. No. I was able to do it.

Especially during the war, did they try to get you to work faster in any way? That might not have been your job, or not.

No, I had production like that.

Do you know if for the production people, did they try and get them to work faster or not?

Yes, they wanted to put out so much a day and I think they wanted to put out a million pounds of powder a day and they finally did. Back in them days that was a lot of powder.
[Inaudible] that place would hum.

Did it seem that the work was stressful or not to you for the other workers? For the production lines workers?

I think they would get a little stressful because they were being pushed all the time. You had to get that powder out. (Pause in tape.) I don't know where it all went, it sure *[inaudible].*

What do you think about the plants effort in World War II? Did it contribute to the win?

No, it went down in war of '45, I was gone for several years and I went back [*inaudible*] safety and worked *[inaudible]* then DuPont came back and I left the government and went back to DuPont *[inaudible]* if I stayed with the government probably would have to *[inaudible]* would had to moved and I don't think that would have worked out, my wife didn't want to leave here, her mother

(End of Side 1, Beginning of Side 2)

Did the plant play an important role in the allied powers winning the war?

I believe they did because we put a lot of powder out, that's what they needed. Of course there was three other plants doing the same thing, there was in one Oklahoma, one up in Minnesota or was it Wisconsin? Minnesota, there was one of them in Wisconsin too, Badger and there was one up in St. [*Inaudible*] in Oklahoma because I worked with some of the fellows from Oklahoma later. We weren't the only ones putting out powder then, we put out our share.

You put out your share. When we were talking about women working there, did they provide day care facilities for women, for mothers who working at the plant?

Do what now?

Did DuPont provide day care facilities?

No. Not in them days. That wasn't thought about in them days.

So, were there mothers who worked out at the plant?

Oh yes.

What did they do with their children?

I guess they got their mothers. A lot of women helped *[inaudible]* homes and cars and paid their children's tuition through school. It's a blessing for women. (Pause in tape.) Like I said they did every job. (Pause in tape.)

Was the plant segregated in any way?

No. No.

Not at all, this would be for women or men or for Blacks and Whites in any way?

No. Just women and men. [*Inaudible*] was open that's all.

Women's and men's toilets and that's the only segregation.

No there wasn't any segregation.

You said that women did all the jobs up there. Were there any jobs that may be only retired people did? Or that may be . . .

Women worked in maintenance. Manufacturing areas. They drove trucks and buses and things like that out in maintenance. (Pause in tape.)

Were there promotional activities such as things to boost people's moral about what they were doing at the plant, about . . .

No, I think it was pretty well cut and dry, you have a certain wage for each shop, like on my job I could get a raise but they would have to depend on everybody getting one. They didn't come very often. (Pause in tape.)

The plant won some Army/Navy "E" Awards.

Yes about 300 "E" Awards, big celebration *[inaudible].*

Big celebration?

Yeah.

A big celebration each time or for the first award?

For the first time.

For the first time.

[Inaudible] put the "E" flag on the pole up there at Charlestown. (Pause in tape.)

Do you know what the "E" stood for?

Excellence.

Did your ideas about working for the plant or at the plant change any time that you worked there? Over the years when you worked for Olin and ICI and all them?

No, I enjoyed my work *[inaudible]* doing things that's constructive in helping other people, I trained a lot of men that ended up getting good jobs at other places after they left there. One of my fellows toward the last *[inaudible]* ground foremans in charge of a safety and security over there, couple of them went with the

government, the safety officers but. . . . (Pause in tape.) *[Inaudible]* I was too old to *[inaudible]* places I know that. (Pause in tape.)

Was the pay inside the plant about the same as the pay for jobs outside of the plant?

It might have been just a little bit better. To get the people. [*Inaudible*] they didn't have no trouble getting people, not when they wanted to work powder works *[inaudible]* plant or whatever name they had for it.

Did many people save their money, or do you know, or did they spend it as soon as they got it?

No, they bought what they needed to help pay for the homes, children in school, bought cars, just I think they spent it wisely most of them did. It was a boost for women to contribute to the family.

Was there any gambling, do you remember? Or much gambling, I don't know.

Gambling? I don't think so, I don't remember. (Pause in tape.) They couldn't get in anyway with cards or dice you had to empty your pockets when you went in.

Well I was thinking about not at work but out in Charlestown or Louisville, or in this area.

No. *[Inaudible]* in the plant you got to empty your pockets.

Did you ever get caught for having matches?

[Inaudible] I didn't smoke or anything.

Did many people get caught?

A lot of people got caught. Yeah. [*Inaudible*] too.

Sometimes it was done maliciously too?

Yes, I think people planted those matches on them.

Oh, you mean some body would put some matches in somebody's else's pocket?

Yeah.

Why would they do that? Just mischief?

I don't know if it was mischief or else they would have to get rid of them so they . . .

Oh, so they gave them to somebody else. Or hid them on somebody else.

Oh my. (Pause in tape.)

Was it the same, you had said that people got along well? Did it change at any time during construction or World War II, did people always get along or not?

Well, I don't know, I think after they got the unions in there, there was little problems then, but during World War II they didn't have unions and I don't remember too much during the Korean time either, it was

during the last part, the last time. The unions got so nasty. Oh, they was nasty. You just can't imagine what those women or men can do that's on union. (Pause in tape.)

Did either DuPont or Charlestown or New Albany or the areas did they plan any kind of recreational activities, such as baseball leagues or tournaments or something for . . .

They had a team the plant played in a league from around here.

Was that baseball?

Baseball. You should have, you should have seen that team. It had several professional players on it.

Oh really?

Oh yes. Tommy *[inaudible]* Madison was a pitcher. They played with the Majors and . . .

Tommy, what was his last name?

Cavanaugh. Ervin Jefferies from Louisville? And there was several professional players that come up there *[inaudible]* wasted a baseball team. Let me think of them. [*Inaudible*] fellow here from New Albany, he's dead now, I can't remember his name, Jumbo Hartley was one of the *[inaudible]* that played baseball. Hartley, Jefferies, Cavanaugh, they was professionals.

I hadn't heard that before. So did the DuPont team win most of it's games?

They did all right. I can't remember whether they always won or not. But they had several cups *[inaudible]* up there when the team did win, trophies.

[Inaudible]. (Pause in tape.)

Who did they play?

[Inaudible]. Different teams. Like some days they was had all kinds of teams *[inaudible]* even in football we had teams and *[inaudible]* basketball, we don't have that many any more. (Pause in tape.) Them was good days when we had those teams that would help the people around the cities. (Pause in tape.)

How did it help the people? In what way?

Well, it was entertainment, morale booster.

(Pause in tape.)

Had something to *root* for. You don't have anybody now. (Pause in tape.)

During the war, was there higher incidents of illness in the area because of so many people?

How's that?

During the war or construction era in the war? Was there more illness around in this area because there were so many people?

No, I don't remember.

Here in New Albany, was the water supply and sewer system . . .

[*Inaudible*].

It was adequate?

Yeah, *[inaudible]* got seven wells. Wells you know down *[inaudible]*. And they took a lot of water up there *[inaudible]* plant. Seven deep wells. They didn't operate them all at one time.

They didn't operate all at once?

No, maybe two or three at a time.

I hadn't heard that.

[Inaudible] took a lot of water.

Do you think that Charlestown or New Albany or this area changed in any way during the construction and operation World War II era in the terms of morals and values in any way?

I don't think so. [*Inaudible*] that was a different time. Fifty years make a big difference.

Oh, yes sir.

Makes a difference. Didn't have television yet and that has been a creator of a lot of problems.

Probably so. (Pause in tape.) Did affluence go up or down in the area?

What?

Affluence. How much money people had?

I don't think it made that much difference. It didn't do *[inaudible]* things like that because of the jobs. Because they knew it was temporary. Come and go.

This may not be something that you know, many people who worked at the plant may have worked on farm jobs before, and now they were working a different kind of job where before they had just worked on a farm, now they were working doing one thing on an assembly line.

A lot of farmers working there and continuing their farming too.

Oh they did both?

Oh yes. But like I said got to be mostly women and help the home, the households, the women had the babies and helped pay for the houses and bought cars and it was a boom.

Do you know if the farmers that worked there, did they like this kind of work better or their farm work better?

It was money. They kept up their farms.

To them, just like for you, it was an opportunity to better themselves, to earn some money?

Yeah. Most of them was coming from a ways from the area away from that area *[inaudible].*

Do you know if anyone, if you heard of anyone, or maybe heard of problems like this that people maybe didn't like the plant because it made munitions? This would again be during World War II era.

I never heard nothing.

Never heard anything on this?

[Inaudible].

(Pause in tape.) Back to the women who worked there, another question I forgot to ask you out there, do you think that the women that worked there, if they didn't have this job would they have had a job somewhere else?

No.

No they wouldn't have.

Some of them did, now some of them *[inaudible]* shirt factory *[inaudible]* work out there because the could make more money and that was a mistake because they wouldn't take them back. Coat factory finally shut down though. (Pause in tape.)

Did many people who moved here, did they stay on after the end of the war?

Yeah.

Many did?

I think they got a lot of people staying.

Did they continue working at the plant or what did they do?

They found other jobs I guess because a lot of people from Tennessee you know *[inaudible]* so forth were still there, made their homes here. (Pause in tape.) Like I said, Charlestown grew from 800 to over 4,000 *[inaudible]* and then the people stayed, in most cases.

Were there any at any time labor shortages at the plant? Or was there always enough people?

Well there must have been because when doing construction they brought these cheap people in by the train loads and after operations I don't think they had any troubles. (Pause in tape.) There wasn't much work around the country in them days.

Yes, end of the depression. It was any work was good work.

It took the war to end the depression. Them was lean days.

Were there ever any controversies about who was hired out at the plant? Such as if minorities worked there, did some people say they shouldn't, or some people say the women shouldn't work out there?

I don't think they had any trouble that way. Everybody was glad to get those jobs.

How did the community change after the war ended?

Well, like I said Charlestown didn't change. It became permanent home for more people, but I don't *[inaudible]* or *[inaudible]* went from 800 to one time 8,000 *[inaudible]* now they got a little over 4,000 I think. They built a whole community of houses there. I think a lot of them got knocked down during a tornado one time.

Oh, was that '47 maybe? No, seems it like it was later than that.

Yeah, I was working out there in the afternoon, came home and tornado had been through there *[inaudible]* plant. Seen the cloud go by from my office up there. (Pause in tape.) They had a lot of storms up there which was conducive limestone underground there, that the conductor *[inaudible]* got your parium in the ground.

In the ground, right.

[Inaudible] a place where they could jump each other. And DuPont didn't believe in putting lightning protection on the buildings because they didn't have any problems of them in New Jersey, but after they lost several buildings here, then I think the government must have convinced them they better put lightning protection.

Such as what buildings?

In the powder buildings.

The powder, like the igloos there?

They wasn't igloos, they were ship houses *[inaudible]* and there was just one plain old ship house it was during day time and the lightning struck it. Several times, at night time there about lightening would strike those buildings, they finally put up the electric lightening protection.

Do you know what year that was that they put up the protection?

Gosh, (Pause in tape.) I can't remember when it was in the '50s I guess it was.

In the '50s. (Pause in tape.)

Yeah, probably in the '50s. Yeah. [*Inaudible*] had several buildings struck. We had two. We lost an igloo.

I have seen a picture of that one.

Did you?

Yes, the big crater in the ground.

Yeah. Well *[inaudible]* lightening struck the truck that was parked there and bounced into the igloo and . . .

And ignited the powder that way?

It didn't ignite the powder, it doesn't do the whole thing, just when the *[inaudible].* The only thing I could find of the man *[inaudible]* range you know little things like that.

There were two people killed in that, was it?

Yeah. Had a lot of people over the years killed *[inaudible]* lightning. First one I remember was Roy Belly did what he was suppose to done, leave his truck and go to the shelter and lightning struck the shelter and killed him. He was a fellow *[inaudible]* his brother worked for my roofing company. (Pause in tape.) I guess DuPont didn't have any problems with lightning *[inaudible]* but we sure do here.

Since you're somewhat of an expert, how do you feel that the safety record was with the plant?

Overall, we won several awards for national awards. We set records on number of hours worked without lost time injuries. [*Inaudible*] Sometimes way up in the millions by hours and of course [*inaudible*] you accumulate a lot of hours at a time of day.

Right, every day you accumulate quite a few.

Yeah. We did *[inaudible]* several citations for safety.

Well I guess that's about all the questions I have.

Yeah.

Can you think of anything that I missed?

No, we pretty well covered the water front. *[Inaudible]* blessing that I'm living in a nice home and have a good pension, good social security.

So you're really happy that you worked up there?

Oh I'd probably be on the streets some place. Yes, I bought this house in '55. That's a long time ago, isn't it? Forty-nine years ago.

It looks like it's in good shape.

It's probably good shape. I can't do the things . . . I used to paint it myself, do all the things, gets so you don't.

Yeah.

I'm going to put central air in before the year's over. That doesn't do the job. (cough) (Pause in tape.) What are you going to do with this? (Pause in tape.)

I'm going to write a report, just a second and I'll tell you. (cough) (Pause in tape.)

(End of Interview)

E.J. HOWARD
July 5, 1994
Jeffersonville, Indiana
Steve Gaither, Interviewer

Were you living here in Jeffersonville when you first heard the plant was going to come in?

I've never lived any place else other than Jeffersonville, other than when I worked with the DuPont Company and traveled around the country.

If you don't mind my asking, how old were you then?

I was born in 1910 and that was carrying on in 1940.

Can you describe the area at that time, Jeffersonville, and if you can, up in Charlestown?

Jeffersonville, Charlestown, New Washington, those areas in this radius, even going into Louisville and the New Albany area, we had a nice, quiet ordinary existence. At that time I was a vice president of the [*inaudible*] ship yards, and we were functioning as a yard. We could hire a top-notch machinist for 35 cents an hour. And then when DuPont came in, they raised their mechanics to $1.37 ½ cents an hour, which upset the total market in this area.

Were those comparable jobs?

Oh, yes, quite comparable. In fact, many cases, the machinists were doing jobs that were even superior to what would be required at that time in the machine shops in the plant. Because they started out with several contractors, plumbing contractors and piping contractors and mechanical contractors, and some of them were direct DuPont employees, while others were done by specialty fields. And that whole thing started up there. They just sent people in, and they started to purchase ground, or take options on ground, and when they solidified that land, that group, that they wanted, at one time, that was 30,000 acres. And then they started hiring laborers and they started building roads, and they started laying railroad tracks, and the first venture had to be roads, because until you had your roads in--and they had to be in keeping with the type of buildings that were going to go in. Then the railroads, the rails and the ties were put down, and there was a yard that would be an assembly yard for the operating plant. And all that was laid out and put in basically first. And that allowed the surveying crews to come in and start laying out foundations and doing those things. And then you brought in a lot of steel workers to put the reinforcing in. Charlestown became just--well, it'd be like a western gold mining town, because it went from a few hundred people starting to over 30,000 people at the height of that operation. It was one of the few times that I ever saw the sidewall of a three-story building that you could stand back and actually watch it grow, because they were actually--well, one that I remember most distinctly, because it was one of the higher buildings, was the nitrating buildings in the 100 area. And that was the first building that nitro-cellulose or nitro-cotton would go into. When we started the operation of gun powder, which became nitration, you either did with wood pulp. We started out with gun cotton or cotton linters, and then of course our operation was so huge that you couldn't twitch enough cotton seeds to get enough linters, so we had to go to a wood pulp. And those buildings were three stories tall and your drive motors were on the third floor and your nitrators were on the second floor, and your piping and draw-offs and so forth were on the first floor. And the length of those buildings, they had brick layers shoulder-to-shoulder, and they had hot carriers bringing that up and they had two fine, outstanding brick layers running corners, and they'd draw their line across, and those guys would just start in and just do bricks just like that, and you could literally watch that line go up.

You could literally watch the wall go up.

Building raise. And if I were to not go into an area for a week's time, throughout the plant, because you had your nitro-cellulose and then you had your mixing and macerating and extrusion and cutting, and then you went into your blending operations. And on top of that, of course you had your acid operation and reclamation operation, and if you didn't go into one of those area for say a week's time, you were totally lost, because the construction was going so rapidly that you would lose your perspective and you just didn't know where you were. You had to almost look at your drawings and your maps and your layouts to actually see what you were supposed to see.

With so much going on so fast, was it well orchestrated? Were the people running over each other?

People, to a degree, were running over each other, but you can understand everything was time and material. And the government didn't ask you if you could. The government said you'll do this. We'll pay you this extra money. So there was money wasted. There's no doubt about it. But you could not force draft an operation of that magnitude without having some loss of time. It was really an excellently orchestrated and operated group. Because you had so many crafts. You had a Union condition there, but the DuPont Company, in coming in here with their expertise, did probably the most outstanding job of construction that was ever done in the United States. Because exactly nine months after that plant was started as a corn field, I made powder in the 200 area. We actually cut powder, because the Superintendent of Operations came to me and said, "Ed, let's start up the 200 area and cut powder tonight. If we can do that, we will have done it in nine months." Of course, it was not powder that was manufactured. It was nitrate in the plant. It was some powder nitro-cellulose that was shipped into us, but we did go in and plasticize it and run it through the blocking presses and then the extruding presses and then started at the cutting house, and actually produced smokeless powder in nine months after that thing was a muddy corn field. But you would have a situation like this: Where you would see men walking on the perimeter road that went around that, and that entire road had lighting fixtures on it, the entire road had a chain link fence that had barbed wire on top it, went around the entire gate, and there was a patrol road that followed that all the way around, and there was almost a continuous, within just minutes, a guard in a truck going around, and every exterior gate was manned 24 hours a day, as a matter of maintaining security. You would see, periodically, a man that carried a 2 X 4 on his shoulder on that road. And then you'd see another man, you may see three or four or five or ten or 20 or 50 or 100. But what would happen--and people that didn't know didn't understand--one of the superintendents would say I want 100 men in 30 minutes to unload or to do something over here. So what they had, they had what they called taxi trucks, and they were long wheel-based trucks that had a bench through the middle that was two-sided, and then it had a step on it, like a running board, so you could step up on the first step, step onto the deck and sit down on these benches that were back-to-back, and sit sideways.

What was that used for? It was just to carry people from one area to another?

It was just to carry--you'd go into the clock alleys and you would pick up your truck that was going to your area. Each one of them was marked whether it was going to the 100 area, nitro-cellulose or the power houses or to the well field or to the 200 area or to the 100 area or to the acid area, and you'd get on a series of shuttle buses that didn't do anything but shuttle back and forth and take the people. So you'd come in the morning, you'd get on your shuttle bus, and they would take you wherever you're going. The plant was criss-crossed with deep ditches. Speaking of deep ditches, the plant was almost ready to start and there was a ditch going into the acid area, which was still far from completion, that was at least eight to ten feet wide and was probably eight to ten feet deep. And the ordinary person would have not, under any consideration, attempted to jump from this side to that side, because they had bridges across it or planks across it that you could go across. Well, one day in unloading a high pressure ammonia, something happened to one of the fittings, and they were dumping high pressurized ammonia into the area; so there was just a solid cloud of ammonia, which really would have done you in had you gotten into that cloud. And they were in the throws

of trying to stop it, but it was right at quitting time. And here were thousands of people coming out of that plant, and people were just going over that open ditch like gazelles. Hundreds and hundreds. There was this cloud of stuff right behind them and people hollering, "Ammonia gas!" (*Chuckles*). All these people, they just flew over that. There was no effort at all. So when the adrenaline hits people just right, they just do unbelievable things. Nobody hurt, nobody fell in the ditch, everybody cleared it, and nobody was really badly without because of it. They had masks there and the guys that knew what they were doing were there to do just that. Took care of the failure. They went back and shut off a valve at the tank car and everything got under control. But there's your side story, because (*chuckles*) those fellows just flew over those ditches like there was nothing there at all. And anybody had not made it and fallen down into that eight or ten feet deep ditch would have been hurt.

But those shuttle buses would take people all over the plant. And with the acreage that you had, there was no other way to do it. But those--I started to tell you--with 2 X 4s on their back . . . so this superintendent wanted 50 laborers, one of those shuttle buses would just start around with the guys with the 2 X 4s on their shoulder, and say get on there, we need you. And they'd just throw the 2 X 4 off to the side and get on the bus, and when the shuttle bus got to the other end, they'd unload them, and that was the way to have those people huddled someplace they would have been disgruntled. But if you gave them a 2 X 4 on their shoulders and sent them . . . they were doing something, they didn't have time to worry about why they weren't doing something, but they were there when they needed them.

So they weren't doing something real important by carrying the 2 X 4s? It was just giving them something to do?

They were doing absolutely nothing. It was a way to keep human beings at your beck and call, without them sitting around and grumbling and mumbling among themselves in an enclosure. It was smart. It was a nice way to handle human beings. I don't know whether anybody ever reiterated it that way, but it was true and that's why it was done. And you couldn't of done it any other way. See, when you're dealing with thousands of acres of construction, they don't want those people tomorrow, they need them . . . if something happens or they get to a certain point, they need to move something, so they might want 100 laborers within 15 minutes. They could get them.

Before you came to work for DuPont, did you have certain skills that were useful at the plant?

