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

*interviews conducted by*  
**Deborah L. Crown**  
*of*  
**BEAR CREEK ARCHEOLOGY, INC.**

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**U.S. ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND HISTORIC CONTEXT SERIES  
REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS  
NUMBER 10C**



GEO-MARINE, INC.



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Fort Worth District

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**THE WORLD WAR II ORDNANCE DEPARTMENT'S  
GOVERNMENT-OWNED CONTRACTOR-OPERATED  
(GOCO) INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES:**

**LAKE CITY ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT  
TRANSCRIPTS OF  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS**

*interviews conducted by*  
Deborah L. Crown  
BEAR CREEK ARCHEOLOGY, INC.  
Cresco, Iowa  
*Subcontractor for Geo-Marine, Inc.*

Principal Investigator  
Duane E. Peter  
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 Lake City Army Ammunition Plant (LCAAP), Lake City, Missouri. The interviews and transcripts were conducted under United States Army Corps of Engineers Contract No. DACA63-93-D-0014, Delivery Order No. 089. 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. The major focus of the project at LCAAP was to document the impacts that the facility had on the state and local environments during the World War II period.

All five interviews were conducted by Bear Creek Archeology, Inc. (BCA), under subcontract to Geo-Marine, Inc., during June 1995, and the tapes of these interviews were transcribed by the personnel at Professional Transcription Service, Dallas, Texas. Duane Peter, Senior Archeologist at Geo-Marine, Inc., served as Principal Investigator.

Deborah L. Crown, of BCA conducted the oral history interviews. All the subjects of these interviews worked at LCAAP during World War II, when the facility was known as Lake City Ordnance Plant (LCOP). The interviews revealed information about employee perspectives of the plant and the mobilization effort of which they were a part, as well as the changes brought to the Kansas City area by the World War II operations at LCOP. The oral history interviews were conducted, according to guidelines, with three women and two men. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded using a high quality Marantz PMB 430 portable cassette recorder.

Ms. Frances "Frankie" Brasington, a long-time resident of the Kansas City area, was interviewed at her home in Independence, Missouri. During World War II, Ms. Brasington worked in inspection and, on occasion, in packing. She quit her job before the end of World War II and moved to California to be with her husband, who was in the military.

Mr. Cornelius Lundy was also interviewed at his home in Kansas City. Mr. Lundy, an African-American, worked on the construction of the plant laying railroad ties. During World War II, Mr. Lundy worked as a janitor; he was eventually promoted during the Korean operation, becoming a tool setter for final inspection. He continued to work at the plant until his retirement in the late 1960s.

The interview with Ms. Alice McEldery took place at her home in Independence. Ms. McEldery, a life-long resident of the area, was living in her present home and working in the home when World War II began. While her husband awaited his call into the military, Ms. McEldery worked at the LCOP box factory (stenciling and painting boxes in which the ammunition was to be shipped) and in soldering. She quit her job before the end of World War II in order to be at home with her family.

Mr. Dale Pollard was interviewed at LCAAP. Mr. Pollard began working at the facility during its construction in 1941. He later worked for the chief factory clerk doing inventories of ammunition and tracking employee time cards and absenteeism. Mr. Pollard left the plant briefly during World War II to join the military. He returned to the plant in 1945 and assisted in putting the facility in layaway. He took another position at the plant in 1950, during reactivation for the Korean operation. After attending several government schools, Mr. Pollard became the Contract Operations Officer in 1978, and he is now the highest-ranking civilian at LCAAP. He has been a supervisor at the plant for over 40 years and plans to retire in the fall of 1995.

Ms. Rosalind Priest was interviewed at her home in Independence, Missouri. During World War II, Ms. Priest worked in production at final trim and head turn stations. She is a life-long resident of the area and was living in her present house when she went to work at LCAAP. After World War II, Ms. Priest worked at Barbie Frocks (a garment manufacturer) and later at a local hospital.

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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**FRANCES BRASINGTON**  
**June 26, 1995**  
**Independence, Missouri**  
**Deborah Crown, Interviewer**

*Today is June 26, 1995. This is Deborah Crown of Bear Creek Archeology interviewing Frances Brasington. This is side one.*

*How long have you lived in this area?*

About fifty years.

*Where were you living when you heard that the plant was going to be built?*

Uh, the street address you mean or the city? Kansas City.

*Kansas City, okay. And you had lived there for about fifty years?*

A-huh, in this area here.

*When you heard the plant was going to be built were you working or going to school or what were you doing?*

I was a hair dresser.

*So you were working then.*

Ah-huh.

*And about how much were getting paid as a hair dresser then?*

Very little. Fifty percent of everything I made. Which sometimes was not much (laughter). One day I didn't even have enough to pay for my bus fare home. (Laughter). No one came in.

*Do you know what the values of the land around this area were before the plant was built?*

Oh gosh. I wouldn't have any idea really.

*What was the reaction of most people in this area when they heard that the government, or Remington, was going to buy the land for the plant?*

I think everyone was tickled, very thrilled, because it would be more work for everyone.