I had a lot of skills. I worked at the shipyard. I drew my first pay envelope--they didn't pay in checks when I was a little kid. You paid in money or you didn't pay--and I drew my first paycheck when I was six years old. I went out under the boats, and they were all wooden construction, and my dad would pay me so much a pound for all the spikes and nails and that sort of thing that I picked up. And I did fine until my father found out that these ship carpenters were dumping the stuff out and say, "Eddie, if you'd go over there to the corner, I just saw a big pile of those things." But I did. I drew my first payroll check, or first payroll money--because you were either paid in silver or in paper money, preferably a silver dollar. There were some people who would not accept anything but silver dollars. You'd give them a paper dollar and they didn't want it. It wasn't worth anything as far as they were concerned. A great many people worked--my great-grandfather would tell me about cost. They worked for five cents an hour and they worked ten hours a day and they worked six days a week. You've gone through what we have today. I had one old guy that wanted to work for the fourth generation. Said he'd worked for my great-grandfather, my grandfather, my dad and my son, and then he wanted to work for me. And he said that when he went to work for my great-grandfather, he worked for five cents an hour. And they worked ten hours a day. But getting back to this other thing. In the shipyard, I had worked in every different facet of ship building, which is totally--you've got mechanics, you've got metal working, you build a house on it, which is the cabin on the boat, you have to lay that all out, you have to cut the steel and do all those things, and I did everything in the shipyard, with the exception of driving or heating rivets. So I was to go up to the plant as a welding foreman, because in the shipyard, I was certified to weld down, vertical or overhead. And at that time, marine welding

certification was one of the most exacting certifications there was for welding in the United States. It had gotten, shortly thereafter, when they went into pipelines and that sort of thing, they had a more difficult deal, but mine had to be x-rayed, it had to be pulled to be sure that the tensile strength was there for pulling, and so I had that expertise. And I was to go up there as a welding foreman. But as in all big jobs, there is a lot of political intrigue, and the millwright foreman knew that he had a guy coming in to work for him that he knew, and he wanted him as a welding foreman, so he didn't want me. So they said, "Have you got tools?" And I said, "Certainly." And they said, "Do you know how to use them?" And I said, "Of course." And they said, "Well, if you want to come to work Monday morning as a millwright, we'll put you to work." So I went to work as a millwright. And they put me in a millwright gang--there must have been 15 or 20 men in it--with a foremen. There was no assistant foreman.

Now, what is a millwright?

A millwright is the mechanical person who normally goes in and picks up the equipment and sets it on its foundations and lines it up and puts it in the position to function. Then if there is piping to be hooked up to it, according to your setups today, you have a pipe fitter, you have a steam fitter, then you have electricians. See, a millwright started out as a total mechanic. There were groups of people in the 17 and early 1800s, that went around over the United States into your areas as a millwright gang. There was usually one man who was the coordinator. They would get in wagons and took their tools and their know-how, and they would go in and build water mills or factories or anything for a company or an individual that wanted. So a millwright actually went in and built the thing in its entirety. So a millwright was, as original, was a total mechanic, either in wood or machinery or steel or [*inaudible*] or whatever it may be. But the millwright finally has filtered down to where he is the mechanic person that goes in after the foundation is there and the foundation bolts are in and he puts the equipment there and he lines it up and then either the electricians, if it's electrical, or if it's piping or it's plumbing, he comes in or if it's a steam fitting, the steam fitters come in. So the millwrights went in and set all the tanks, all the pumps, all the motors, all the everything. So I worked there in that group probably for about five weeks, and then they made me the assistant foreman for our gang.

They didn't have an assistant foreman before?

No. See, I was not 30 years old, and yet I was an assistant foreman telling men that were 50- and 60-years-old what to do and when to do it, and I had to be good enough that when they said they couldn't do that, I'd say, "Oh, yes we can. Let's do it this way." I did it the same way with my welders, because when the guy came out of a hole and said, "We can't do this," I'd say, "Get a hood and let's go down there and see." And I could show him how. But it was something that was natural to me. But then even after I worked for the DuPont Company, I was still a plant engineer when I was just about 30 years old, and I had people that I was directing that belonged to the DuPont Company that had been there for 30 years. And two or three times I heard them say, "I wonder what the baby wants us to do today?" Because these were all old, established people. I went to work for the DuPont Company right here, and everybody thought that I came from DuPont home office, because I was elevated so quickly to do what I had to do. But I did it. Because when I left here, I left here at the request of the Superintendent of Maintenance that had had me here that wanted me in Oklahoma, and then the same thing happened to me when I went to Minnesota. I went up there as a plant engineer because the guy that I'd worked for was up there and he wanted me. I almost went to Hanford, Washington. Thank goodness I didn't. I was a bachelor, I was 30 years old. I was just perfect to be drafted. I was taken out nine times. I was deferred. I always told them, I said, "Now, if you're not going to ask for me to be held as a necessity, you let me know ahead of time so I can go get in the Navy." I said, "I don't want any part of the Army and I don't want in the Air Corp. I want in the Navy." But they said they'd always tell me. The Superintendent that I worked for was at Hanford and he wanted me up there as an engineer, and so two days before they were going to tell--and they were going to send me, because Hanford was more important than where I was, because that was atomic energy, and I came through, I went for my 4F to eligible. They wired Hanford, the chap I was supposed to report to, that I'd just been made

A1. And he said, "Keep him. I don't want him." And two days later, I got another deferment. (*Laughs*). So I didn't have to go. But they never did tell him anymore, because they wanted me to stay where I was. Now, where were we?

But anyway, what I did, I was made an assistant foreman, and then several weeks after that, I was called to the main office and they wanted to know whether I would act as the mechanical engineer for the 100 area. So then I had all of the millwrights, all of the mechanics, whether they were pipe fitters, electricians or anything else, under my beck and call as the mechanical engineer for the total area of nitro-cellulose.

Was this during construction still?

Oh, yeah. There were no buildings when they did this to me. I'd been out setting those big storage tanks and that sort of thing and putting pumps on bases during this five or six or seven, eight weeks in there that I was a millwright. Then I went in to a 100 area construction office and then started to direct mechanical activity as these buildings went up and the tank farms went together and the whole building took shape, the whole area took shape. And then I worked as the area engineer for the mechanics of that construction. And then as things began to shape up at the end of a number of months, the operations people told construction they wanted me. And construction says you can't have him until all of his equipment in the 100 area is approved and run in. So then I had to stay there until A, B, C, D, E and F building areas--all those lines, because there were six lines--till that was all done. And that included [*inaudible*] standpoint when it came in, it went into the warehouse, out of the warehouse, into the nitrating houses, boiling tubs, the final blending and then it went out of there over into the 200 area and started processing over there. But they wouldn't let me be the area engineer for the 100 area, which I knew like the back of my hand. They put me in the 200 area, which I knew nothing about other than just my association with it.

What was 200 area?

The 200 area was the area in which the nitro-cellulose became smokeless powder. It'd go into a blocking press, which would take the fluffy stuff and actually make it into a big block. And then that big block was transported into a mixing house and the mixing house had bread mixers, and you'd drop these big blocks into that and it would break them down, and then you would add alcohol and ether and other ingredients. We piped ether around in one-inch pipes. And then in that area, we were reclaiming almost a million dollars a day in alcohol and ether fumes there at one time.

Reclaiming? Oh, when you were drying the powder?

No, you would pull all those heavy vapors out and bring them back into a reclamation duct that would go back to big (*fibers?*) that were layered with coconut--well, it was charcoal. And you'd go through that and you'd fill that up, and the water would attract the alcohol and then you'd pump the alcohol back and then it went through a reclaiming tower, and you'd drive off the alcohol and then drive off the steam. We had an alcohol reclamation and we also had an ether manufacturing, because we couldn't buy enough ether, even with the huge alcohol storage that we had, and ether storage, you couldn't run that big plant 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week, you couldn't buy enough. So we made it and we reclaimed it and we did all those things. But that was part of the 200 area.

Do you know if the technology to do that was new at the time?

It wasn't. Just basic. [*Inaudible*]. You had towers do it the same way you have your cracking processes on gasolines and oils and that sort of thing. It was nothing new, but it was very costly, because the only way --it had to be run all over that plant. And none of the condensate water ever returned to those big boilers. You had 186,000 pounds per hour coming out of each one of those boilers, and every bit of it was make up water coming out of our well system.

Make-up water?

Well, you make steam, you lose water; so you have to put more water in to make more steam. And the water has to be in perfect balance, so you had a huge laboratory that didn't do anything but just run testing water all the time. It had to be exacting, it had to be perfect, or you'd blow your boilers up because you'd lime them up and you'd get a hot spot on your tubes and out would go the whole thing and you were playing around with 550 pounds of steam, generating our own electricity, and then we'd put that in step-downs. We took 300 pounds of steam and put it in to manufacturing the acid, because we took that to do the acid operation. Then you'd drop that down to 150 pounds, and then you dropped it down to 50 pounds and then you dropped it down to ten pounds. So you used heating and you did boiling and processing and all that from the 550 pounds of steam that had already generated the electricity that was operating the plant. The plant demanded so much electricity, the public service company, or the electric companies and the utilities here, could not furnish enough current. So we had to rig our own. They found these generators in a warehouse someplace. They'd been made for something else and were never used. So they were brought in here and we built two power houses, and then after the second [*inaudible*] I tagged those two power houses together so that you could run the whole plant on one power house. You couldn't run it the way we were running it then, because it took out all the steam and electricity. But the way we were running it, when it was restarted.

Back in '52?

Fifty-two is when it was. When we built it, we built a big connecting steam line, insulated steam line, so that we wouldn't have to operate both power houses.

But getting back to this other thing, I then stayed with the 100 area until it was totally completed and operable.

So that would have been maybe March of '44?

Because I was put into the 200 area and made powder, dehydrated it, blocked it and extruded and cut it just nine months after everything was started. I don't [*inaudible*].

Probably May?

Yeah, it was nice, warm weather. It was probably May.

Maybe this is a good time to ask you just to run down your different jobs in chronological order. First you were there as a millwright, and then you were there . . .

Then I became an assistant foreman in the millwright department. Then I became the mechanical engineer for the 100 area.

What were the responsibilities for mechanical engineer?

That's just what I got through telling you. All of the mechanical equipment that was installed, hooks, tanks, elevators, anything that was mechanical in the 100 area was my responsibility to get it there and coordinate the activity to get the plumbers and the pipe fitters and the electricians all there to do what they had to do and then you had to run it in. You had to have an acceptance sheet signed by DuPont and one signed by DuPont. One was the operating group and one was the construction group.

Oh, signed by two different groups in DuPont?

Oh, sure, because one was a construction outfit and the other was an operation. They were completely different. They had no connection. We were in different office buildings, they had different areas of activity, very, very definite division between the two. So for me to get out of the 100 area, because construction had asked, and I thoroughly was convinced that they wanted me to be the area engineer, which was operations mechanical superintendent for that area, and I thought for sure that they'd say, "Well, he built it." But no, I didn't. They said we want you in the 200 area. So the 200 area is first stage and then you've got first stage and then you had solvent recovery, you had blending, and you had extrusion, and then you had cutting. So it was three distinct areas of huge expanses, and they gave me that and I knew nothing about it. I had to do a lot of studying and reviewing and walking and looking and doing and asking questions to do what I had to do, because I had never been in there. I had dye shops and machine shops of all varieties to do all the pins and do all the grinding and operating of these machines to cut that powder that had to be just exactly right to give you the propulsion that you needed, and smokeless powder, of course, burns from the inside out and the outside in, and it's a continuous expansion of gases. So it's a propellant. It's not a high explosion. It's a propellant. So you ignite it with black powder, and then you have this continuous burning so that when the charge starts to fire, it burns continuously and expands while it's propelling the missile out of the cannon. And it has to expand [slaps hands together] right from the time it leaves there in order to have the trajectory that you want to get where you want to go. But anyway, I stayed in that for probably eight months, and then the superintendent wanted me in Oklahoma. So they called me in and said, "He wants you there, he wants you there in ten days." So the job that I had, when I left, they gave it to three other people.

It took three people to do the job?

I'm not bragging. By that time, they had trained other people who were competent in the field up through the first stage and the second stage, and [*inaudible*] in blending operation, because I had all those tank farms, I had all of the cracking operations, the reclamation, and had to change all the filters and that sort of thing. It was a very complicated and unusual operation. But by so doing, I got to the point where I knew the whole plant. So when we started in '52, I was the plant manager's [*inaudible*] was one and mine was number two. I was the first one hired, and actually when he left the plant, I was in charge of the plant. I had everything that there was there, but normally, I was the plant engineer. But at one time, I had about 2,200 people, because I didn't have the areas because there were area superintendents. But when the plant manager left, I was the plant manager during his absence, because of my general knowledge of the plant and had been working so long with DuPont and I did work one year for Good Year, when it was in standby. Then I had charge of the entire DuPont section of the plant, just because of my knowledge of the plant. They had no knowledge of anything but loading. They had no knowledge whatsoever of this powder operation to manufacture powder. With great reluctance, I got the job.

So you probably left for Oklahoma around the beginning of '42?

Yeah. I stayed there for three years.

So you were there to the end of the war? Almost '45 or so?

Oh, no, no. I went to Minnesota before that.

During construction, can you tell me anything about housing and food, maybe first prior to the plant's being announced, prior to construction period, and then how it changed?

Okay. My dad and my two sisters and I could go into a grocery store and for some ten dollars, come out and I would carry two bags, my sisters would each carry one and my dad would carry one or two. You would have enough food stuff to last three or four days in your household. At that time, as I told you, a top

mechanic, as a machinist or a good millwright or a good electrician, was making about 35 cents an hour. Everything was in relation to that. When DuPont came in, rents went up, food went up, clothing went up. There was nothing that didn't go up. Transportation became impossible. They actually built Highway 62 and widened it in order to let people drive their cars and get in and out of that plant. I have been in that plant parking lot for over two hours at the end of the day trying to get out.

Just in the parking lot, two hours?

Just in the parking lot. The road became just a bumper-to-bumper thing. They had to bring all that heavy equipment in. They laid a railroad into the plant for the scratch, brought it in from the Jeffersonville mill. They put trains, they just took coaches and put them on car after car after car after car. People hung on those things because there was so many people that they didn't have enough coaches to take care of it, and people would actually, in the winter time now, were hanging on the outside of those cars, in order to get to work. The engine would come in, and they built a huge bridge, easy as wide as this room, and it was arched over the railroad track. And those people would get off of those trains and fill that thing. It was like a funnel. Everybody had to bring their lights, and here I was a little 30-year-old kid doing all these--mechanics came from all over the United States. There was nothing else going on. So when the word got out that you could come there and get work, people came from all over the United States, and they were the best mechanics. [*Inaudible*]. You got the finest mechanics in the United States to build that plant because there was nothing else going, and that was the first thing that hit.

[Inaudible].

That's right. Now, whether anybody had realized that or not. But that was true. Those guys would get off of those trains and funnel into this thing that went over the top. I did this one day: I made it a point to get right in the center. I picked my mail box up and did like this [gestures], I picked up my feet, and there was such a crush, they carried me clear across that arch, and until they got on the other side and spread out, I didn't have to walk. Now, that sounds ridiculous, but I did it, because I wanted to see whether it would work, and I actually did. The crush would be, it'd be a claustrophobia, or if tight places bothered you, you better not get in there, because they just funnel in there, and when you got into it, it just moved like a "chung." I don't know. It was quite an [*inaudible*] thing. But you went in and you got on your shuttle bus and it took you to the area that you were going to work in. And you had this huge parking lot that was . . . they went in there and put rock and cinders and whatever they could get, and then it was laid off just like a regular parking lot, and people would get so distraught or overwrought about what they were doing, they'd be in one of these lines coming out, and they didn't have enough guards to control it--these people, these were rough guys--and they'd just soon run over a guard that was trying to direct them as not. But anyway, some of these guys would just take their car and just ram them right into the side of the other so that . . . it was just a mob action.

Let's talk about land acquisition. When it was announced that there were going to be something coming out here, do you remember . . . ?

They didn't make a big publicity thing out of it. These land acquisition people, they just went in and said we're going to build a plant and we're going to do this and we're going to do that, and we'd like to make you an offer. And then it finally got to the point where someone said we won't leave, and then you had to just force them away [*inaudible*] to do that. See, they had a certain amount of money -- there was certain farm land--they had guidelines. And there were some that got better deals than others because they were more forceful and that sort of thing.

What do you think were the reactions of people? What did people feel about this?

Most of them or many of them with big farms that had done well were resentful. They, underneath, realized that there was a war, there had been enough publicity that you didn't have a lot of bad reactions. But most people, when you try to take them off of their property [*inaudible*] for two or three generations have lived on it, naturally there was resentment. But the thing was, the land people were relentless and one bunch would come in and make an offer, and in just a few days, there'd be another one come right in and know what went on--they were working out of a controlled office. And there was a lot of resentment and there were a lot of people that felt that they were getting what they wanted for their property and would go someplace else. There was just a mixed emotion.

Among the people who resented it, do you think there was a change in attitude when we got involved in the war, after Pearl Harbor?

Yes and no. It's just people being people, and their reaction was just about what you'd find in any area where [*inaudible*].

Did your family own any land?

(*end of side 1*)

. . . groceries went up. It was just like a gold mining town. That little city--it wasn't a city then--that little town of Charlestown went from a sleepy country town to a madhouse. There wasn't a room, there wasn't anything that anybody could stay in. They had tents, they rented out barber chairs to sleep in, lean them back, sleep them at night, and cut hair in the day time. Oh, yes. People went in and literally rented barber chairs and slept on them. There was no space. There was just no space any place that wasn't utilized, and people were doing everything imaginable. There wasn't hardly a house in Louisville you could rent. There was nothing in Jeffersonville.

Not even in Louisville, huh?

No. Everything was full. You shove 30,000 people into an area real quick and it just fills up everything. And people with an extra bedroom, they had two or three guys sleeping--they actually slept on three shifts. One would come in and he'd go to bed, and time for him to go to work, he'd go maybe eat at the house or eat at a restaurant. There'd be another one come in and there'd be another one, because you were on three shifts. There were a lot of houses that were used three shifts, around the clock.

Was that for operations or construction also?

It was construction.

They worked three shifts at construction, also?

Oh, sure.

I've heard both stories. Some people say yes, some people say no.

Oh, no. There was somebody on that plant continuously while it was being built. Now, the third shift didn't do a great deal, but there were three shifts of people there. The main shift of course was days, but there were people there . . .

There were still people working.

And there was still people working. Had they not been working, it wouldn't [*inaudible*], and then when you start the operation, it is a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-day. Once your processor starts, you don't shut it down. It has to go "tick, tick, tick, tick, tick."

Can you describe a typical day when you were working construction?

Construction is construction. You were told . . . they wouldn't take no for an answer for anything, and you would set your sights to do certain things. There were certain areas that had to be done on a certain time to allow another group to [*inaudible*] and do something. It was a very, very close schedule, and it had to be perfectly coordinated. And if one of them slipped a cog, and if you didn't have enough cement or you didn't have enough steel and you didn't have enough this or that, and the only reason that plant did what it did, there were still no shortages of stainless steel and pipe and flanges and fitting and poles [*inaudible*].

Because you got in before all that.

They brought in a huge force of buyers and purchasing agents and they went out all over the United States and they went [*inaudible*] the United States, as far as their needs were concerned, and if it hadn't been all sitting in there in all them warehouses, and if they hadn't been able to go out and find locking presses and things like that in some of these areas where these things had been used, and some of them were 50, 60 years old when we got them. They were [*inaudible*].

That's what somebody just told me. I was interviewing today. He said a lot of the equipment that came in was old, either used equipment . . .

Obsolete.

. . . or it had been sitting up somewhere for awhile.

It had been done away with, and we brought it in. Well, you see, one of the things that I did, we were having so much trouble with presses, blocking presses especially, we were throwing away these huge castings, and I went in to the superintendent one day, when I was an area engineer, and I suggested that we put stainless steel sleeves in there, and I said if we put the stainless sleeve in there, all we need to do then is when the sleeve wears, pull the sleeve out and put another one in. And he just laughed at me and he said, "Well, that won't work." He came back two days later, and he said, "You know, I've been thinking about that," and he said, "go ahead and work that out," he said, "because it would work." And he said, "I can see what you're getting at." He said, "We're throwing these huge castings away and having to have more brought in and then we're having to machine them down," and he said "What you want to do is just perfect." And I don't know how many hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars that we saved, and it also reduced our maintenance probability of doing this and doing that, because by that time, everything had started to get tight, and to go get a huge casting--the thing weighed three or four thousand pounds--in and machine it--we had our own machine shops, and we could do all those things, and then we had area shops. But what we did, I had them take one of those cylinders and bore it out to a very close tolerance; then I had stainless steel sleeves forged and we machined those, and then 24 hours before we were going to put them in, we put a cap in both ends of the stainless steel, and we put dry ice in it and contracted it. And then we put a heating arrangement around the cast iron, and it went out, and then we had to quickly, in a big press, line that thing up, shove it in there, and you'd lock it tight. Then when we wanted to take it out, we did the same thing. We cooled the interior, expanded the exterior, and pulled them out. But a typical day there, was you were brow-beaten, on a continuing basis, to meet your fixed deadlines. Nobody took any excuses you can't do it or anything else, and if something happened, expediters would just get on an airplane and go to the factory and say now you've got to do this, work 24 hours a day, do whatever you have to do, we have to have it, and it was done just that way.

You mentioned that the best machinists and the best mechanics came from all over the United States. Is there any other things you can say about the types of people that worked there? What kind of people were they?

Had every kind of a person, you had every nationality, you had mean ones and you had timid ones and you had dirty ones and you had clean ones and you had prissy ones. You had every kind of a person that you'd find any place in the world. Because they came from every place. There was no place in the United States that they didn't come from.

With such a great diversity of people, were there problems with people getting along?

Oh, yeah. At night, they'd all go drink beer and whiskey and they'd get into fights, and you had a problem with them coming in drunk in the morning, but you also had a huge guard force, and when we got trouble, you just ousted them, but you didn't fire them. They just would sober up and come back [*inaudible*] and go back to work.

So it was problems but nothing that was difficult to handle, nothing out of the ordinary?

Nothing, no, no, no, no, no.

Were there many either African-Americans or Mexican-Americans working there?

There weren't too many Mexicans. You had a lot of Blacks. But you just had a scale of White people, and there were Italians and there were a lot of fellows there with German accents and Italians. I imagine you would have found every nationality, but your predominant was Black and White.

Since there were also these several different groups, were there certain jobs that certain groups did or tended to do, tended to be assigned to?

No, it was just a mixture of everything. Well, you even had lead burners. Because you see, when that plant was built, there was a heck of a lot of lead in there, and we had a lead shop and lead burners, and there was another thing where a lead burner has to serve--well, he was serving eight years as an apprentice before he could run a job. And then when I became operational maintenance, I had a lead burning shop and had lead burners that put liners in certain acid tanks, and lead lines that ran in front of them and that sort of thing. Because that was the only thing you could use with your nitrates and your sulphurics and then your weaker solutions and all those things.

The tanks had to have a lead lining?

Yeah.

What did construction employees do in the evenings, besides go out and drink?

Some of them were tired and they went to bed, if they could find a bed. Just like I told you, most of them would drink beer or whiskey, they played cards, they gambled, they did everything that you'd find where you'd get a bunch of construction people. And nobody paid too much attention to them, as long as they behaved themselves.

Was there a lot of gambling, do you think?

Oh, sure. Because see, I grew up when some of the nicest people that I knew were gamblers. They owned a huge night club. I used to play around as a kid and this Chief of Police in Jeffersonville knew my family very well. And I was in my mid-twenties, and he liked me--well, during the '37 flood, I ran his boat

continuously, and where I lived there in the museum, the second floor, we had 30-some-odd people in there all the time, and when we wanted some good warm food, we'd go climb the ladder on the power pole at the back of the house, [*inaudible*] on the second floor, and have food. But I ran his boat all the time. But we used to go to all these big gambling places. There was [*inaudible*], there was the Silver Creek, and there was the Log Cabin and there was the Greyhound. They had the finest chefs in the United States, and the food was superb.

This is all in Jeffersonville, right?

All in Jeffersonville. And so Jeffersonville has been a great gambling area until it got some of the do-gooder judges that they accumulated great wealth, but they did it because they didn't want any gambling. I don't know why. But these do-gooder people have always gotten my goat.

When did they kind of stop gambling in Jeffersonville?

Oh, golly. Date things just don't fix with me, so all I'd do [is] make a fool out of myself if I tried . . .

That's okay.

Because I used to go to all those night clubs with the Chief of Police and have dinner, and the thing that's a grocery--it's a Greyhound Grocery--was a Greyhound night club. And you'd walk into the center area--we're getting off the subject--but we'd walk into the center area and there were big guys in tuxedos with two revolvers, who had revolving capsules, had guys in there with machine guns. They were in turrets and they could just fly right around. They were always afraid that somebody from the gangs from Chicago would come down and raid them. A little guy would come in with a black suitcase with $200,000 in it and gamble for a syndicate. But we're getting off the subject. (*Chuckles*) I'm too full of too many things. See, you're just fortunate, I'm 84 years old and I'm as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed . . .

You are extremely sharp.

(*Chuckles*).

During World War I, there was a lot of talk about munitions companies profiteering, when they were working for the government, producing munitions. Was there any talk about this?

I don't think there was ever a case of basic profiteering. The government got what they asked for. The government said we want it, you do it, we'll pay you cost plus ten percent. You see, you can't say that that's profiteering. The government wanted it. What'd they do with Hanford? They wanted Hanford to make atomic bombs before anybody else did. Cost was nothing. See? So I don't call it profiteering or anything like that. The government got what they asked for. Now, there was waste, but you can't have haste without waste.

That just goes along with the nature of the project.

They got what they wanted, we beat the clock with the atomic bomb, we beat the clock with propellants, we furnished Europe with all the propellant that they wanted, and the only way you get it is just the way they got it.

Were most jobs Union or non-Union out there, during production?

Some were, some weren't. Unions were there, but they weren't a deterrent, because everybody was gung-ho to get it going. Now, after I took over in operations, well then it became a headache, from the time you start to the time you quit.

Was this after it restarted? Or was this during [inaudible]?

Even after it was going and then it was worse after it re-started than it was before. But you did have that Union setup in there. But with DuPont, see DuPont didn't get into Union control until many years after all this went on. See, most of DuPont's plants had company unions instead of outside unions.

I think I know what your answer's going to be for this, but what do you think about the plant's part in the war effort? Did it play an important role or not an important role?

A very important role, because you see, you had this plant here, which, at that time, was the largest powder plant in the world. It was running and producing. I went to Oklahoma, started that plant there, and we had pistol powder and we had rifle powder and we had TNT, we had tetrol, and we had smokeless powder. So that was a very necessary plant. We dumped out TNT and petrol, just cans and cans of it, being plant engineer out there, why I had the whole plant, but we did pistol powder, which is the little fine stuff, we did rifle powder, we did cannon powder, and then we of course had the high explosives that went along with it. And that plant was very important and filled a gap. Now, when I went to Minnesota, after three years out there, to re-start a [*inaudible*] plant up there, we got one line started. But when you try to start a plant--it's stupid to have put it up there in the first place. Why would you put a plant in Minnesota where it hits 30 below zero in the winter time, and you're flowing stuff all over the place that's got water in it? It was stupid and it was nothing but a political ploy to do it. But we got one line operating, but that brought us up into 1946, '47, and just about the time we got it started, they said stop it. But up there, again, I went in and worked seven days a week, ten and 12 hours a day to get this thing going, and then when it stopped, the Union stepped in and they brought up so many problems that the whole thing shut down, and they said, "Ed, we're going to transfer you back to Wilmington, Delaware." So I went back there as an assistant plant engineer, in the titanium dioxide part of DuPont. So I answered your question more than you wanted.

And I had something I was going to ask you and now I forgot it.

(*Chuckles*). Shame on you.

Were you at the plant when they started hiring a lot more women, a higher percentage of them?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Did they provide any day care facilities there?

No, nobody wanted them. They didn't ask for them.

What did working mothers do with their children?

Left them with baby sitters. And there were enough old and middle-aged women and mothers and grandmothers and cousins and nieces and that sort of thing, they did it.

It wasn't a problem; they didn't need that?

You never heard anybody people calling in and say I can't come in today because Gertrude's sick and I've got to stay with here and the baby sitter's yah, yah, yah, yah. But it was not a deterrent.

The women who worked out there . . .

They couldn't have run the plant without them.

There's no argument about that.

Women had the dexterity and the ability to feed cutting machines and those things that men didn't have. Men were clumsy. Women could feed all those round, pull those strands out, and get them in the right boxes.

The women could work with their hands much better.

Yeah. So women in cutting houses, women in the loading plant down in Good Year. There was the largest sewing room in the world. Every machine was a woman. So the plant, the manufacturing plant, nor the loading plant, could not have functioned without women. Now, when I had a woman to come in and say I'm going to be a pipe fitter, then was when we had problems. And I'd say, "Now, Gertrude, if I tell you to go out there and pick up a 20-foot section of two-inch pipe with a flange on both ends and go up that ladder with your end, I don't want you to tell me 'I have to have somebody to help me.'" And most of the time, they realized their inadequacy. But I've had a great big woman to come in and she'd say, "Mr. Howard, I'm going to be a bus driver," and I'd say, "I don't have any objection to that," because she said, "I can wheel that bus around just as well as any guy here." And she could. So there were things they could do well. Now, with the big woman with the bus driver and the wheel, she could wheel and deal and we had buses that took people all over the plant. It was a necessary thing. We had to have. They'd come into the clock alley, they'd get in the buses, after they went with the shuttle buses, [*inaudible*] things, we went into regular school buses and those [*inaudible*]. So they did that. And, as I say, without the use of women, the plant would not have produced what it did in either the manufacturing nor the bag loading plant.

Was the pay the same, not only between men and women, but any other minority groups?

There was a fixed wage for each type of operation.

So it was by job, not by sex or race?

That was the job, the pay rate was that, when you did that so long, you got so much more, you got so much more. So it was a job. The laborers got so much, the painters got so much, millwrights got so much. But you had one, two and three class people. You had helpers, then you had mechanics one, two and three.

Was that split up like that for most jobs, most skilled labor jobs?

You had a helper and we had a one, two and a three. So you started out as a third class, and then you went to second class and then you went to first class.

Were the pay rates, were they set by DuPont or were they set by the government or the wage and labor . . . ?

They were set by DuPont and okayed by the government.

Was there any kind of segregation out there in any other way?

Oh, yeah. We had women change houses and men change houses.

And women's restrooms and men's restrooms. Oh, I guess those were in the change houses.

We did have segregation.

That was the only kind of segregation?

That was the only kind.

I'm curious about that, because in most of these places there were, but there seems to have not been any here.

Middle west was a nice congenial group of people until we got ruined by the influx of huge [*inaudible*] activities. (*Chuckles*). I say that with tongue in cheek. It was part of progress.

Were there any kind of "why we fight" type of promotions or morale boosting promotions?

Oh, sure, you had a huge safety group. DuPont was probably the first corporation in the United States that had a safety program that you either did it their way, a safe way, or you didn't do it. If they had an accident, you'd spend hours and hours and days and days finding out why it happened and what you'd do to keep it from ever happening again.

How do you feel about their safety record? Was it good?

It was outstanding, and had they not taken the stand that they did, it wouldn't have been outstanding.

Because you're working with a lot of hazardous chemicals and processes?

You were working with hazardous chemicals, you were working under the most adverse conditions under construction, and DuPont Construction was just as determined that you were going to do it safely as with operations. They had two facets. With your constructing, you have one type or one safe condition, and when you're under operation, you have both of those, because you're still constructing, you're still maintaining and you're still operating. So an operational set-up is more dangerous than construction, and yet each have their hazards. But DuPont did an outstanding job from beginning to end and still does. Well, General Motors--I don't know how many other corporations--I'm sure WalMart even uses basic safety things that were actually born through DuPont's determination to run a safe plant. So when you run an acid plant or a chemical plant or an explosive plant, you're either safe or you don't have anything to work with.

What was the relation between a lot of pressure, if there was pressure, to produce quickly on the production lines and safety?

You went in the plant, they told you to wear safety shoes, you will wear gloves, you will wear safety equipment as required for your job, you will wear goggles and you will wear a hard hat. Now, you don't want to do that, go home. And if you're caught doing it without it, you're going to go home anyway. It wasn't a case of would you like to, you're a nice man or you're a nice lady. You either do it or don't come in. Or if you do do it, go out. And I remember, as a millwright, they told me to put on my gloves and go and put quarter inch bolts into something I was bolting up for an air duct. And I said, "You can't do that. That's stupid." "You do it." So I did it. And you can do it. Now, it takes a bit longer, but you don't cut your fingers. You don't have these things. So we had minor injuries and we had sub-majors and we had

majors. It was all broken down, and you had a full-size hospital, you had nurses and doctors on duty, and there was a steady stream of in and outers because you're getting cut and brazed and scraped and bumped and pinched and everything, but it worked out fine.

The pay, you said, went up at the plant. It made pay go up around here. During operations, was pay at the plant still higher than outside?

Yes.

Substantially higher?

Quite a bit higher. Other workplaces had to start to meet it because they wouldn't get anybody to work for them.

Did a lot of people save their money, or did most people spend it as soon as they got it?

Some threw it away, some saved it. Again, it's just people being people. You had many of those construction people; that's the way they lived. When you get it, you go gambling, spend it on women or something to drink or do something with it. You don't need any you come back to work. And then usually if they were in a hotel or motel or boarding house, they'd come in, they'd pay all their bills off, some of them, they didn't. But that again is being people. But you had those that saved and you had those that spent every penny of it as fast as they could get it, and some of them faster.

Were there any problems between newcomers and the people that lived here for a while?

Well, yes. I remember when I went to work at Oklahoma. I went into this town of Claremore, which was Will Rogers hometown. Construction was leaving when I was going in. I would usually go into those plants maybe two months before they were through with construction, in order to hire and [*inaudible*] some [*inaudible*] men and put them with these various construction crews to see how the thing was going together and ask questions, and the outfits that went into Oklahoma, into Rosemound and the surrounding area, were a tough bunch of drunken bums, to a great extent, they didn't pay their bills. So when I went to live in Claremore, Oklahoma, people ignored me and snubbed me for six weeks until they found out I wasn't like what was there. I was a DuPont construction person in their eyes, and they didn't like it. But after that, I lived in the Will Rogers Hotel at an apartment there, I rubbed shoulders with the better people at the hotel, they liked me. So it wasn't long, even in a dry state, I was being invited to dinner parties and cocktail parties, in a dry state, and after six weeks or so I thoroughly enjoyed myself. But up till then, even if I went to church, they didn't like me even in church, because I was part of that powder plant bunch of bums.

But there wasn't that dissention up here?

It happened too fast and went too fast. The other went slower, had fewer people, it wasn't the pressing thing that we did here. There was more of it there than there was here. There were people that hated them because they overrode everything and they were in such masses. But as a whole, there was not a great--having lived here and living here, I didn't pick up a lot of problems from the fact that they were here. Everybody realized that they were pushed in here, they didn't have enough room to move in and they didn't have enough places to stay. [*Inaudible*] a real problem.

Do you think that Charlestown, or the area around here, not just Charlestown, did it change any during this time, in terms of people's . . .

Whoo!

. . . well, no, not outside [inaudible]?

It changed everything. It changed their attitude, it changed their way of life, it went from a little sleepy town to a city of magnitude that was uncontroliable.

So can you say anything about how it changed maybe people's values or priority of life?

People's values changed, the quality of life changed, people's demands for food, entertainment, housing.

Can you give a couple of examples, how these changed?

Well, there were just a few little piddling restaurants, and there were so many people to be fed that you ended up--[*inaudible*] you'd just go ahead and sit at a few tables with white tops on them, and you could get a fried egg sandwich and you could get a cheese sandwich or a broiled ham sandwich. From anyone. You could go get dinners and you could get all the [*inaudible*]. They went from a sleepy, country town to what you would find in Jeffersonville at the time they were doing it. And then Jeffersonville elevated to a higher degree than did the other, and even Louisville went to a little higher degree.

Did people's expectations of what they wanted, did those raise to a higher level or not?

Oh, I don't think their expectations did, but having the extra money and knowing how other people lived . . . and you were in an era where there were a lot of changes. With electronics and the TV's and things like that coming into being, all those things elevated and you just tied in and it really speeded up what would have happened in due time anyway.

(*Turned off recorder for Mr. Howard to get Mr. Gaither something to drink*).

Were there ever any labor shortages out at the plant?

Oh, sure. There'd be lapses when there was just nobody there. You hired what came, and if they didn't come, you didn't have them.

What did the plant do to solve the problem?

There were people that were driving 75 and 100 miles a day to come to work. You were drawing people from this huge area, all over, Madison, Indiana, on north of Madison, people come down from Indianapolis. You drained everything. There were farmers that quit farming and there were farm women that had never worked any place in their life before. You could go out there and get a job and make all that money. And they just kept pulling and pulling and pulling, and so doing, they managed to maintain what they needed. There'd be shortages, but then they'd pull some more in. They had recruiters that just went out to all these little towns and would sign you up right out there.

This brings up something else. I guess probably quite a few people had farmed. They'd always just worked on a farm.

That's just what I said.

Then here, they came to something very different. Do you know how they liked that? It's two very different lifestyles, farming and having a job.

You made more money than you did on farming; so we liked it.

So that was the main consideration, was money?

Yeah. Money was the thing that did it.

Were there any controversies ever about who the plant hired in any way?

I don't know. I don't recall [*inaudible*]. There could have been, but I don't ever recall.

This could have been Union and non-Union.

If it was a live creature that could do something, you hired it.

And it never caused any other people getting upset about who it was or anything? Okay.

And you had people that were hired that were inadequate in what they're doing, but they did something. And when it came time to reduce, you laid those people off first, and you kept the better mechanics to do the finish up, but when you were going, whether that guy was good, it didn't make any difference; he did something. And you needed huge numbers of laborers.

Even if they could just do something?

And you had a lot of weak minds and a lot of very strong backs, and that's what you needed. (*Chuckles*).

Did a lot of people lose their jobs at the end of the war?

Oh, sure. A lot of people lost their jobs at the end of construction. Because you can't go from 30,000 people. Now, of course, one time, on the second operation, I had some 2,200 people in my maintenance engineering, plant engineering, but I had everything imaginable. I had mechanics in the fire houses, I had mechanics all over the plant in the main shops, there were custodians. But at one time, I had 91 foremen, and there were general foremen and area engineers stacked into that and then the engineers on top of that, and it was so widely diversified, to me it was always the most interesting job because it was so diversified, and it was just plain interesting. I always enjoy talking about it.

Do you know what happened to the people when they did lose their job, either in construction or . . . ?

Well, if John Jones came from Texas, and they would talk about what job's opening up now? Well, there's one [*inaudible*] stuff in Ohio, there's some stuff over on the East Coast, there's some plants going up on the West Coast, and there's a group of people that, in construction, that's all they do. They moved where the construction is. They don't give a hoot where they live, other than where's the work.

Could you say what percentage of people were that type, that were working?

Probably half of them. And then the farmers went back to farming and the farm women went back to helping the farm men on the farm. They may not be as happy, but a lot of them went into the sewing rooms, a lot of them went into the cutting rooms, and a lot of them that stayed on and kept their job. But by the same token, when the plant shut down, there were a lot of people that had to change their way of living because they couldn't keep on doing what they wanted.

Was the shut down . . . ?

Gradual. Sure, it was the 100 area. They finished it up, people trickled out.

Oh, well that's in construction?

Yeah.

What about at the end of the war? Was it gradual or just cut off?

Production tapered off, basically, because you had to run all the stuff through the line, and then you had to go back and clean all that stuff up. You had to disassemble it, you had to wash it, you had to preserve it, you had to put it back together, you had to dehumidify it. We kept huge numbers of people on doing nothing but shut down work.

Do you know about how long that went on? Was it a matter of weeks or months or a year?

Oh, it was months. And then after the plant was shut down, then you had a maintenance crew, which I had, too, that didn't do a thing but go around and maintain those buildings in their shut down setup, to keep them from deteriorating. But I always begged them to let me run one power house and run one line of nitro-cellulose and one line of powder for six to eight weeks and shut it down, put it into temporary lay-away, move to the next line. Then it kept a nucleus of people that knew what they were doing and how to do it that could train other people. You would maintain each of those lines by operating it every eight or ten weeks at a time, and you could've kept the plant in perfect condition, because as the acid ate up this and this broke and that did, you would be maintaining a supply of equipment and parts that kept certain manufacturers bringing them to you, and you kept a power house in operation and you could have shipped it to one power house to the other, you could have kept all your boiler tubes up, you could have kept everything up, and you'd have a beautiful operation. But today, you don't need that much propellant, because you're going--there's still enough powder plants in operation, Hercules and some of the others, that you've got enough propellant, but not to take care of what you would need, but today's warfare is rocketry and those things, and you don't have to have the amount of cannon power that you used to have. We did stuff. We built a 16 inch gun powder, stuff that big around, that long and they bagged it down there, too, but battleships are sitting ducks now, and you're putting them all in mothballs and you're dismantling them and you're doing away with those. Of course, you've got rocket launchers and you sent those back. So the way we kill each other is changed so greatly in the last few years, that you don't need all this smokeless powder.

How did the area here change after the war?

It's just like we discussed. Everybody's needs were heightened, the way of life changed, went from sleepy activities to very sophisticated activities, you had more lawyers, you had more judges, you had more banks.

It didn't go back to being a sleepy town?

No. All these greedy people came in and went to work. So you had greedy judges and greedy lawyers running out your ears and the welfare departments and doctors. Everybody became more and more--and your population, remember a lot of those people didn't move away from there; they stayed.

Can you say a percentage of that?

Oh, well, Jeffersonville was 10,000. Now, what is it? Twenty-five to 30,000 or something like that.

And most of those came in at some stage to work with the plant and then stayed?

See, I used to know almost everybody in Jeffersonville in a certain section. I knew the kids, I knew their mother and father, I knew what they did and I knew where they lived. I look in the paper today and I don't know anybody. And houses that have been there for 100, 150 years, people living in them I've never heard

of before. They've gone in and painted them different and changed them differently, and it's just part of progress. See, when my family moved there, the office telephone number was 1-9. The house where my parents lived was 1-2-4. That's all the telephones there were. There was a telephone 1, 2, 3 up to 19, 20. You paid no water bill. You got your water, you paid so much a year. I think it was $4.96 a year. You had no television. My family lived in a house with central heat, indoor plumbing. When I was growing up, two-thirds of the houses didn't have indoor plumbing. You had outdoor toilets, you went to the corner or you had a pump in your yard, you had closets for the pipe water and utility water. [*Inaudible*] rain all the time, you'd go down with your buckets and take them up and use it. See, the strides that have been made in just my lifetime, in electronics and ways of life are so great that I doubt that there's any other era in history where you'll find this much advancement in so many different fields.

In such a short time.

That's right. Because in 1910, when I was born, everything was Gay '90s and that sort of thing. Well, the house I finally grew up in is 100 years old this year, and it always had central heat, it always had electricity, because my grandfather could generate his own electricity, and the telephone number was 1-2-4. You'd pick up the receiver and I had, on a number of occasions . . . my dad knew everybody that was anybody in town and I remember the superintendent of the telephone company said, "Ed, come up. I want to show you how your telephone works." And you just had rows and rows of prissy women, with their hair up on their head, with big glasses on, sitting in front of a cubicle with wires up here and wires down here. And one line would call, so you'd pick one line up here and they wanted to talk to 2-4-6, and you'd stick it up there. And those women just sat there on big high stools with headsets on and did that. Now, you go into one of them, all you hear is click, click, click, click, click. And incidentally, that's what I had up here I had our own well system. We pumped all of our water, we treated all of our water, we had our own telephone system, we had our own drinking water lines, we had our own fire lines, we had our own fire pumps, we were totally independent of any outside source. We generated our own electricity. We did everything.

I've got a question for you on those wells. There were seven of them, right? Seven of the Ranney wells? Did all seven of those . . .

(*End of Tape*)
(*End of Interview*)

CHARLES McVICKER
June 27, 1994
Charlestown, Indiana
Steve Gaither, Interviewer

When you first heard that the plant was going to be built, were you living in Charlestown or were you living [inaudible]?

No, out of town. I came in Miller Construction. I was with them, and they're out of Indianapolis.

You were working for Miller Construction before you heard the plant was going to be built.

. . . and all the substation and all the [*inaudible*] power and all the electric line.

Were they the electrical subcontractor?

We built towers and hooked all the lines up in there [*inaudible*] put lights all the way around the plant. [*inaudible*] . . . how many thousand they had working at that time.

Miller or . . . ?

. . . company or the people [*inaudible*] and they had contractors and they had DuPont. DuPont was already making powder when I came in.

Oh, were they? So what year did you come here?

Let's see. I think they came in 1940 or '39 or '40 and started.

How long had you been working for Miller?

I was working for Miller about three years.

How old were you?

I was born in 1914, and I said that was in 1940 when they came.

So it'd be 26. What did you do with Miller?

We done light construction. We built all the towers and such.

What was your job, though?

I helped build towers.

You weren't . . . ?

No supervisor, nothing like that.

Do you mind telling me how much you made?

I think at that time we were making $1.45 or 60 cents an hour back then.

Was that before you came to Charlestown that you were making that amount?

Yeah. Around 1940, '41, they only paid $1.15 to linemens. And they paid 80 cents for laborers. Their labor got 60 cents, but what we done, we got about 80 cents. But then [*inaudible*] up there climbing.

So if you were climbing, you got more money?

Far as knowing anything about electricity, I don't know much about it. All we done was construction.

Were you making $1.45 to 60 in Indianapolis, before you came here?

I think I made about $1.26 or something like that. Not very much. Back in them days, when I first came to Indiana, we built a tower line in Indianapolis to New Castle, and we stayed at a *[inaudible]. [Inaudible]* about 40 miles east of Indianapolis.

There at Bloomington, isn't it?

No.

Oh, 40 miles east. [Inaudible].

[*Inaudible*].

No, I'm not from here.

Oh, you're not from here?

No sir. I'm from Texas.

[*Inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*].

I don't know. It looks like it's right there, but there's no town name there.

It's a nice town.

That's where you first moved to when you went to Indiana?

We had our headquarters there. And we worked out of [*inaudible*] way. We came back this way and then when we [*inaudible*].

When did you decide to move to Charlestown?

Right in the middle of construction. I came in the middle of construction. [*Inaudible*] towers and substations.

But was there no work in Indianapolis area, or did you move here . . . ?

I just went wherever the company had a job.

The company sent you here and so you went?

Yeah.

Did you have any friends or relatives around here?

No.

When you moved here, did you move here alone?

Yeah, I moved [*inaudible*]. I stayed down in town, down into the [*inaudible*]. I stayed down there with a woman [*inaudible*]. She kept eight fellows there.

What town was that? Do you remember?

Watson.

Watson? Okay. Can you describe this area, Watson and Charlestown, what it was like when you first came here?

It's [*inaudible*] little old country town. I think there were about 800 here I think at that time.

What was housing like? How much was it and how available?

We got it I think eight dollars a week, board and room.

Eight dollars a week?

[*Inaudible*]. We [*inaudible*] six dollars [*inaudible*].

At Watson it was six?

Up in [*inaudible*], east of Indianapolis [*inaudible*].

East of Indianapolis it was six. Was housing, when you moved here in 1940, easy to find?

Oh, no.

Difficult?

Yes sir.

Many people here?

Yeah, they had several thousand working at the plant.

When you got here? Okay. What about food?

It was reasonable. We went down to Memphis and built some towers down there, and they fed you food down there for 15 cents a meal.

In Memphis?

And that was 1940 [*inaudible*]. The company, they redone all of Memphis, but they sent us down to build some towers. We were down there two weeks. Up [*inaudible*] Indianapolis get a pound steak up there for 60 cents I think at that time.

Was more food more expensive or less expensive here?

Less expensive.

Less expensive here?

No, they about the same.

About the same? Okay. What about . . .

Greenfield, Indiana. That what town I . . . .

Okay.

Can't remember [*inaudible*].

Think you had to forget about it and then . . .

[*Inaudible*].

What about entertainment? What was entertainment like when you first moved here?

I don't think they had any shows. They had a beer joint up there. I didn't get close to it, though. I don't drink or nothing.

A tavern or bar or something?

Yeah, it was a tavern up there.

What about salaries of other people? In general, did they pay people . . .

I think laborers were getting 40 cents an hour. I think what they paid them.

Was that plant work or was that off the plant?

Well, . . .

Or both?

Both on construction, and I think DuPont was only paying about 40 cents an hour then.

That's just for labor, unskilled labor?

Yeah.

Was the pay about the same for both on the plant and off the plant, or would you know?

Yeah, I think it was about the same.

About the same? Okay.

Now, on manufacturing, they made a little more money [*inaudible*], though [*inaudible*] the plant, because there wasn't much work around there. With them there . . . in fact, I stayed over in Louisville that summer, and they took all the seats out of the train coaches and put them back-to-back in the center, and then run it length-wise all the way through the car. They put them back-to-back all the way through in the center of the car. And then they had on each, outside [*inaudible*]. And it was the 8th Street Station over there in Louisville, and cross the river over in New Albany and they'd pick up people there and they'd come back here, and there used to be two bridges built across the 62 down there then. And you'd unload and you'd walk across the . . .

Oh, the pedestrian bridges going on the . . .

Yeah. And you'd walk across them, and go into the plant.

What were the other people moving to the area like?

If you hadn't come from [*inaudible*] . . . it was a whole of Eastern Kentucky people came up there.

Whole lots of Eastern Kentucky people?

Yeah. No telling how many people DuPont worked back there then, run those three shifts. You come in on 62 down there, right there, where that road turned, that's where the administration building is. You go up that way. They had I don't know how many buildings, about 20, they just putting up rough buildings and put tar paper on the outside of it, and they had lots of people that walked in here from Puerto Rico or somewhere, worked in there. They brought them in.

What year was that? Do you remember?

Well, during the war. After I went overseas, they had that, and that old building was still here afterward. They sold them off.

What year did you come back from overseas?

In 1945.

So it was after 1945?

[*Inaudible*] Christmas Eve morning in New York, had to stay on that shift all day, Christmas Eve morning. And [*inaudible*].

About 45? What about during construction, when you were first there? Did they have work camps or buildings on the plant area or in the construction area?

Not where people stay at.

No, it's where the people stay at. Okay.

But some had tents, lived in them. I saw people had tents.

People who had moved here?

[*Inaudible*].

What shift did you work?

Day shift was all we had.

Oh, you only worked day shift?

Ah-huh, construction, but they had a 24-hour day then. We [*inaudible*] during this last war. [*Inaudible*] in the Vietnam War they worked them there for a while three shifts.

So that was only during production that they had 24 hours?

Yeah.

Construction, no?

No.

Did you work Saturday and Sunday very often?

No, they couldn't do that. Forty hours.

For you and your job, what was a typical day like, during construction?

Well, we rebuilt about two or three of them towers a day.

The electric towers, with the wires [inaudible]?

You can see them along the plant down there.

What time would you start working?

I think we started at 7:30.

Seven-thirty?

Got off at 4:00.

And you got off at 4:00? Okay.

When they builded GoodYear, I mean they builded DuPont up there first. And then about a year later, they built GoodYear down there, where they loaded these charges. Then they would take that powder and put them in the bags. And then they would put them in the containers, they'd put them in pallets then, and ship them over to the front line.

But you worked for DuPont?

I worked for Miller and [*inaudible*].

Right. I mean you worked for Miller [inaudible].

I tried to hire in with DuPont and I stopped by two or three doctors, [*inaudible*]. I only had one eye. I was blind in my right eye. DuPont wouldn't take me. They was strict.

Did Miller do all its work for DuPont or did it work for both?

Miller had a contract with DuPont to build them towers. And then we put the lines up, too.

What were conditions like at the construction site? Can you say anything about that?

No, they had it staked off for rich folk to build it, where they poured the concrete and bring boulders in and put it [*inaudible*].

Were things confusing or very orderly?

Orderly.

Orderly?

The towers we builded were out in the country. They just dug them down and then we set them footings down in there, [*inaudible*] it and fill it back in, and then rebuild from it. [*Inaudible*] out of the ground [*inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*] the lights to go on up [*inaudible*].

Most of the workers lived in Charlestown or Louisville?

Oh, they from everywhere.

Oh, something I forgot to ask you. Who worked there, what types of people, and where did they come from? Were they mostly from Eastern Kentucky and this area?

They came from all over.

All over the United States?

I had an idea of [*inaudible*] coming here from [*inaudible*] states, I mean [*inaudible*] where all they from. Like I said, we had 19,000 down here during this last war, the Vietnam war. And they didn't make no powder then. They made powder during the Korean war. That paid for the economy during that.

How did people get along at that time? This is during construction?

I reckon they got along pretty good.

They got along pretty good?

I reckon.

Were there any problems between locals, people who had lived here for a long time, and the people who were moving in?

I don't think so. Of course they bought up lots of their land. They had to move out.

So what did you hear about that? Not being from around here, what did you hear about . . .

I think most the people were willing to sell their land.

They were willing to sell their land?

Ah-huh.

Back to how people got along. What about Whites and non-Whites? [Inaudible].

They didn't have too many colored people working down here. We had some during this last Vietnam war. We had several of them working in that. Not several; we had some. Mostly Whites. We had some, some in supervision.

Were you Union on your job?

Yeah.

You were Union? Were there any problems between Union and non-Union?

No. On line construction, something like that, they would all be Union.

They would all be Union? Okay. What about did you hear about problems in other areas?

I don't think so.

Don't think there were any? Okay.

There could have been. I don't know.

What did construction employees do, or people that you would have known at the time, what did you do on the evenings and weekends?

Maybe I'd go to Louisville, see a show or something.

Did you have a lot of free time or was there a lot of work?

No, there wasn't much free time.

Not much free time.

My wife's uncle, he had two trucks sent in, and he'd have me take his trucks down on Saturday and have the oil changed in them. Not all the time, but when it needed it. Get the tanks filled up with gas and so forth.

This was your uncle?

My wife's uncle. He had two trucks [*inaudible*]. He had trucks when Miller and I first went to work together, too.

So you got married after you moved here, right?

I got married after I came out of the service.

In '46, or '45, '46?

This'll be our 50th anniversary in August. I mean 52, 52nd. We celebrated our 50th two years ago. We built a tower line [*inaudible*] from Louisville to way down the other side of Boston, down in Kentucky. We built that [*inaudible*] electric [*inaudible*].

What time did you join the service?

I went in December of '42.

You may not have been here then. Do you remember any POWs, Prisoners of War, working at the construction site?

I don't think they did, but they brought a bunch of them in from Puerto Rico.

But that was after construction was over, right? That was after World War II was over?

No, during the war, there. I don't know what they done. Of course, I were overseas then.

They were there during World War II, during the time that you were overseas.

They sold them buildings afterward. One of the guys [*inaudible*] was still here this time, and he told how they'd start cooking, [*inaudible*] road go down there past the administration building, they had tents down there, [*inaudible*] done all that cooking, they'd start cooking breakfast at 2:00 in the morning down [*inaudible*].

Down at the construction site?

[*Inaudible*] for the people working up there.

So did DuPont fix the people working for them breakfast?

DuPont had a cafeteria. Good Year had one, too.

Is this during construction that they would start at 2:00?

No, it was during the war. What one of them cooks told me. I wasn't there. They'd start preparing for it.

At 2:00 in the morning. It's early. I never did finish asking you. You said you got married when you came back from the war? Did you live in Watson the whole time that you were working here on construction?

Yeah.

How did both Watson and Charlestown change? Or did they change during Construction?

Charlestown did. Even in this Korean war, I saw people in their tents out there.

Even in the Korean war there were people sleeping in tents?

During the Korean war it never did. This last war, the Vietnam War, where we had 19,000 working here.

During Vietnam?

During Vietnam. [*Inaudible*].

What about Watson, did it change much?

No, I think it stayed about the same.

When you first moved there, what was the population?

I wouldn't know. I doubt that it had much more than 100 or so people [*inaudible*].

. . . stayed a small town?

M-hm.

Did Charlestown change in any other ways, besides population?

. . . know too much about Charlestown until after I came here to live. They had a U.S.O. building down there. They build that for the soldiers.

U.S.O. in Watson?

No.

In Charlestown.

It's the community building down there now [*inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*] World War II over with they made a community building out of it. But it was built for the U.S.O.

You came back from the war in 1945, was it? And then you came to Charlestown then?

And I went right back to work for the plant here.

Did you go to work this time for Miller, again?

No, government.

What was your job then?

I worked on the lines to begin with and then we started storing powder [*inaudible*], and I had about six or seven, eight men working for me. [*Inaudible*] that powder in storage a year, and then we put the [*inaudible*] paper in there, [*inaudible*] purple paper. And then we had checked all them every year. And if it hadn't turned white, then we had to take that can out. That showed that something happened to the powder, [*inaudible*] bad and stuff. I went into what they call surveillance.

So first you were in lines, maintenance?

I worked on the line loading some of them Charlie's.

On the assembly line. I thought you meant working on the power lines again.

And then [*inaudible*] took over a crew [*inaudible*]. We had an igloo blow up down there this time. [*Inaudible*]. And three was killed in it.

When was that?

When did that igloo blow up down there, Tootsie? We had three people killed in it. And then they give me back my old job [*inaudible*]. So I took over surveillance. The men worked for me on it. We had [*inaudible*] loading black powder on some igniter blow up, too. Two were killed in it. There wasn't nothing left at that table, just a big hole. [*inaudible*] and igniter line there. It just sheared that there off just like you took a saw and sawed it, concrete walls. But they was [*inaudible*] through there, and they brought that powder up to the line and dumped it in a hopper up there, and they was supposed to take in [*inaudible*]. They had big heavy aluminum cans about that big around and stand up like [*gestures*] tall. And they were supposed to have not leave them up there. They was supposed to take them back to the receiving magazine down there. They didn't do it. So that's what they came up with [*inaudible*]. And that fire got hot and that there can was just like a bomb going off. When it got hot, it just sheared that concrete off. But after that, then, all that powder went to an igniter line had it's own little cardboard box, six pound. They done away with all them aluminum can [*inaudible*].

So they changed it. They didn't use aluminum cans anymore.

[*Inaudible*]. Of course they wasn't supposed to leave that up there. That can. When they went up there and filled them, if they had any left, they was supposed to take them down to what they call a receiving magazine. But they left it up there, and that's what the investigation came up with. [*Inaudible*] blast [*inaudible*]. Three in the igloo and two on the igniter line.

. . . did you go back to the plant for a job?

Well, I needed a job and [*inaudible*] they were hiring. So I just went there. I went to the Quarter Master first, and they hired me, but I heard about the arsenal [*inaudible*] so I had came on up here. Couldn't [*inaudible*] work down there. [*inaudible*] and see part of the old Quarter Master over there on the right.

In Jeffersonville?

Yeah. Part of that caught on fire and burned down here about four or five years ago. But they should have rebuilt it. See, that was there during the Civil War. But the [*inaudible*] is still there. But then they had all them stewards' houses back behind there. They made parachutes in there and I don't know what [*inaudible*] during this last war. [*Inaudible*] old quarter master had it during the Civil War.

Why did you leave the Quarter Master and not start working there and come on up here?

I heard about this up there and I shouldn't be up here; so I did. They hired me in down there and then I came on up that afternoon. I was supposed to go to work there the next day. [*Inaudible*] up here. They hired me up here.

Was it two facilities still then? Indiana Ordnance Works and Hoosier Ordnance Plant? Was it still two?

It wasn't this last time.

Well, I mean when you first got the job?

Yeah.

Which one did you work for? You had been working for Indiana, right?

Yeah, I [*inaudible*]. But two different ones had it. Good Year ran it down the other end and DuPont ran this up here.

So since you were working for the government, did you work just on one plant? Or did you work both?

Everywhere. [*Inaudible*]. We had powder stored up there, too.

So you worked up there, too?

[*Inaudible*].

Was that true of most of the government employees, they worked all over?

The crew I [*inaudible*], I would take them up there. They would check that powder. See, that powder had to be checked all the time, because it was in storage so long. I had all three plants.

This time, when you were doing that, was that Union or non-Union?

It was Union this time. It didn't bother me [*inaudible*] the government. They went down on site twice this time. It didn't have no Union before that. This last time, during the Vietnam war, they had Union in it. They walked out. Striked two times.

When you worked there, were there many strikes? Not just in what . . . ?

No, just that two times they had it.

What were the working conditions like there?

They had good working conditions.

When you worked on the line, was that your first time to do that kind of work, an assembly line? What did you think about it?

I didn't like it.

Why didn't you . . . ?

But then after a little while, we had our powder in storage, and then the safety man, he told me about it. Told me [*inaudible*]. So I [*inaudible*] foreman over that [*inaudible*].

So how long did you work on the assembly line?

[*Inaudible*] about a year on it. But then after that powder in storage, [*inaudible*] a year. Even before it was a year old, I took a crew out there. We had to test all the lightning rods on it. We had four lightning rods on each one [*inaudible*]. Three or four. We'd test all them to see if we had any problems [*inaudible*]. They make [*inaudible*].

Was your work stressful or not?

No. I enjoyed it.

How was the pay, if you don't mind my asking?

It wasn't too much. I was at the top of the grade when I retired from down there, and I think I only took $6-something.

You retired in what year?

When'd I retire, Tootsie? Oh, '74. May of '74 I retired.

And you were top pay rate then?

Yeah. [*Inaudible*] higher I could go.

What about when you were on the assembly line? Do you remember how much the pay was then?

I think at that time, that's just after World War II, I think they were only paying about 50 cents an hour or something like that.

About 50 cents? Much less than Miller, huh?

Yeah.

What about when you first went to being supervisor, checking the powder storage?

I don't know [*inaudible*]. About $3.00 or something [*inaudible*]. They closed the plant down after World War II. So I went back with Miller. I needed a job and Miller put me back to work then. We built a line from Oakland City to Princeton. But not no tower line. [*Inaudible*] pole line.

You were married then?

I liked Miller. Miller was a mighty fine company.

After you got out of the service, why did you go to here rather than to work for Miller?

We had to keep moving around then. That was after I was married, then. The Air Force was good to us. See, I took my basic in Miami Beach, and then we run up to West Palm Beach and my wife came down and then I lived off the base, and then our oldest boy was born in the Breaker Hotel, the Air Force [*inaudible*]. That's the most noted hotel [*inaudible*]. And they made a hospital out of that, and all I had to do, I think they got 65 cents a day for her meals. Stayed in there two weeks.

That was even cheap back then.

If we needed a doctor, they'd just send him up to the house. [*Inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*] alright for you to take her to the base for you to see the doctor, but if you wanted them to come to the house, they would come. The Air Force was good.

Was this base here important to the defense effort, the war effort, during World War II?

You mean this one here?

Yeah.

Oh, yeah. This was the biggest powder plant they had.

What about during Korea and Vietnam? Was it . . . ?

It was then, too. And then was this time. I don't think any other plants shipped any other charges overseas this time, except for us.

I didn't know that.

I could be wrong on that. [*Inaudible*] charges for them [*inaudible*] them big [*inaudible*]. They stood about like that, big old charges [*inaudible*]. . .

About 40 inches high, huh?

. . . big old guns that they used. Loaded 16 inch powder. About that long, about that big around. They stacked all them on top of one another. I forget how much them charges weighed.

That was that stick powder?

M-hm.

Were you ever worried about working up there? Did it ever bother you?

No.

You felt like it was safe? What were the other people working at the plant like, when you came back from the service?

About the only ones working there then was they opened it up and just veterans were working there.

Only veterans working there?

Mostly.

Were there any women working there still?

Hm-m. Not then.

. . . the plant still operating?

No. They closed down. And then we opened back up.

So when you got back, they had already shut it down?

Oh, yeah. It had been shut down. . . . about 300 and something working down there.

Right now? You have quite a few.

I get a letter from Lee Hamilton. Ever once in a while, he'd send them letters out, and he told me that they was going to hire 300 more at that [*inaudible*].

Who is Lee Hamilton?

He's a U.S. Representative.

Indianan Representative?

Yeah. He sent out letters every so often. [*Inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*].

Do you hope you get called back? No, okay. Do you know if the plant provided day care facilities?

No, I don't think so.

Was there a company newspaper or plant newspaper when you were there, or some kind of newspaper?

No, there was this last time. We had a plant . . .

There was during Vietnam? But there wasn't any time you worked there?

Yeah. See, I was there working in Vietnam.

During World War II there wasn't? Or before and after?

There could have been. I don't know. But they called it *The Powder Board.*

This again would have been working at the plant when you weren't there. Did you ever hear about the plant being segregated in any way?

No.

This doesn't mean Black and White, but Black and White or male and female or anything.

Nope, didn't have nothing like that. [*Inaudible*] in the army. I went to India, and we had a PX over there, and they [*inaudible*] snack bar [*inaudible*]. I took it over there and we made ice cream every other day and then we had coke. That's the only place in the place you could get anything cold. And they had a Colored PX up there, but all they had just a little old room in there and they didn't have hardly nothing up there. They couldn't have nothing cold, no ice cream or coke. But two of them worked for me there. They would dip ice cream for me there, [*inaudible*], and they were well-to-do. They in business and they wanted me to [*inaudible*] work for them after . . .

Where was this in India?

Up in Hassam, India. Right around where lots of tea plantations were. The British had . . .

All their hill stations up in there. That's a nice area.

When we left there, we left everything. Trucks, all the [*inaudible*]. I had that ice cream machine there and the coke machine there. But that was the only place on base with anything cold. All them trucks, all that stuff, left [*inaudible*].

Just left it there, huh? Do you know if during the war there were any morale boosting programs or "why we fight" promotions, things to boost the morale of the people working there?

Yeah, I think they done that some.

. . . what the Army/Navy "E" Award is?

[*Inaudible*].

That was sometime when you weren't there. So the plant up there won five "E" Awards, and I'm curious. I don't know what "E" stands for.

[*Inaudible*]?

Yeah. It was awarded I believe five times it won the award.

I think their [*inaudible*] awards there this time [*inaudible*].

How long after the plant closed did you get back?

It ran after I was retired from there.

No, I mean when you got back from the service?

It wasn't running.

How long had it been . . . ?

I reckon soon as the war was over, but they just closed it I reckon. Yeah, I went to Quarter Master and they hired [*inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*] over there the next day and somebody was going down to the plant [*inaudible*]. [*Inaudible*] up there. [*Inaudible*] during that Korean war, they made lots of parachutes [*inaudible*].

During production, did people save their money?

Some of them did. [*Inaudible*]. Black powder plant [*inaudible*] use it.

That's the one built in the '80s?

Yeah. No, it was built in the '70s. They were just building that when I retired. They ran this [*inaudible*]. I don't think they ever did make much. It's still just sitting up there.

Do you know if during the war, when there were all the people here, did what people did for entertainment change, after the Construction Era, when you went into operations, even though you weren't here?

No, they built that U.S.O. building down there after that. It wasn't there when I went to the service. It wasn't there.

What happened there?

The U.S.O., they had it scattered all over the country for the soldiers. And there'd be girls in there and I reckon they would dance with them, maybe and so forth. They'd have refreshments and something, a place for the boys to go.

Do you know if many people gambled?

Now, in Christmas of 19 . . . there used to be a lot . . .

[*end of side 1; beginning of side 2*]

. . . *So that was in 1950?*

In 1950 I believe, yeah, I believe was when they closed it down, best I remember.

Did a lot of people go down to Jeffersonville to gamble?

Yeah, I think they did.

Lots of the people working out at the plants?

And then the Greyhound out there. They had them greyhound dogs out there.

Was that in Jeffersonville, too?

Clarksville. Our base down in Florida [*inaudible*] base they had a Greyhound there, too.

Did you ever hear about how people got along during the war here?

They got along pretty good. Of course, [*inaudible*] stuck to ration. [*Inaudible*] people have so much assistance, depending on how many in the family. They would give you a book. If it said sugar, coffee and bacon.

Oh, a ration ticket.

They had it in World War II, but during the Korean and Vietnam war [*inaudible*].

How did things change from when you left to go into the war and when you came back in town, in the area of housing and food?

When I came back, [*inaudible*] money. It wasn't rationed then.

I meant in, I guess cost. Was housing more expensive? It was cheaper when you got back?

About the same.

What about food? Was it cheaper or more expensive?

I think about the same.

So those two things didn't change very much?

I bought a house down on Allison Lane down there with seven rooms I bet. He had a store in it, part of it, and it was built during the war, and I bought that for $3200.

For $3200?

Yeah.

In 1940 . . . ?

[*Inaudible*] out of the service. I lived up there in one of these project houses for about a month. I saw that in the paper and I went down there and bought it.

What were the project houses like?

They're still out there.

But I'm wondering about then. Did you live in Pleasant Ridge?

The one at the top of the hill up there. The first one up there. They had lots of people living up there. And then they sold them, see, afterwards. A friend of mine, I think he had three of them houses. He rented them out. [*Inaudible*] almost all of them he rented out, of course lots of people own it. Lots of them fix them up where they're pretty nice homes.

When you lived in yours, was it a nice house, or was it not too nice?

No, it wasn't too nice.

Why do you say that?

They was just . . . wasn't nothing fancy. They had a bath, some of them had showers, but there wasn't no furnace. You just had a big stove.

Was there a change in the quality of life here, in this area, being Watson or Charlestown, between when you left to go in the service and when you came back?

I wouldn't know much about what it was before I went in the service, because I done said it, I boarded down there at Watson.

And so you think Watson and Charlestown aren't too comparable? They don't compare?

Yeah, not too many people lived down in Watson, then. . . . town [*inaudible*] build up a whole lot since then, till World War II got over. Been lots of nice homes built in Charlestown. Of course a better projects. You still got them houses the government built up there. [*Inaudible*]. Lots of people have fixed them up where they're pretty nice.

Do you know what happened to the people who had worked at the plant, when the war ended? Did you ever hear anything about them?

Lots of them went back to Kentucky, I reckon. And [*inaudible*] Kentucky. Of course, some stayed.

The people who lived around here, did they encourage people to stay, or did they not?

I think most of them were friendly to us. During this last war, we had 19,000 working down there at one time and what not. Because before that, the end of World War II, [*inaudible*] no telling how many thousand they had [*inaudible*].

I guess I don't have any more questions. Is there anything you want to say about the plant? Anything I left out?

I enjoyed it. [*Inaudible*] plant was good to me. I volunteer at the hospital, and [*inaudible*] out at the hospital [*inaudible*] the hospital got to hold on to that second floor over there, now. [*Inaudible*] so forth. They need more space.

This is the hospital plant?

Out here.

Out here.

We needed more room, and they rented a whole lots of office space over there.

Yeah, because that's what is happening out there now, is they're renting places to commercial interests. Your wife worked at the plant during the war?

No, she didn't work there.

Is she from Charlestown?

No, she's from Kentucky.

From how far away?

You know where [*inaudible*]?

No.

Greenville, Kentucky? Central City?

Now, I've been through Greenville and Central City.

Greenville is the County Seat. That's where she worked. She was raised over in [*inaudible*].

How did you meet her here? Did she come up here to work?

She went up in Detroit and then she came back to Kentucky, and stayed down there. And I come across Kentucky and married her.

She didn't live here during the war or work here during the war?

Hm-m. No, she wasn't very old. The war started [*inaudible*] World War II.

Oh, she wouldn't have been old enough to work there?

She went to Detroit and [*inaudible*] during the war.

[*End of Interview*]

HARRY PAYNE AND LUCILLE PAYNE (wife of H. Payne)
June 23, 1994
Clarksville, Indiana
Steve Gaither, Interviewer

First, could you just tell me a little bit about when you moved to Charlestown, what time you moved to Charlestown, what you've just told me?

I came to Charlestown in 1933, June the 6th. And I've been there ever since, too. I've been here five years at this retirement home, [*inaudible*] moved in but I've lived in Charlestown about 50 [*inaudible*] years.

Where did you move from?

An adjoining county, Salem, Indiana is the county seat of Washington County. I graduated from high school there in Salem.

Why did you move here?

Why?

M-hm.

Well, I went to school and then off to the barber's school and it was a little bit, had used several boys in Southern Indiana in the barber shop, a six chair shop, and he had pretty good luck with them. He liked them, he had a lot of confidence in them, but the depression came along, it was a six chair shop, and they laid two of us off. I remember Ralph Ward. He came here, he came down to Charlestown, I went to Anderson for a little while, but Ralph Ward was the one that got me in Charlestown. He called me up and told me that the fellow that owned this barber shop was going to be a game warden, work for the state, and he was interested in selling it or renting it or something, and that's the reason I came here.

So when you first heard the plant was going to be built, you were living in Charlestown?

Oh, yes. I came here in '33 and they started the plant in '40. September in '40, when they started when they started building the plant. I was there about ten years before the plant came.

Were you living alone or with your family?

I was single when I came to Charlestown, but I met a wonderful girl and I married her. So we've been married 58 years. Yeah. She's out here playing cards now. She's still with me.

Can you describe Charlestown when you first moved here? What was it like?

Well, it was just a small country town with a population of about 900.

Was it 900 in '33?

Nineteen hundred and thirty-three. And it was made up mostly of retired farmers. Now, there was a few people that they run an [*inaudible*] in Charlestown to Louisville and some people commuted back and forth and had some jobs in Louisville. It was kind of a bedroom town and a retired town of retired farmers. Now,

this bunch of people, industrious, law-abiding citizens. It was a nice country town. I've enjoyed living in Charlestown real well. In fact, I've been homesick to come back to Charlestown. I'm only 14 miles away but just moving away, after you live in a place 50 years, up-rooted, and it gives you a little . . . I would have said home sickness is the worst sickness there is and I've experienced it [*inaudible*].

What were the streets and buildings like?

Well, they were pretty well run down when I first came there, but they had a urban renewal program what really built it up a lot.

Was that before the plant or the urban renewal program?

Urban renewal started I think about 1960. There's the way it looked when I came. This was my shop right there.

Oh really, I've seen this picture before.

Oh, there's an air view of Charlestown about the time the plant came here. My shop is down on this end. But when I moved up here, when I quit, my shop was right in here. I moved down here about 30 years, but then I moved up here in 1966. I stayed there until I retired. But it was a nice little . . . I didn't know of any sewer system or water system. I had a tank and I had to carry my water from the cistern for the water to shave and shampoo, like for the shop.

For the shop you carried your water?

Yeah. But during that war, that's when they put the, or before the war came, they completed the waterworks. We did have water but most of the sewers was built during the war here. I know that they went down the street there 14 feet and my shop was going--they just had to kind of shovel the mud out of it where it [*inaudible*] in there. During the time that the building of the plant, there was about 30,000 people there and it made a really congested . . . If you wanted to go very fast or get to another location you couldn't walk up the street because there's too many people. You had to walk on the outside or in the street if you're in a hurry.

Oh, you couldn't walk up the sidewalk, you had to go out into . . .

It seemed like that all 30,000 people were there in Charlestown but of course they wasn't, there wasn't no room for them, they drove from distant places and then they run commuter trains and things from rural, up there, to bring the workers. But it made a real congested thing on the schools and the neighborhood. We had to cope with it.

I want to ask you a few questions about the land acquisition, when the government first started buying land there. What was the reaction of most people in Charlestown when they first heard that Dupont or that the government was looking to buy land?

Well, it could be hard to answer that. They didn't realize the magnitude of the thing. There's fellow who come in here from Dupont. Allen Barnes, our real estate man here kind of negotiated the forms, but that was kind of a stressful time with buying those homes and they had to move out, but they paid an enormous price for them. That's the only way they could get possession of them.

What I was kind of curious about was before they were actually buying the land, when they just heard about it. Were people excited about being able to sell their land or were they disappointed or what . . . ?

No, I don't think they originally [*inaudible*] had that attitude because of the crowded conditions [*inaudible*]. If it was taken to a vote, I don't think it would have passed. But still, they had to have this munition plant and everybody tried to cooperate because the war was going on and we wanted to get that over with.

So do you think that the people who did sell land to the government or to Dupont, did their feelings change about it? If, like you say, it had gone to a vote it wouldn't have passed, so some people were, perhaps, unhappy that they were buying the land. Did their feelings change?

Well, I don't think there's an ill feeling. It was just the idea of leaving their home and being uprooted and that was quite a change for them, I don't think they were so opposed to the change, but it did work a hardship on a lot of them.

Did you or anybody you were related to own land that was to be bought?

No, no.

Did land prices in the area go up because of the land purchases?

Well, yes. I don't know about outside of the area, where the plant was going to be, But they paid enormous prices for all those up in [*inaudible*]. I don't remember what the amount was but in order to get possession and to keep these people happy they had to pay a pretty good price for them. That kept them happy, too.

So, you say they were paid quite a bit for their land . . .

They were paid well for their trouble.

Was it generally enough to buy land outside of the area?

Yes, it would be more than enough I would think. They weren't really hurt financially, it was just a emotional thing of leaving their neighborhood.

Did you know some people took the government to court over what they were paying for land?

I can't remember any specific person that did that. I think some of them, after they come in and kind of started, I think they kind of held out as long as they could to raise the price of it. But I don't remember anybody bringing suit because they had to move. It could have happened, but I don't remember any of that with any of them. I knew most of those people down in there. I don't remember anybody being in litigation in any way.

Have you ever heard of Longview Beach?

That's down on the river. Charlestown, that's where they get their water. There's wells. Of course, this river water seeps through the sun and purifies it and that's where Charlestown got her water.

Why was it called 'Longview Beach'?

I really don't know. There was just some summer cottages there. There was Six Mile Island that was there, too, right across from it.

Six Mile Island or Twelve Mile Island?

It would be twelve miles. Six miles, that's where this shipping port is now. I believe it'd be Twelve Mile Island. You have a Six, a Twelve and a Eighteen, but that would be the Twelve Island.

What were the summer cottages like there?

Well, they were just very common, nothing elaborate, just comfortable.

How did people use them? What were they used for?

Well, mostly just for recreation. There was picnics and used it for just kind of a summer home. People out of Jeff and [*inaudible*] county.

Mostly people from this area?

Yes.

Would they spend the weekend there or spend a month there?

Oh, yes. Some of them lived there permanently. There was some permanent cottages. I think they lived there year-around. My mother-in-law, brother-in-law, after a while, he lived there a while, but he used it a lot as just a summer home.

So some of both?

Yeah.

Some people lived out there for a long time, some people just visited?

Yeah. A few lived there permanently, but most of them was just used through the summer.

Can you describe how Charlestown changed when construction began?

Well, there was enormous change. If you went to the bank you'd be standing in line. It was a lot of waiting in line for groceries, banks. It was the biggest disruption to the school, the hectic [*inaudible*] more than anything, the crowded conditions. The government did build a school. It's not in operation now. They're all from the [*inaudible*] School Association, but they did build a school.

What were the conditions at the construction site like?

The conditions in the town?

No, at the construction site, out where they were building the plant?

I don't get your question.

What were the conditions out at the construction site when they were building the plant?

It was no problem. That didn't disrupt life in Charlestown other than just the crowded conditions and people who had lived there all their life that didn't like the strangers. But they're all nice people, very little problems and no crimes that amount to anything. Things went pretty smooth.

Do you know if, at the construction site, did they have housing for the people who came there to work?

They have a bunch of houses up there now, but most of those were for the executives, not for the production workers. Most of those were just for executives. Those houses are still being used. I don't hear much about them now, but it was a beautiful, overlooking the river. They were nice, not expensive homes and small, but as far as I know, they're still . . . I guess most of them are still up. I really don't know who lives in them now.

Do you know if for the workers, did they maybe have tents set up?

Did they do what?

Have big tents for the workers to stay in, or do you think they probably had no place for the workers to stay? The workers found all their living arrangements outside of the work site?

The people that lived there, they made apartments out of chicken houses and they were living in baseboard boxes and every place around there. It was throwed at them all at once. There was no preparation for it.

Most of the workers lived in the town, in Charlestown, or did they find places outside of the town?

No, it was not many. I'd say 90 percent of them were outside, there just weren't that many young people of production [*inaudible*]. They drove [*inaudible*] eighty miles from Bloomington. They drove a long distance.

You mean they lived in Bloomington?

Yes and they commuted. There just wasn't any place to live in Salem and New Albany and Louisville, Jeffersonville, and here to Louisville because there was no place to live here.

How long would it take to commute between here and . . .

Louisville was about 100 miles. It'd take you a couple of hours at [*inaudible*] miles an hour. [*Inaudible*] at 50 miles an hour. They spent about as much time in commuting as they did working, I expect.

I expect so. What kinds of people worked there?

Well, not many professional people. Of course, a lot of carpenters and plumbers and people with trades like that because that's what they used, but they were all nice, nice people.

Did a lot come from far away or were most from this area?

Well, I expect Bloomington was about the farthest they come from. Of course, some people come here permanent to live. They made their home here and I know a few people that moved here and made their home here.

Did the Louisville area have enough workers to supply all the labor that was needed for construction, or did people come in from different areas of the country?

I'd say they come in from different areas of the country. At that time there was a lot of unemployment. In 1940, it was just the throws of the Depression and there was an awful lot of people out of work. I don't think they had any difficulty in getting workers. I don't think they did.

How did people get along during construction?

Well, you would have thought there would have been lots of crime, but everybody just cooperated. We all tried to live together. I'd say they got along real well to be so crowded people moving in their town.

Did businesses do real well then or not?

Oh, yes. Whiskey stores did well, but there was very little drunkenness. A lot of people drank [*inaudible*]. There was some clothing stores moved in there. [*Inaudible*]. In fact, we had more work than we could do in the barber shop. Of course, a barber shop was not a big way you could make a lot of money anyway. It brought a lot of money to the community.

Back to about people getting along. Did the people who had lived here for a long time, did they mix much? Did they get together with the people who had moved in from other areas, do you know?

Well, not too readily. They gradually did, I think. I don't think they had open arms when they first came. They were strangers, you know, but everybody tried to cooperate with them.

What about White people with non-White people when they first moved in? Did or did not many non-White people move here?

I think there was a few. I can't just pinpoint their names. Not many Colored people moved in the housing project. The government built a big housing project but there was no colors in that. Charlestown had several Colored people living on the south side of us here but there was never no race riot. We all got along real well.

What did construction employees do on the evenings and weekends, besides drink whiskey?

I really don't know. [*Inaudible*] of entertainment. There was no entertainment. I really don't know. [*Inaudible*] did pass the time away.

Did they have time for entertainment? Did they on weekends and evenings have to still work? Maybe not work at the site but work washing clothes?

Just chores. They worked around the clock, but we had people sleeping in, some people sleeping at night, some in the daytime. I don't remember what the recreational program was. Anyway, it didn't cause any problem.

Did the town of Charlestown itself change during the construction, just during the construction period, in any way?

Oh, yes. It jumped, you see, from 900 hundred people to, well, I wouldn't know what the population was but Charlestown is about 6,000 now, but new homes have been built since then.

What did the town itself do to cope with that? For instance, new housing going up or businesses coming in, you mentioned a couple, maybe the police force?

Some new police was added on during construction, not many. We had about one when I went there in '33. I don't think they put on but two extra ones. But there was very little trouble, no fist fights and things, very few. We didn't know a thing about them, there might have been some that we didn't know anything about.

A lot of people, I've heard, moved into chicken coops or whatever they could.

Yes, we got a lot of traders in, too.

Did the city pass any regulations concerning where people lived during the construction?

No, I don't know of any.

What about in the areas of public utilities, water, sewage disposal and garbage pickup? Since you had the population increase, did that change any?

Well, yes, it would, but it was lucky the town was in the process of putting in sewers about that time. They hadn't started construction but I think that was completed mostly after the plant came in, the sewers. Now, we already had the water system.

The city had just put in a new water system.

Yes. But we still had some outside toilets till they put in the sewer system.

What was the transition period like between construction and when the plant started operating? Was there a lull, did the population go down and then increase again or what was it like, what happened?

Well, it seems it just gradually increased. The only time it ever went down was when a war was over. They [*inaudible*] closed it down. The population dropped then. That would have been in '44. That was the only time we had any drop in population.

What did they do at the plant during the war?

The production part of it?

Yes.

I really don't know. Good Year come in there and made the bags and put this powder in and loaded the bags. It went into shells. I really don't know the nature, really, of the work or the production. We only had one bad explosion that killed about three people and broke some window [*inaudible*] in Charlestown on the square.

I want to ask you some questions like that one which you may or may not know anything about, I don't know. They're questions about what went on at the plant, and I'm curious to how people who didn't work at the plant saw the plant during that time? How was the pay at the plant?

Well, the pay at that time was really lower. The pay was pretty good. I don't remember the exact figures what they get per hour out there, but they were paid well for their work. That's the reason they came here, for the money that was in it.

How was the pay outside of the plant, was there a big difference? You said pay was pretty low in that period. Pay outside of the plant, did it go up, also, with the plant?

Well, I have no way of knowing. I expect it did. If you was wanting some repair work on your home, it would cost a little more. [*Inaudible*] they would be a little higher, I guess. I couldn't give you any figures on that.

Do you know or not if the pay was the same for everybody, for both the men and the women who worked out there?

I really don't know. I never heard any dissatisfaction with the pay. I'd say it was all equal, more than it is now.

More equal than now?

Well, it seems that women are getting the bad end of the deal now. They're doing mens' work but not getting paid mens' wages for it.

Did most people save their money, or did they spend it as soon as they got it?

Well, most of it was [*inaudible*]. It wasn't elaborate spending. It was maybe living out of it.

So, what did they spend their money on? Was it just living or . . .

Food and shelter most of it was spent on. That was about the only thing there was around to spend it on.

Did it change, or how did it change at this time during plant operation with people getting along in the same areas such as the local people who had lived in the Charlestown area a long time and the people who were from other areas, did that change?

All that I remember, one fellow that was dissatisfied and he didn't like it at all and he let everybody know it was he didn't want any newcomers in but other than that one fellow I don't remember of any complaints.

How did he complain, what did he say? Do you remember anything in particular?

Well, he just classified them as newcomers and he just didn't want to deal with them.

Oh, I see. Was there any difference between how adults got along and how children got along, or teenagers?

No, it made a hardship on the children in school for the crowded conditions. Some of them had to go, maybe extra hours or something. They couldn't take care of it, couldn't educate them all in the school period. But I don't remember much complaining about it, the conditions was like that and we had to cope what that.

What do you mean by they went extra hours at the school?

I can't remember, my wife was a teacher you want her to answer these questions? She would be in a better position to know about that than I would be.

If she wants to come in then that's fine. Do you want to ask her?

Well, it's up to you. If it would solve one of your problems then we'll try to get her.

Sure. Okay. You had said that newcomers and the people who had been there for a while, there was only one person who didn't like them. When the plant started operating, did they or did they not start mixing more?

I don't think he ever did. He was a good fellow in a way, but he had a funny disposition. I never saw a fellow just like him, but I don't think he ever softened up much.

Did other people start mixing more?

Yes. They went to our churches and our parliament and our lodges. There was a mixture there.

During this time, during plant operation, what did people do on the evenings and weekends?

I really don't know. I guess some of them had [*inaudible*] if they wanted, I guess some of them brought in [*inaudible*], some of them were hunters, I know, and fishermen, you had the Ohio River there, they had boats and they had recreation.

Did many people gamble?

Not many. There was a poker game going on up over my barbershop the 50 years I was there. But it was just a friendly game, no big deal, there was no gambling, no gambling to speak of.

Did the plant plan any kind of recreation activities, or did the city, did Charlestown?

They did for the children. They had Little League ball games and I don't know if the city planned it or if it was the school system or who was responsible for planning it, but they did build a nice ballpark there for the children. The Federal Government didn't do it. It was done with the means of the community and personnel put together.

Did the community, did Charlestown encourage the people who moved here from elsewhere, did Charlestown encourage them to stay or did they not?

Well, I think that they made them, you know, fairly welcome. Like you say, they [*inaudible*] our churches and not all of them, but a few of them. Sometime there was one of the officials at the plant was president of the Lions Club, not [*inaudible*] but executives of the plant.

Was there a higher incidence of illness during the war? Because of the higher population?

It looked like there would have been an outbreak but cemetery conditions, the state regulates that pretty well, when we asked about . . .

No specific [inaudible].

Oh, there might have been an outbreak of chicken pox or measles, you expect that in any community, really, bad or not bad.

So do you feel like it was or wasn't any worse than it would have been?

No, I don't feel like it would be.

The water supplies and after Charlestown got it's sewer system in, was that adequate to handle the population then?

Yes, I think so. A lot of them objected to the changeover, they didn't to do away with the outhouse, it cost too much to hook up with the sewer but there wasn't very much of that. Everybody realized the importance of that, of having a homemade sewer system, I can't think of the name for that.

Septic system?

Septic system, that's going to give you a lot of trouble.

This will probably be a difficult question to answer. I've asked you how Charlestown changed but how did, maybe the people in Charlestown change during this time, if they changed at all in, maybe, their morals or values or affluence?

That would be harder for me to answer accurately. I don't remember any incidences. As far as I know it was very smooth.

Was there a curfew during the war?

They tried to develop one at one time [*inaudible*]. I don't think there was much . . . teenage violence then as there is now. People were more respective. I would say there was no policy that was effective as yet. There wasn't any curfew. They might have tried to, it just seems like I just vaguely remember something about a curfew but I don't remember any instance of it or why they did it.

Did anybody dislike the plant because it made munitions, this is thinking of World War II?

Well, no. We got a lot of [*inaudible*] at times so that my [*inaudible*], that's an aggravation.

You got a lot of what?

Power houses, they're called it 'fly ash', I think. It's just ashes that fly from the coal burning. I had two big fire companies there. It really got into Charlestown. There was lots of aggravation with that but I don't remember any big problems with it.

(Lucille Payne): How do you do?

Hi.

L. Payne: I do good. To go by a shorter time. Yes, well, that was a short duration.

Okay, that was go get more kids to school?

L. Payne: Yes. During the day, like in second grade there'd be half of them come in the morning and half of them come during the afternoon.

But the school day wasn't any longer?

L. Payne: No. It wasn't longer when the children were given four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon. Now, it might have been longer [*inaudible*] day, but, you know, four hours of the morning, four hours the afternoon, I had the morning shift [*inaudible*], you know.

If you want to stay for the rest of the interview and, and I've just been asking your husband some questions and if you have anything to add, or if you would like to answer also.

L. Payne: I'll be glad to stay and if there's any thing I can answer . . .

Yes, speak up any time. Right now we're talking about the time during when the plant operated, during World War II. And I was asking if there was a curfew and whether anybody disliked the plant or spoke against the plant or anything during World War II because it made ammunition.

L. Payne: Well, of course everybody was making money. I guess they had to do what they were told. I thought they did a real good job of [*inaudible*] the war, there was a sign outside Charlestown that said, "Population 859."

Oh, yeah?

L. Payne: I remember that. And, of course after they built what they call 'the project', [*inaudible*] thousand people that came in to help in the beginning.

H. Payne: He's asking, I think he has the information on that.

She can go ahead, that's fine.

H. Payne: I just want our stories to go together (laughter).

It doesn't even matter if they don't.

L. Payne: When they built the plant, it was thirty thousand, wasn't that right?

H. Payne: I thought we had thirty thousand employed there. That was in construction, I think around eight thousand in production.

L. Payne: And I remember that sign that said 859 population before that. Very small place.

(End side one; Begin side two)

L. Payne: So there would be room for people to live there but of course we had people coming from all the towns around.

H. Payne: About everyone in the town had roomers, we had four at one time and they'd [*inaudible*].

Oh, really?

L. Payne: They lived in chicken houses, in the back office and . . .

Your roomers did . . .

L. Payne: No, not ours, others.

H. Payne: They lived in our house.

L. Payne: We had just built a new home. And we had, oh, let's see, our home is small, we had about three or four staying at a time, in the basement and upstairs and all of our house, we had a real little home and we filled it all.

So it was crowded everywhere then, huh?

L. Payne: Oh, yes. I think the area was about a radius of . . .

H. Payne: A hundred miles. A lot of them was from Bloomington, Seymour, Madison and he asked me that question, I think he asked me.

So how did the war and the plant affect everyday life in Charlestown? Of course, it was more crowded but . . .

H Payne: I don't think there was severe ill feeling. We all cooperated with it and made the best of it.

Did rental home property, did it rent, did it rise during the war?

H. Payne: Oh, yes. I was paying ten dollars a month for my shop and then they raised it to sixty dollars.

Sixty dollars? Wow, that's a big raise. Why did it go up so much?

H. Payne: Well, he lived in [*inaudible*] Indiana, he lived here, he was that game warden I told you about, well, he knew I wasn't getting filthy rich but he knew we had more business than we could take care of and he felt like he ought to have more rent. I think he went to forty dollars first and then later on I think he got up to sixty, I think.

That's still a big jump from ten dollars to forty dollars.

H. Payne: (laughter) Everything moved pretty fast back in them days.

Yeah, Yeah, I imagine. What about food? Food, produce?

L. Payne: They rationed. They rationed meat and produce . . . We had to have tickets to get sugar and meat and shoes . . .

H. Payne: I remember in Charlestown, that was federal regulations, every place was saying that.

. . . the prices of things to up?

H. Payne: If groceries were up I don't remember it.

L. Payne: I guess it did.

H. Payne: I guess (laughter).

Did any kind of groceries become hard to find, besides meat and things that were rationed?

L. Payne: I didn't notice anything except that we always had to have stamps for our meat and sugar, shoes.

H. Payne: I don't think that was a regulation for the whole United States, every time there were regulations like that I think . . . that wasn't due to the plant.

L. Payne: Oh, yes. That was due to the war.

Can you say anything about how the quality of life, did that change or not?

L. Payne: We still walked down the street at night and all, we weren't afraid then like we are now.

H. Payne: I don't think it changed the quality of life. We felt just as secure as we did before they came, I don't think there was any bad fear of things, of crime like there is now.

What about things like time to relax? You said everything moved fast then. Was life a lot busier during the war?

H. Payne: Oh, yes. Everybody, all the merchants and everybody was busy. [*Inaudible*].

That would be one way that quality of life might change, things were busier, your life was busier. Were there other things like that?

H. Payne: I don't think so. I don't think it disrupted things too much.

L. Payne: I think they worked together a lot in the way of trying to help people that wanted to work at the plant. I think people were real good about that.

H. Payne: Yes, I think everyone [*inaudible*] and make the best of it.

Did many women work at the plant?

H. Payne: Oh, yes.

L. Payne: Oh, yes.

Was this all during the war or only at certain times?

H. Payne: She worked out there in the [*inaudible*] after school was out.

L. Payne: During the war, I didn't teach for about five years so I went out. I worked from January to May at the plant.

Do you remember which year?

H. Payne: The war ended in '44, would be around in '43 or 42, along in that time.

L. Payne: I think about '43 or 44. [*Inaudible*] . . back to teaching and it was in [*inaudible*] was taught in one of the buildings that they used for an office building [*inaudible*]. We called it the arsenal building.

H. Payne: The administration done made that into a school building. There wasn't enough schools to house it so they made that administrative building into a school building.

Was this the administration building a little south of Charlestown?

H. Payne: It was almost built up in Charlestown.

Oh, that one that's built up at the end of Highway 3 now? That was the school building?

L. Payne: They used that for a school.

H. Payne: They used another one of the buildings [*inaudible*] they used to get them after school, too.

This was during the war?

L. Payne: In 1947.

Oh, that's right.

H. Payne: This was after the war.

L. Payne: That's when they used that administration building.

H. Payne: That was after the war.

L. Payne: That's when David started to school.

Did many minorities work in the plant?

Lucille Payne: Minorities?

Right, like African-Americans or Mexican-Americans or . . . ?

H. Payne: There wasn't enough Colored people, they didn't come in to work here, there weren't enough Colored people to . . .

L. Payne: Did they work at the plant? I don't remember. I don't remember seeing any.

Of the women who worked out there, would most have been working at some job, whether they worked at the plant or not, would they have found some sort of job or not?

L. Payne: A lot of them worked in the sewing machine . . .

H. Payne: You're not answering the question. He wants to know if they would have found employment if they didn't have that one?

If they didn't have that job at the plant would they have looked for some other job? I guess for yourself you probably wouldn't have or would you have?

H. Payne: I would have said they would be unemployed.

Would have been unemployed? Okay, would have worked in the house.

L. Payne: Well, they needed people to come there, they got people from other places at that time.

Out at the plant you just said they needed people to work there, they came from other places. Were there any severe labor shortages?

L. Payne: It just seemed like they was just glad to get the work, like come in from another place, they were glad to get work.

Did the plant advertise for people to work there in any way?

H. Payne: They had employment offices around different places that you could come from. I think those two things that aggravated people most was the expense of the thing. They had hired people and so many

of them would be in each other's way and that wouldn't be [*inaudible*] asleep someplace. And they destroyed so much that if they had a big lumber pile somewhere [*inaudible*] and people here, the loss of anything hurts. They would bury lots of hardware bolts, nails and things.

L. Payne: In the plant?

H. Payne: In the plant, yeah. It was awful bad to see that happen *[inaudible]*.

Were there ever any controversies out at the plant about who they did hire? For instance, these are just a couple of examples, if they were to hire, maybe somebody from outside of the area and some people thought maybe they should hire local, that would be one instance in a controversy.

L. Payne: I didn't hear anything like that.

H. Payne: I would remember [*inaudible*].

At the end of the war, did many people lose their jobs?

H. Payne: Oh, yeah. It was toned down, it was thirty thousand people [*inaudible*], it makes a big change. Of course, it wasn't all local but a lot of people was laid off in that.

What happened to those people? Meaning, did they stay here or did they go somewhere else . . .

H. Payne: Well, a few of them stayed here, made their homes here. Most of them went back to their own communities. A lot of people from Kentucky went back home.

Did the community change? Charlestown and the area, did it change after the end of the war?

H. Payne: Yes. It seemed like our town grew, it's about six thousand now.

L. Payne: It left an element that, well, for instance, the school system. There were a lot of them that stayed through this working project, they stayed and I think part of them are [*inaudible*] high caliber people but I think a lot of them are more like food stamp.

After the end of the war.

L. Payne: A lot of them. It made, well, the school system had a lot of that.

H. Payne: Well, most people were saying that they [*inaudible*] they had money, homes and farms. . . .

L. Payne: All of those people up in that project . . . they didn't know. Some of them, where they were, those cheaper project places . . . a lot lower.

H. Payne: They was just poor. There wasn't no discrimination to be poor, they just didn't . . .

L. Payne.: Well, I know, they didn't cause the trouble, except, like I said, for the food stamp . . . that's not too good. [*Inaudible*].

How did you mean, that this may have been bad for the school system?

L. Payne: Well, their I.Q.'s weren't as high as the normal.

H. Payne: Well, we've ordered school bus taxation and a lot of those people didn't have taxable property and it made higher taxes on the people who did pay for the public school.

L. Payne: It didn't turn out to be criminals or anything like that but . . .

H. Payne: [*Inaudible*] That wasn't a disgrace to them or anything but it did work a hardship on them and the township because they had to educate your children and [*inaudible*] but it was bound to hurt some.

L. Payne: A lot of nice people, I don't mean to talk against them, and there still is a lot of good people. But I . . . it made it harder in the school system and . . .

The plant's coming here. The two of you, from your point of view, has it been good or not so good, overall?

H. Payne: Well, I would say it was good for Charlestown. It drove a lot of people here. [*Inaudible*]. It would be more advantageous than it would be a liability. It was an asset. [*Inaudible*]. Eight or ten billion and you're [*inaudible*] some benefit. I think that's about what those plants cost, I think, because they had ten thousand acres they used for production.

That's about all the questions that I have. Is there anything that you would like to say concerning the plant or concerning its affects in the area or anything about it that you think is maybe interesting?

I think we'd just been a little sleepy village if the plant hadn't have come here. It's been a thriving community right now but it's been an asset to the neighborhood, I think.

During Korea and Vietnam, during those areas, how did Charlestown change then, and the plant?

H. Payne: It was just a repeat of the crowded conditions [*inaudible*]. Charlestown was going through a lot of different phases. It went through about three wars, urban renewal. Of course, that urban renewal, that was scheduled, that was supposed to make a [*inaudible*], they tore down all these buildings and replaced them with new ones and then it was a benefit to us, that probably wouldn't have happened if the war hadn't changed the conditions here.

I don't know anything about that other than you mentioned that earlier. That was 1964, you said?

H. Payne: Yeah, [*inaudible*], made kind of a park out of that.

H. Payne: This is a history of Charlestown.

[*Tape recorder turned off.*]

(*End of Interview*)

CHRISTINE RICHEY
July 7, 1994
Charlestown, Indiana
Steve Gaither, Interviewer

Let's see. I started at the plant in October, 1940. I was 20 years old at the time. My job was offered to me by Colonel Lewis. At the time, he was the administrative officer, and I was volunteering to sign up boys for the draft at the time, and Colonel Lewis came over to talk to Mr. (Frankie?) to see the typing teacher at Charlestown High School, and he asked if there were anybody that would like to have a job at the plant. So Mr. Lewis came over and talked to me and asked me if I'd like the job, and I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to have a job there." So I was employed immediately. And I worked there all during the construction, signing up. I worked in the personnel department and signed up people for . . . the employed people, for government only, not the contractors. Du Pont, E.I. duPont de Nemours was the contractor, and the construction was sublet to other contractors for the actual construction.

But you were only working with personnel in the government division?

Right. Then after we were ready to start operations, they built the big 703 Building, the Office Administration Building, and we moved from our temporary quarters over to that building, and from that time on, it was considered Ordnance, the Ordnance Department, and I worked in personnel then from then on, until--get my notes out here--let's see, I worked then until February '43, and I resigned to join my husband, who was stationed in Yuma, Arizona. He was in the 88th Engineer Battalion. And it was a bridge building outfit. So I went there and when I got there, they needed some help in the office; so they offered me a job at Yuma, Arizona. So I worked there for the Engineering Department until it was time for the boys to be sent on to another station. And from there, they went to Camp Swift, Texas, and I followed. And they needed people to work at Post Headquarters, so I got a job there, and I worked there until he went overseas. Then after that, I came back to Charlestown and worked for E.I. duPont de Nemours, and I worked for Mr. William Donaldson, who was the Assistant Manager, and I worked there until the end of the war, and let's see, I guess we call that VJ Day. What was that date? June 6th or something like that, '45.

Okay. So you worked till . . . ?

Till the very end of the war. And when they announced that the war had ended, why everybody just threw their pencils up in the air and just was so thrilled the war was over. So Mr. Donaldson asked me what I planned to do after that, and I said, "Well, I really need a job, so anything that you have to offer, I'd be tickled to death." He said, "Well, there probably won't be any employment here," because they closed everything down as fast as they could, and so then he . . . I said, "Well, I'd like to go back to work for the government." So he talked to Colonel Lewis, who was still there, and he arranged for me to come back to work for the personnel department for the government. So then I worked there until they--let's see, then they went on standby, and that's when I--they told all of us that if we could find a job anyplace, we should try to go ahead and take it. So I applied at War Assets in Louisville, and I got the job. So I worked over there for quite a while, until let's see, I guess it was Korean . . . about the time the Korean War, and then I got a chance to come back, and I got a job in the government office, and let's see I worked for the . . . in the property stock control area, supply division. And I worked there for quite a while, and then I got another job later with the Ordnance corps, a statistical clerk. Worked there for quite some time. And then I changed into a secretary position for the Ordnance corps, still at Indiana Arsenal. And then they closed down again to just a skeleton force; so I . . .

That was after Korea?

Yeah, after Korea. That was . . .

Fifty-six or seven?

I guess I should have been giving you these dates all along, too. I worked from, as a secretary there, from August the 9th, '54 to June 23rd, 1957.

These are the dates that are on the list you gave me or is it your list? Separate lists?

Well, I'll give you this list if you want.

Oh, okay.

Then I took a job with the Field Safety Office as a statistical clerk on June 24, 1957, and I worked in that office until April the 25th, 1965, and then I applied to for the secretary . . . commander's secretary position. On April 26, '65, I was hired for that job. And I worked there until May the 31st, I think it was, 1975 as secretary to the Commanding Officer. So that was approximately 10 years I worked in that office.

All right. Let's go back to before you started working there. You said that you were about 20 years old then?

M-hm.

And you were still single then?

Yeah.

And living with your family?

Right.

Had your family lived--you were living in Charlestown?

Yeah. I've lived here all my life.

All your life?

M-hm.

And can you describe Charlestown before there was any news that the plant was going to be built?

Well, Charlestown was a very small community, had approximately 800 to 900 people. We knew everybody in town. It was considered a bedroom town. Most people worked in Louisville. Other than . . . the only employment around here was the school system, and of course, the teachers and that sort of thing. There were a few jobs around town, but very few. Most everybody worked over in Louisville or in Jeffersonville and New Albany. And let's see what else can I tell?

Interjection by third party: *[Inaudible].*

Yeah, it was just a nice, quiet little town. And then when I graduated from high school, I was 17 years old. My father was killed by a train during a flood--the 1937 flood--which was in January of that year, and I was

a senior in high school. So I had planned to go to college, but due to the fact that he was killed by the train, I didn't get to go. So after I graduated from high school, I went to Brighton Stratton Business College in Louisville, and after I graduated from there, I got a job working for Louisville Coal Institute. I worked there for about a year and a half, and then I went to work for the Franklin Pioneer Corporation, and I was in the . . .

Also in Louisville?

In Louisville. Ah-huh. I worked in the real estate department, and I was working there at the time I got my offer from Colonel Lewis to go to work down at the plant.

For the people living in Charlestown, before the plant came, were most younger or older?

Well, I would . . . most of the . . . I guess there was probably more older people. In my high school class, I think there was about 23 that graduated. We started out with about 35 I think, and it was about 23 that graduated. I went to school from the first grade on through high school at the Jonathan Jennings School. It used to be in the town square.

What were the roads and buildings and public utilities like?

Well, we had . . . let's see . . . we didn't have any public utilities I guess in the beginning. We had cisterns. . . .

Were there wells along the street, or all private cisterns?

We had private wells. In our home, we had two wells. We would turn the water on first one and then the other, and then--they were cisterns--and you had to filter that through charcoal. And that was our only water supply. And the way they would do when the cistern would get low, well then they would clean it out, wash it out, and then they would start the new clean water going in, and then use that with the other system. And then vice versa. So then . . . and then I remember when they put electricity into our house. My brother worked for, let's see, Fairbanks and Morris, over in Louisville, and so he put our electric lines in.

Do you know about what year that was?

Oh, let's see. I guess that I must have been probably about 10 years old.

So about 1930 or so?

About 1930 I guess. And I remember when we got our first washing machine. My brother sold it to the family. It was a Fairbanks and Morris model. And we thought that was great. You didn't have to use a ringer anymore. *(Laughs)* Do all that by hand. We used to have to wash the clothes. So I guess my mother washed them on a board and rinsed them, and then . . . we did have a ringer thing that run the clothes through that to ring the water out of them, and hang them out to dry. So then after we got the electric washing machine, well that was really something.

When it was first announced that land was going to be bought for something, according to the newspapers, but it wasn't sure what was coming in, when it was first announced . . .

Oh, it . . . the news traveled fast. I think Reedy Haymaker had a restaurant down the other end of town, and this man . . .

How do you spell Reedy?

Reedy, R-e-e-d-y, I guess.

Third party: R-i-d-a, I think it was.

No, not Rita, Reedy, R-double e-d-y, Reedy. Reedy Haymaker.

All right.

And she ran this restaurant, and this older gentleman used to eat breakfast in her restaurant. And that was the first that I heard of it, anyway. And she was the one that was telling everybody, "Well, they're going to buy land here and they're going to build a big plant." And course, everybody was buzzing about it, you know.

Were they excited about it, or . . . ?

Oh, yes. Everybody was just really excited, you know. Course, some believed it was so and . . . you know, because you'd hear all kinds of gossip from Reedy, most naturally. That was the place where people went to eat and hang out and so forth. And so anyway, sure enough, everybody began to realize that this man was around here, and then there would be . . . you'd see more people coming in and they were out there measuring and looking the land over and walking over it and so forth.

The reaction that you felt then or that people seemed to have then, did that change over the years, how they thought about the government coming and buying the land?

Well, I think the farmers were really up in arms because that was considered to be prime farming land, and they had good crops. The land was rich, and most of the people that lived down in there that were the better known and wealthier people around here, because they had good farms and they made good livings off the farms, and they were really up in arms for having to sell their farms. And, of course, those people had to relocate. Some of them went over in Kentucky and bought farms and there wasn't anything available over on this side right immediately around. I know one family went . . .

On this side of [inaudible]?

Ah-huh. So I looked . . . one of my friends that, Hazel Loots, Hazel and C.R. Loots, owned the home right down there on the corner where 703 Building is now. They had just built this new brick house, and of course new houses around here, you know, were very few and far between. C.R.'s dad had the cement mixer plant. And so anyway, they bought their house and demolished their house. Well, of course that really . . .

They demolished it? They didn't . . .

Oh, yeah.

. . . carry it off or let the Loots' just carry it . . . ?

Well, I don't think so. They may have let the Loots' have it. I don't know. I could give you Hazel's name . . .

That's okay. It's in the records up there.

But then anyway, then they built a new house and they built their house out on three. It's a stone house right out there as you turn left to go up into the project, where the library is. Well, it's on the right-hand side, that stone house. That's the house they built.

Did your family own any land?

No. We just owned . . . we owned the land here in town. We had two lots here in town, my dad and mother did, and then we owned land out on old 62. My dad had a small farm out there.

I know you don't know this from personal experience, but the people who did sell their land, do you think they were paid an adequate amount or enough money to buy another piece of land of comparable value?

Well, I really don't know. I think out at the plant, I think that they were paid ample. Let's see, there's a Lewman family that lived out there. Let's see David Lewman, he still lives around here. Doesn't he?

Third party: Yeah.

You might talk to him.

Did land prices in the area rise because of that situation?

Oh, I'm sure they did, yes.

Can you describe what you did . . . what was your job when you first started working. Did you work for the Quartermaster Corps?

I started out as a clerk-typist, and we just worked in the actual personnel department.

At first in the temporary building?

In the temporary buildings, and then after a while, I was given a job as an assistant clerk, and I was in charge of the typing pool. I had about 15 girls working for me, and we just typed the letters. Well, actually, we did all the typing for the colonel's office, the commander's office. Mrs. (Beckley?) was my boss, and she was the personnel director, and so I worked in that job until . . . well, actually, I worked in it clear up until the time that we moved over to the 703 Building, and then I was promoted to assistant to Mrs. (Beckley?). I worked for her for quite a while. It was kind of too bad for me to have to quit that job. But I was in love so I had to quit my job and go with my husband.

Do you remember about what the date was when you moved to 703? Was that as soon as it was completed that you moved over there?

Let's see. I probably have that down here. *[Pause while she looks at her papers]* I guess that must have been about '42, as best I can tell here. Transferred from Engineering Department, at large, to Ordnance Department, at large. That was when, I think, about the time we moved into--that was May 16th, 1942, I think.

Were a lot of people moving from the temporary buildings up into 703 at that time?

Yes, I think nearly everybody moved over there. The contractor people were also in the temporary buildings, and all of us moved. The government people had the right end of the building, and the contractor

had the other end of the building. And the government, of course there . . . now I can't remember exactly how many government employees we had. I know you wanted to know that.

Well, I have total numbers.

But I don't have that information here. Because I just don't have any records to show it. I don't remember.

You said that you went to work there because you were offered a job. Can you say, more in detail, why did you want to go to work there?

Because it was better pay. I was only making 10 dollars a week over there. No, I guess was making 15 by that time, because I had transferred to another . . . at Franklin *[inaudible]* and Dress Company, I made I think it was close to 15 dollars a week. So that was quite a nice raise for me. Then, 1,440 per annum. I don't know what that figures out to. It's substantially more. Yeah, ah-huh.

Was 15 dollars a week average for pay for your job, at that time?

Yes, I think so.

So would you say that the plant was paying more or about the same as the standard rate?

Oh, they were paying more, because everybody that could get a job was quitting their jobs and going there. And most of the employers around here were really up in arms because they couldn't keep people. Everybody was going to work *[inaudible];* the contractor paid even more than government did.

Oh, really?

Yes.

Did it cause problems for other businesses around here, this region?

Yes, it did.

Was there any resentment about . . .

Quite a bit of resentment. Yeah. And then too, see when the government finally would start closing down, you know, as they didn't need all this powder, they started closing down, well, then people were just hunting for jobs every place. Well, then when they started up again, everybody left their employers here in town and in surrounding communities to come to work for the plant. Because see, even the women for the bag loading plant, there was a lot of women that were seamstresses and sewed. Richey's mother worked there, and she worked at making the bags. And that building was just huge. They just had sewing machine after sewing machine, in rows and rows and rows, and they told all these women that if anybody passes out and falls off their chair, you don't stop; you keep on going. We'll take care of them. We have first aid people, and they'll be here immediately. So even though you want to help, don't stop. Just keep on going.

Well, since you brought this up--I've got some more questions I want to ask you about this later--was there a lot of pressure to work quickly or not?

There was down at the Goodyear end, at the Hoosier Ordnance Plant.

Was that from Goodyear or from Ordnance, that pressure to work quickly?

Well, they were just really on the production line. They were trying to get these things made as quickly as possible. So there was pressure, definitely, but that was the name of the game. If you wanted the job, well, that's the way you had to work. And I don't think that they just stood over them with a stick or anything like that. But they were paid according to how many they made.

Oh, it wasn't hourly, it was piecework?

Well, it was more like piecework, yes. And they counted these bags, and however many that you could sew, well then you would be given more money. And so they strived to try to do the best they could.

For your job, going back to construction era, can you describe what a typical day was like, just in general?

Well, we were under pressure, too, but nobody just stood over you and told you you had to do this perfect and everything. It had to be perfect, else they wouldn't let it go out. We had all these girls that typed these letters, and then if they came through me, I checked them, and then my boss checked them, before they ever went into the colonel's office for signature. And if there were any errors, well, of course, they were brought back and we were reprimanded to be more careful, and you know, when you typed something, you were supposed to read it over to be sure it was right before you turn loose of it. And so that was the way it went, and we were just busy, busy, busy. You hardly had time to lift your head because there was all this work stacked up that you had to do, and so we just worked as fast as we could.

How did you get to work?

I walked for a while, and then I got a ride with Mary (Wessle?). I rode with her for a while. And then when my husband . . . my husband had a little insurance office uptown in later years, and he would take me back and forth. And then finally, I got a car of my own, so I drove that.

But that's on into Korea and . . . ?

Yeah. That's on into the other.

I was mainly wondering about World War II right now.

Ah-huh. Well, at first, I just walked. Everybody walked, you know. Very few people had cars, and . . .

And they didn't have a shuttle bus out into the . . . ?

No, not out into the town, but we rode with other people. Like a driver would maybe have five people ride with them.

Did you ever need to go, if you were on the plant, go to different areas in the plant?

Not when I worked for the government. When I worked for the contractor, I did.

How did you get around then? Walk again?

No. They would take you in a vehicle. There were different areas. I remember one time I worked down in the acid area and needed to fill in for somebody who was going on vacation. And I worked down there for two weeks. I didn't like that much, because they had an acid spill while I was there. And they had to

close all the windows and we had to put handkerchiefs, or scarfs, over our faces, and breathe through that. And they told us to not dare go outside. So that was scary. I didn't care for that too much. So I'd rather work back up at the Administration Building. And that's what I did from now on.

The vehicles that they carried you in, was it just a normal car, or was it a special vehicle?

Yeah. Government vehicles. They had sedans and they also had buses that they transported people around through the plant.

Plant buses.

M-hm, yeah.

What were the plant buses like?

Sort of like the old school buses.

Just a normal bus.

They were just painted a government army green, or whatever you call it, mostly.

Somebody had told me about a special bus that they used to use that, it sounds like it was an open-sided bus with just seats down the center, facing the sides.

They may have had those for the workers out in the field.

But you don't remember seeing . . . ?

I never had to ride those. No, because I strictly worked in the office.

Can you describe the conditions at the construction site--this is during construction [inaudible]?

Well, they were nice working conditions. The buildings were nice. We had nice bathrooms, inside plumbing and all that, and of course they built the wells down along the river for the plant, and Charlestown also had their own wells. And then Charlestown got the plumbing--what do you call it--the water system at that time. And everybody got it in their homes, too. But I guess that must have been about the time the plant was built.

In your office, you said that there was just huge stacks of work. Was the work well orchestrated? That is, that everybody had a certain job that they did and the assignment was clear, you knew what your responsibilities were, or was it that . . . ?

It was very orderly. It was done in a very orderly fashion.

Were there too many people for what you needed to do or not enough?

No, I think we had plenty, ample people. If we didn't, they just hired some more people.

Was it ever that there were too many people? People who didn't know . . . getting in each others way?

Well, you used to hear those kind of rumors, but if there were too many people, it was during the contract . . . in the contractors part where they hired so many people, out in the plant, and at different times they would hire these people because they needed them to do certain jobs, but it took a certain amount of time to

train those people in the work, and lots of times, they'd just be sitting around waiting for instructions as to what to do. But from what I know about it, most of the people that were hired, they were hired to do a certain job, and they were taught how to do these jobs. And there were some people that goofed off and played along, and those people usually ended up losing their jobs before long. You know how it is. If you hire a person to do work and they don't do it, then they don't last too long.

Was turnover high?

No, I don't think so. Anybody got a job there, they liked to hold onto it.

They tried to stay?

Yeah.

Did most of the workers live in town or out at the plant site?

Well, they lived in town and surrounding communities and drove long distances, because, like I say, there was just no place to rent, and it didn't get any better as time went on. Lot of people just bought a little bit of land and just threw up a little two-by-four place, and lived in a little one-room place out along Highway 3, and just little old temporary-type dwellings.

Were there any tent-type dwellings that you know of out on the site?

No. No, I don't think there were any tents.

What kind of people came to Charlestown to work?

All kinds.

And from where?

Well, they came from Taylorsville, Kentucky, and Jeffersontown, Indiana, (Vivi?), and Madison and Snellersberg, Scottsburg, on the highway.

All the local areas?

Ah-huh. Just all over.

Do you think . . . did they come from far away?

They did. They came from far away. Some people drove as far as 100 miles a day.

No, I'm meaning the people who moved here to get construction work. Did they come from other states, besides Indiana?

I don't know about that. I don't think so. I think most of the people they would come and just stay through the week. Maybe go home on a weekend or something like that.

So the majority of the workers were from the immediate area?

I think so.

How did people get along during that time, go ahead and say during construction and when you were here during the war?

Well, they got along great, as far as I know. You really didn't hear too much about it. Everybody realized that there was a war coming along, and we were going to have to get this plant built and furnish this powder and so forth, and see boys . . . our younger fellows around here were being inducted into the Army and Navy and the Air Force, and so everybody was working hard to do their part.

Did the people that lived here for a long time get along well with the newcomers, or did they mix much?

Well, yes, I think they mixed very well. We had a USO Building, which is the present Community Building. The USO built that.

Down there at [inaudible]?

No, no, right down here. Down there on Water--let's see, is it Water Street? No, Main Street. It's just a block or so down. It's a white building. It's called Community Building now. But they built that and they had entertainment and so forth like that for the people that worked here, and then, of course, actually during the war, we had--what do you call it for the soldiers? During the war when they captured the German soldiers, they brought some of them over here.

Third party: Prisoner-of-war camps.

Prisoner of war camps is what I'm trying to think of. And that was on the left-hand side of the Charlestown Landing Road.

Just up north of the Administration Building?

Yeah, ah-huh. They built big buildings back in there, and that's where they housed them, and they had a wire fence all around that.

I've seen a map that shows two different camp areas. Was it only the prisoner-of-war people that were up there, or were there other workers up there?

As far as I know, it was just the prisoner-of-war. And they had quite a few of them. They would bring them in on the train, which was right directly across from 703, and I remember sitting in my office and looking out over there, and we'd see them get off the train and then they would just slide down that steep embankment and they'd line them up and march them up the Charlestown Landing Road to those barracks.

Did they work out at the ammo plant?

Oh, Lord, no. They didn't allow them to work. They were kept pinned up. Yeah, they had guards.

Oh, they just stayed in there?

Yeah, they had guards. And I really don't know how long they were there, but they were kept right there. I mean they were prisoners.

So they kept a pretty close eye on them?

German prisoners.

They didn't usually let them out of the compound?

We never did see any. After they got them off the train and they marched them up Charlestown Landing Road to the actual barracks, they were there. When they took them out of there, I don't even remember when that was, but they probably just took them out by bus loads and took them someplace else. I don't remember what they did with them.

Something else I saw on the maps--there seems to have been a huge bus parking lot. I can't remember exactly what it said, but it's a bus depot or something up in that camp. Do you know what that was used for, other than transferring the POWs?

Not unless they used the buses for just transporting the workers out into the plant. Because they did have to transport them out there. They'd just go in and they'd clock in, and then they would get on the buses and then they would take them to the areas that they were supposed to work at. And they stayed only in those areas; they weren't allowed to roam around all over the plant.

The workers?

M-hm.

Going back to people moving here, did many non-Whites move here? Either Mexican-American or African-American or . . . ?

Not too many. I don't think so. They recruited them from all over. They'd go down into the hills of Kentucky, in the mountainous areas, and recruit people, and then they would bring them up here by bus. And I don't know, I guess they just took them back and forth. Because they recruited them from all over, and they needed those workers out in the plant. That was mostly during the construction time. When they actually started operations, by that time, they were needing a different quality of people. They needed people that were more college and high school graduates, not just people willing to work.

What quality of people were they looking for during construction? Just anybody?

Anybody that knew how to do carpenter work and mostly that type of thing, and then brick layers, because a lot of those buildings were made of brick.

Now, that brings up something else. Is there a difference between the buildings at IOW and HOP?

Oh, yes. The IOW was more permanent and the other was more temporary buildings. Because the Hoosier Ordnance Plant office building was temporary. I don't think they ever intended for that to last forever. But then, of course, the sewing rooms were built of block, or cement block, concrete block.

Was it intended to last longer, to be different from say the Administration Building or . . . ?

I don't think so.

It may have just been the size of it [inaudible]?

M-hm. M-hm. They just needed the space. Have you ever been in any of those sewing rooms?

I've seen pictures of it. It's huge.

Oh, you ought to go in some of them. If you could just get somebody to take you through.

I may do that tomorrow.

I tell you what. You ought to get a hold of Gail Daugherty, and he can probably arrange to take you around and show you and tell you a lot of things, plus, you know, he can take you anyplace in the plant. We've taken several tours, and it's just unbelievable how big that plant is. It is huge. I mean it just took us almost all day long. Of course, I had been over parts of it, just not all at one time, but just different areas. They would just take us out and show us different things.

What did the construction employees do in the evenings?

Gee, I don't recall. They probably were so worn out that they didn't want to do anything but sleep. Because see, lots of them worked double shifts, too. They worked three shifts. And if they could get a chance to work overtime, they did, and there was a lot . . .

They'd work 16 hours?

There was a lot of overtime. Even in the office. When they needed us to work overtime, we did.

Did you work overtime a lot?

M-hm, in the office we did.

Was there much entertainment around or did the . . . ?

There was nothing.

Nothing?

Nothing around Charlestown. Nuh-uh.

I saw something . . .

I guess they played cards and did that sort of thing.

I saw something in the minutes of the town board yesterday--I was looking through it [inaudible]*--about regulations. This would have been in 1941 I think, maybe '42. Rules about operation of pool tables and pinball machines and things like that. Did many arcade type of places come in to the town, or is that just . . . ?*

No. Not other than what was already here. They had pool rooms and that sort of thing, but of course I never did frequent any of the pool rooms. We weren't . . .

Third party: [Inaudible].

Girls weren't ever seen in places like that. I wasn't, anyway. *(Chuckles)* Now, they did have some taverns, didn't they. I imagine they did a land-office business *(laughs)*.

They probably did. How did Charlestown change during the construction years?

Well, it just bulged with all the people that was here, roaming around, but after it was all over with, it just sort of settled back down to like it was before. Of course, there was a lot more people.

After it was all over with meaning end of the war?

Yeah. Of course, you know, they built the housing project, too. There was one Jonathan Jennings project, which was on the right-hand side of three, and the Pleasant Ridge project was on the other side.

Third party: *[Inaudible]* they built that temporary housing.

Oh, they had temporary housing out there for a while.

That was WPA project?

No.

Third party: I don't know what it was. It was a government project or something.

They were setting up temporary housing, and they put concrete down and they had a sewer system and water, and just . . .

Third party: Like mobile homes.

Yeah, just sort of like mobile homes, only they were just little square buildings, just like our kitchen, bathroom and a one bedroom there. But they didn't get very many of those built.

Third party: Well, they got quite a few out there, because they used . . . they sent them up from *[inaudible]*. Used them at IU for temporary housing for students.

Yeah. Well, okay. Put that down, then. I wasn't too familiar with that.

Do you know any dates with that? Was that toward the end of the war, or at the beginning during construction?

Third party: I don't remember. I wasn't here.

See, they were just working feverishly to try to make housing for people, and then of course, there were a lot of mobile homes that came in.

Was there an apartment complex built? I've seen something regarding a 75-unit . . . it looks like an apartment complex.

Third party: *[Inaudible]* not apartments. They were duplexes that people lived in.

Okay. It could've been that.

Third party: They laid out the whole area, what they call Pleasant Ridge.

I don't know anything about what you're talking about.

Well, it was just confusing, because I thought Pleasant Ridge was the first thing to be completed with the housing projects.

Well, I think Jonathan Jennings was first. And then Pleasant Ridge started.

Third party: It could've been Jonathan Jennings that you were talking about. Right out here they have . . . looks like apartment buildings, just in a little group.

They were sort of like little townhouses. They were duplexes, and then they were like a townhouse. They had the living room, kitchen . . .

Third party: They were two-story.

. . . yeah, on the first floor, and then the bedrooms were upstairs.

Studio apartments?

M-hm. M-hm.

That was at Jonathan Jennings?

M-hm. Jonathan Jennings.

Maybe that's what it was. But in some of the literature, it's called apartments. So that was confusing. . . .

Okay. Well, apartments then.

Before you started working out there, did you have some expectations about what working out there would be like?

Well, no. I just assumed it would be office work, similar to what I'd been doing. And actually were never . . . I never was afraid to work out there. A lot of people were, after they once started up the operations. But of course, *[inaudible]* several three of us away from that really didn't feel afraid to work out there.

What were the other people afraid of? Were they afraid of . . . ?

Explosions.

Explosions. Was anybody ever afraid of an air raid?

No, we weren't. But the planes were not to fly over the plant. That was a no-no. And so they didn't, because it was really a dangerous thing, you know. Any a plane had crashed and fallen over or fallen down and crashed, it could have caused really horrible explosions. Yeah, because there was a lot of explosives being manufactured at that time. We did have one huge explosion, and they never did really know, I don't think, what actually caused it. But it made a great big crater. That was in later years.

Yeah, the '60s.

I think when I was working for Colonel (Loughead?). That was the first and oh, we had calls from all the media wanting to know everything, and we couldn't tell them anything. We weren't allowed to tell them anything, because we didn't know ourselves. And of course, I was in the colonel's office at that time, so that was quite a job to stave off all those people.

In literature that you read now about World War I, often it's mentioned that a lot of companies made big profits off of government contracts, during World War I, and some things were done to change the contracting system for World War II. Was there any talk about profiteering, either things that you heard or rumors or anything about people and [inaudible]?

Well, we didn't hear too much about that when we was working out there, but as we all know, the contractor could spend as they so chose, and they did. And the prices, a lot of them, were exorbitant. And it was very unnecessary. I think they could have held cost down. . . .

[End of Side A]

. . . spent a lot more than was really necessary.

So do you think that there should have been a better way besides cost-plus-fixed-fee contract?

Now that you look back over it, I think it would have been better, because they paid too high prices for a lot of the items that they bought.

Was your job union or non-union?

Non.

Was there a lot of union employees?

Yes, they did have union employees, contractors.

Contractors were. How about the government?

We didn't have union at all, clear up until--well, they tried to get it till the last of my employment, but I never did join the union.

During construction, when they were trying to hire lots of people, how active were unions at that time?

They were active, but as far as I know, we didn't really have any problem during construction. But after we started working in the 703 Building, there were several times that we had problems.

With operations?

Operations, ah-huh.

Do you remember anything about those, how bad the problems were or how small they were?

Well, they just had the pickets on the gates, and they didn't want to let us in, but of course, I was a government employee. So they let me in. I had no problem. One time a car was going through and they grabbed the aerial and pulled it off the car and threw things at the glass. We always rolled the glass up so they wouldn't throw things at us, but I never did get hurt. I didn't feel too safe going through those picket lines, but I went on through. No problem.

Was this during World War II or after?

That was after.

Can you say anything about working conditions? I know that, not necessarily in your office, but if you knew people at the other contractors or operations areas.

I think working conditions were fine. Never did hear anybody complain too much. People that worked out in the field all seemed to be happy with their jobs.

Did you know anybody who worked on the lines [inaudible] *or maybe the other assembly line-type jobs?*

Well, yes, I knew a lot of them at the time. But to try to give you names now is almost impossible.

I was going to ask you a couple of other questions. In general, you don't have to be specific, was it in general the first time that they had done this kind of assembly line type of work?

I think so.

Did they ever say what they thought about it? Whether they enjoyed the kind of work or didn't enjoy it?

I think most the people enjoyed working out there, from what I heard them say. Everybody always seemed real happy with their work . . . simply because they were getting paid good wages.

So it didn't matter if it was assembly line-type work if they were getting paid well enough?

M-hm. I think everybody was always happy, as far as I know.

What do you think about your part in the defense effort during World War II?

Well, I felt like I was doing my part, trying to help in the war effort. And after all, my husband was overseas fighting. So I felt like that was the least I could do.

What do you think about the plant's part?

I think they put out every bit of effort that they possibly could to do the best job.

Were there a lot of working mothers there during the war?

Yes, I think so.

Do you know if either the contractors or the government provided day care facilities?

No, they didn't.

Was there a plant or company newspaper?

Yeah, we had a plant newspaper.

Was there more than one during the war?

Yes, they had one down at the Hoosier Ordnance, and they had one up at the Indiana.

Was the plant or any of the facilities in the plant segregated? I mean like this could be by either White and Black or it could be male and female or it could be younger people and older people, as far as types of jobs that they worked or areas.

Oh, yeah, there was segregation for mens' jobs and women's jobs.

Can you describe that?

Well, there again, it was down on the lines, and they had just like for the sewing room, most of those people were women. I don't know of any men that worked in there at all. They were all women as far as I know. And I don't think there was any segregation as far as Black and White. That was the beginning . . .

No Black and White restrooms?

No, I don't think so. That was the beginning of hiring the Colored people, too. I remember that. A lot of the contract people just liked to had a fit when the government employed some Black people. And a lot of people didn't like that, but they soon got used to it.

Did the contractors not want to hire Blacks?

They didn't at first, but then as time went on, they were kind of forced to. You know how that went.

Are you talking about during World War II?

During World War II, I don't recall them having very many Black people during the actual construction. There might have been a few, but most of them were White. And in the office, they were all White. And then as time went on, they did hire some Blacks . . . in the office.

This is getting up into the '50s and the '60s?

Yeah.

Was there any segregation as far as say retired people doing certain jobs, looking back into World War II?

I don't think so.

Were there any morale-boosting campaigns or "why we fight" promotions during World War II?

Yes.

Can you describe any of these? Not all of them, but [inaudible].

Well, they were always putting out bulletins, as to do the best that you can, to try to boost the morale of the people; that we had a job to do and we have a war to fight, and so give it your best efforts. I'm sure everybody did.

The plant won some Army-Navy "E" awards?

Yes.

Do you remember what the "E" stood for or also why did you win the awards?

Excellence.

Excellence. Why did you win the awards?

Because we felt like we were doing an excellent job. And that was really promoted. Each one of us received a pin. Red, white and blue, and then it had an "E" in the middle of it. And a wreath around it or something. I had one, but I don't know exactly where it is. I'd have to hunt it up. They had a special day and they put the big flag up that almost touched the ground. It was the most beautiful sight you ever saw.

I've seen something about adding a star to the flag. I think they won five different "E" awards. The first award they presented you with a flag, is that it? Or the plant with a flag?

I don't seem to remember that. I just remember the pin, the one when we got the pins.

I've also--since we're on this--I've heard that there was a--I forget what they're called--a flag that people put in their windows, and they would put a star on it for each member of their family that went into the service. Do you remember those?

Yes. M-hm.

Was there a big one in the . . . maybe the sewing building, the Bag Manufacturing Building or somewhere else in the plant?

That I don't know. See, because I didn't work down there.

I thought there might have been talk.

Hm-m *[no]*.

You've already told me that your pay at the plant was quite good. Do you know anything about others . . . would you say across the board it was good for everybody?

Everybody. Much more than they could get any place else.

And was the pay the same for everything? If a woman was doing the same job that a man was doing, was it the same?

I doubt that. Of course, women always got the lower pay, even if it was the same job.

You would say that was true for the government and Du Pont and Goodyear?

I think so. It's better now, I think, throughout the nation. But back during those times, women never did get what . . . if they were doing the same job that a man did.

Do you happen to have any examples, or is that . . . ?

That's just my feeling. I don't have any examples. I think you'd have to show that with paperwork.

Right. Which is what I'm looking for, and I can't find any.

Right.

Did most people save their money?

I hope they did. *[Laughs]* I don't know.

Don't really know . . . ?

I did. I tried to save. Because during that time, we saved about 4,000 dollars, which was a big hunk for us. When he got out of the service, well, we decided we'd build this house, and we had 4,000 to start out with. My mother gave us the lot. So we only had to borrow about four, and with his help and his dad's and so forth, we built the house. So that was pretty reasonable, wasn't it?

Yeah. Do you know on what or how people spent their money?

A lot of them just blew it.

How's that?

Well, they would drink and party and so forth.

Did they do that here in Charlestown or go down to Louisville?

Well, there wasn't too many places around here. We had a couple of beer joints and stuff like that. But they were usually full. I imagine they went to other towns, mostly, because there just wasn't room for very many of them here.

Do you think that the crime rate change any?

No, we didn't have too much crime.

Not even when there were so many people [inaudible]?

No, everybody just worked, worked, worked. Like I say, a lot of them did double shifts. Anything to make more money.

And how about people getting along after construction, during operations [inaudible]?

It just leveled off. There were just streams of cars that came from all sections, from Louisville, Jeff, New Albany and on up the highway. The highways were just constantly--just a stream of people coming from everywhere, wasn't it? You didn't know because you weren't here. *[Chuckles]* Well, then they built the double-lane highway, because there was so much traffic, we just couldn't take care of them. And it was bumper to bumper all the way to Louisville.

How long did it take to get to Louisville?

Well, ordinarily, we always allowed an hour to get over there, but now, I guess you can make it in probably 30 to 40 minutes. I imagine that'd be about right.

Did the plant, or did Charlestown, plan recreational activities?

No. The only thing we had was the USO Building in town. That was all the activities.

Were there baseball teams or football teams or . . . ?

Not that I know of.

Third party: Baseball [inaudible] it wasn't organized, but they always had a baseball game on Sunday.

Out at the plant?

Third party: No, no. It was just local boys.

Where did they play? Out in the field somewhere?

Third party: Yeah. They would play different communities, New Washington, Madison, Jeffersonville, New Albany.

I didn't engage in baseball games. I didn't know.

Third party: Pick-up teams. A dozen or so kids around town *[inaudible]* that loved baseball would *[inaudible].*

But it wasn't organized?

Third party: No.

Do you think that the communities, well Charlestown mainly, encouraged people who moved here from outside to stay around or encouraged them to mix?

Well, I think that they encouraged them to mix with people. As far as I know, they did, but there probably wasn't too much of that, because we didn't have any place, except our churches to go to for any activity like that, other than the school. The school auditorium was used for anything that we wanted to have.

Did church membership go up for churches--church attendance go up?

It went up some.

Some?

Yeah. Not a great amount, but some.

Was there a higher incidence of illness, as the population increased?

Not that I know of.

Nothing spectacular. Were the water supplies and sewer treatment facilities adequate?

They were. Yes, after we finally got the water system in.

What about before?

Well, of course, before you know, we just were like we were. We had our own water system, and so each individual family just lived as they did before.

I'm curious. If when the plant started and the people first started moving in, if most people still had cisterns, where did the people living in temporary places get their water?

I don't know, unless they just had to borrow water from somebody else. I always wondered that myself. To think about it, though, we did have a couple of boarders, couple of people came, and they wanted to rent from my mother, and we didn't have a bathroom at that time. And we just had our cistern water, and we did have hot water. We had a hot water tank, had it piped into the house from the cisterns, and just had a regular old wash bowl, and they'd take their baths out of that. And they had to manage themselves because my mother wasn't able to go up and down the steps. So she'd just hand them their clean linens and they changed their own beds and carried their own water, and so forth. So they managed. They were tickled to death to get the rooms. We had two bedrooms upstairs.

So you rented a bedroom to each person?

M-hm.

Do you think that Charlestown changed during this time, during construction and then operations through the war, in terms of morals and values in any way?

Well, I think they did.

How?

I think they had higher morals after that.

Higher morals after the war?

Well, I don't know. I think it was about the same, really.

How about general affluence? Could you tell a difference after the war?

Well, yes, because by that time, after the war, because we did start fixing up more and we had nicer homes and so forth, with electric and water and all that. As before, everybody just lived in the same conditions that they lived in all their lives, which was just about like it was all over the entire United States I imagine. I think everybody began to live better after the war, because there was more money.

Do you think the expectations changed, expectations about quality of life and what people thought they should have?

I think so. I think the more a person has, the more they want, and the more they strive to do better and have more things.

Okay. And so the higher pay at the plant, would that have affected that?

I think so. I think that you wanted your children to go on to get higher educations and so forth.

Was there a curfew at any time in Charlestown?

The only time that I remember curfew was during the flood, and that was in 1937. That was before the war, and they did have a curfew there, because we had a lot of refugees for Jeffersonville, and so we had a curfew then.

What about blackouts?

Well, I guess we did have some blackouts at different times.

This was . . . ?

During the actual war-time.

Right. Were they . . . ?

Lights out by a certain time.

Oh, okay. For energy conservation or for . . . ?

Just for safety's sake.

Okay.

They would turn the lights out and the plant was lit up like Levi's *[?]* all the way around. And there were times when they would have blackouts.

At the plant?

Ah-huh. Yeah. Maybe just for a short time or something like that.

Would that be for safety again?

Yeah, it was for safety.

Why just for a short . . . ?

Well, because they was just afraid that there might be planes coming over or something until they could be identified.

At any time during the plant's operation, did anybody say something against it or anything against it because it produced munitions?

Well, I think when they first started, people were a little bit leery of them. But it all happened so fast, I don't think anybody had much say-so one way or the other. The older generation might have felt that way. I didn't, because I was right in there, and I was trying to work and do all I could to help.

The older generation?

Well, I think they were a little concerned about having the powder plant there.

Oh, the safety.

For fear of safety of it. And then when they built the black powder plant, that was later Plant Two. It never did go into operation. When they built that, that was . . . if that thing had of gone into operation, it would have been dangerous, because the fumes from the plant would have killed the vegetation in this area . . . according to Mr. Donaldson, who I worked for. That's what he told me.

Since you mentioned that, was there a lot of pollution from the plant?

Well, I don't think so. I imagine there's parts of the plant that is still polluted with the different chemicals and so forth, but it's all concentrated in certain spots, I think.

No obvious effects on Charlestown?

Oh, no, not on Charlestown.

Back to my question about saying anything against the plant and producing munitions. How about during Vietnam and Korea?

You mean people saying things against having the plant here then?

Right.

Not that I know of.

Protests because of producing munitions?

Oh, I don't think so. By that time, people were pretty well aware that this is the way it's going to be. So they didn't protest.

How did the war and the plant change everyday life in Charlestown, in terms of housing and food and clothing and things like that? As far as prices and availability?

I'm sure all the prices went up, up, up. Of course, during the war, we were all rationed. We had ration stamps that we bought. Buy so much sugar or so much bacon and certain items and leather, for shoes and that sort of thing. You could use your ration stamps, and when they were gone, well, then you did with what you had. And gasoline was rationed. We had little booklets with the stamps in it.

So the main changes were from rationing, not so much from prices going up?

Right.

Did many women work at the plant?

I think everybody that was able to work worked there. Because if they wanted a job, they could get it.

The women that worked at the plant, would they have worked outside of the home in any case or do you think it was just because the plant was there, and the nature of the time and situation that got . . . ?

Most of my friends, anybody that could possibly work, worked.

Okay.

They wanted to work.

So that they would have found a job. If it wasn't at the plant, they would have looked for a job somewhere else?

Yeah, they would have gone to Louisville.

And you don't think there were many minorities working at the plant.

Well, you mean after the war?

No. During the war.

During the war?

Yeah.

Well, there were some worked there, yes.

Were they from local areas?

Yeah, local. M-hm. And Louisville, too. Because we had one section of Charlestown that we always called Nigger Hill. But we don't say Nigger Hill anymore *(chuckling)* to them. But anyway, most of those darkies were from there.

Was this on the south side of Charlestown?

Probably. No . . . yeah, the south side of Charlestown I guess.

Were there any labor shortages [inaudible], *during World War II?*

Not that I know of, because they recruited from every place.

When they needed people, they found them?

M-hm. They would just advertise in the paper, and they would set up little temporary offices different places and take those shuttle buses and go pick people up and bring them over here.

What about after the World War II? Labor shortages?

Well, no, I don't think there was. Because like I said, if they needed people, they advertised for them and everybody would quit their jobs wherever they were *(chuckles)* and come running.

Probably already answered this, but I'll go ahead and ask it. In employment, were there any controversies in the community regarding who the plant hired or didn't hire? This could be for union or non-union, [inaudible].

I don't think so. I didn't know too much about the union and stuff, because I didn't get involved in the union. I always felt like if you work for somebody, they should have the right to tell you what they wanted you to do and if you didn't like it, then you should look for work elsewhere. That's my philosophy.

You mentioned the plant took employees away from other areas. That would be one kind of possible controversy, because people would say this is either good or bad, that you're taking this away. Another one might be taking farm labor away. Did that cause any problems?

Well, not that I know of, but I'm sure that it did cause some problems, because everybody just wanted to make as much money as they could, and these jobs were available. So we went over there.

Do you think people who worked, who would have done farm work, did they continue to do farm work while they worked at the plant?

Well . . .

This is speculation.

M-hm. I doubt it. I think anybody that worked over there, that they would be too tired to go out and do farm work, unless it was their own.

Did many people lose their job when the war ended?

Oh, yes.

Can you describe how they . . . what happened when the war ended?

Well, when it was over, it was over, and they just told everybody that the jobs would not be available after a certain day. If you could get a job, well, grab it.

Do you remember how far in advance that date was? Was it tomorrow or two months?

Well, they gave everybody some notice. You know, I'm not sure that it was two weeks, but I mean we usually knew when a layoff was coming. They always advised that in advance.

Okay. Even at the end of World War II?

Oh, yeah. Because each time that I left, they'd say anybody that can find employment, go ahead and take it, because we're going to be closing down on a certain date.

Can you say anything about general types of people who stayed on, after the end of World War II?

Well, they only had a skeleton force, so there weren't very many people that were allowed to stay. And it was just down to a bare minimum.

Not necessarily stayed on at the plant, but stayed in the area.

Oh, stayed in the area. Well, I don't think too many of them stayed. I think they moved on to other places. There might have been a few, but it was somebody that was professional that could get jobs and knew about places like that.

Okay. That's what I was wondering about. That's the type of person.

Ah-huh. They would stay and then work over there.

So it would be skilled or professional people?

A lot of the people, like Du Pont, they'd offer the people transfers to their other plants, at Wilmington, Delaware, places like that.

Is this for general plant operators, or only for people in supervisory and management positions?

Supervisory and management, I imagine, mostly.

Do you know if they offered anything like that for just plant operators?

I think they did for the operators, too. There was a Du Pont plant in Louisville, and it's still there. So they offered some of the people that worked over here jobs in their plant. Merl Frasier, for one, lives over . . . still . . . well, he's retired now, but he went from here over to that plant, and worked there the rest of his days, until he retired.

Did the community change after [inaudible]?

I don't think it changed a whole lot, except more people. But everybody just sort of fell back into their regular pattern.

Of before the war?

Mostly, I would say.

What did Charlestown do--this can be answered any way you want to--what did Charlestown do to cope with the increase in population?

They just coped. There just wasn't anything you could do. You just went about your business and let all those people go their way.

Did you ever hear anything about new regulations being passed or particular concern about people staying out or trailer houses or temporary shelters or anything like that, how they regulated those?

No. Anybody that had space in their yards, a lot of people just rented out those spaces for these trailers. Of course, they did have to have certain regulations. They had to have a place for them to do their laundry and they had to have the sewers piped in and water piped in. People who could afford to do that, did. And that helped relieve the situation a whole lot for families, because there was just no place to stay, and most people didn't have the money to build places for them. So the trailers sort of helped the situation out a lot. Of course, now we're here. We could've put a bunch of trailers up there in our backyard, but with just my mother and I, we didn't feel that we had the resources to do that; so we didn't. We just rented a couple of rooms, *(chuckles)* and that was it.

Well, that's all the questions I have. If there's anything you want to add . . .

I think we've just about covered everything, don't you *(chuckles)?*

Okay.

[End of Interview]

APPENDIX A

RELEASE FORMS

RELEASE FORMS
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. New Albany, INdiana

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July 5, 1994
Date

Julius A Hock
Interviewee

_____
Date

_____
Interviewee

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

NAME Ed. J. Howard

ADDRESS 4113 Utica Pike

Jeffersonville, IN 47130

PHONE

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5/14/94
Date

Interviewee

Date

Interviewee

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NAME Charles & Mc Vicker

ADDRESS 160 Birch Dr.
Charlestown Md

PHONE 456-2703

TAPE NUMBERS: 1114-014 INAAP #2

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6-27-94
Date

Charles & Mc Vicker
Interviewee

_____
Date

_____
Interviewee

RELEASE FORMS
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

NAME Harry Thomas Payne and Lucille Payne

ADDRESS 2200 Greentree N. Apt. 1213

Clarksville, IN 47129

PHONE (812) 283-5279

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6/23/94 Lucille Payne
Date Interviewee

6/23/94 Harry T. Payne
Date Interviewee

RELEASE FORMS
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

NAME ANITA CHRISTINE MEYER RICHEY

ADDRESS 911 THOMPSON STREET
CHARLESTOWN, IN 47111

PHONE 812 256-2304

TAPE NUMBERS: 1114-014 INAAP-5

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7 Jul 94 — Date

Anita C. Richey — Interviewee

_____ — Date

_____ — Interviewee