*Did you or did your family own any land that was going to be . . .*

No, un huh.

*Do you know if land prices in the area rose or fell because the government bought that land or . . .*

I would say they rose.



*Do you think that most of the people who lost their land because of the plant being built there, the people that were originally out there, do you think they were paid enough for their land to buy new land that was [inaudible].*

I would say so, I would think so.

*Do you remember ever seeing the plant when it was under construction?*

No, uh uh.

*Do you remember the construction workers, the people that built it?*

No, uh uh.

*Did you notice any kind of a change [inaudible].*

No, not really.

*Tell me about the town before the plant was built.*

Well, I think there was not too much work and I think that Lake City really brought in a lot of people and helped a lot of people during that time.

*What did you and other people do in your free time early on there, like before the war started?*

Well, my husband worked over a radio station, but it was in Springfield. We lived there for a little while. And he played over KWTO and KGBX in Springfield and then we come back to Kansas City and then is when I went to work at Lake City because he went into the service then.

*So you were a hair dresser before you went to work at the plant?*

Oh yes, ah-huh, m-hm.

*How did you find out about the job there. How did you get your job out there?*

I think I just went out, as well as I remember, and put my application in, I think.

*Why did you want to work there?*

To make money (laughter).

*Was there more than that? More than money as the reason?*

No, uh-huh, just a better job.

*Before you started working out there what did you think it was going to be like to work out there.*

I had no idea. I had no idea.

*What did you think was done at the plant before you went to work there, what did you think they did?*

Oh, I think I knew. As well as I can remember I think I knew they made ammunition there.

*In which building or which area there did you work?*

I worked in 3A and I worked in 3 and I believe building 2, I'm not sure.

*Three and 3A are building numbers?*

Ah-huh.

*And what was your job?*

Inspector.

*You were an inspector, okay.*

I was inspector and then over the period of time then I worked in, I don't know what area it was called, but the cases would go by on a little roller and you had to pick out the ones that were damaged. There was a bright light there and you had to watch and see which were good and which were bad. And then when, one time when we ran out of work in my area they sent us to packing, which was horrible, it was really bad.

*You didn't like that?*

Heavy, too heavy of work.

*What was an average day like for you there? How did you get there, what did you do for lunch and . . . ?*

Well, we ate in the cafeteria for lunch and we had a car pool to get there. And I remember we--do you want me to tell all of this about . . . ?

*Oh, sure.*

We had a, this fellow that had the car pool, he had funny eyes, one went this direction and one went this and we were very young kids and he was looking this way, but he was looking at us with this other eye and we were dying laughing (laughter) all the time. But he was great person and I think there were six people rode in that car. And it was winter time and it was really, really cold, and I remember he was such a good natured person, he would even heat bricks to lay in the back seat to keep us warm during our ride out and ride back. (Laughter).

*That was nice, gosh. So you drove every day?*

Ah-huh.

*And did you help him pay for gas or . . . ?*

If I remember correctly we had to pay him so much per week but I've forgotten what that was.

*Did a lot of people car pool or did most people just drive . . . ?*

Everyone really. No, we all car pooled. Most everyone, because I think that was what, about twenty some miles from where we lived you know, so we all just got together and went in one car.

*And, so, when you got there did you have a badge to show them or . . . ?*

Um hum, we had a badge.

*So where did he park and how did you get in?*

We had to come through a big gate, a security gate, then we'd come on through and park in a parking lot. Then there was a guard at that gate to get you on into the building. We had to walk probably a block to get into the building from the main gate there. Not from the main gate but from the gate to the building.

*Did you have any breaks during the day or . . . ?*

I believe we had a break between morning and lunch, I think we did. Oh, I know we did but I can't remember whether it was every hour or just one during that time, I can't remember. And then in the afternoon we also had a break, one or two maybe. (Laughter) We went to work early of a morning and seems to me like we got off early in the afternoon.

*And did you always work during the day then?*

No, we rotated our shifts. Let me see I believe it was 8:00 to 4:00 maybe, and then there was 3:30 to 12:00, and then 12:00 to 7:00 or 8:00 the next morning, so we went around the clock. Two weeks I believe on each shift I think.

*And then you'd trade off and work a different time period?*

Ah-huh.

*Did the same people work with you all the time?*

Ah-huh, yes, we all rotated together.

*Did those shifts have names then, did they--or . . . ?*

B shift . . . A shift, B shift and C shift, I think, I think so.

*How did you job fit into the overall production of the bullet, like what stage was your job?*

They were finished, the bullet was finished. But the machine we were on were huge machines and you had a fellow, he was called a tool setter, and he took care of maybe six machines. Then they'd have another tool setter took care of six more and then, the whole floor there. And we would have a big truck thing full of these finished cartridges or whatever you call them, and we would have to take our hand this way and pick them up and when we slid them over the bullet the end of it would be here but the heavy part of it would be up here and you would have to hold them in your hand and you would roll them this way and look to see if they were finished.

*A bullet you'd hold in your hand and roll back and forth?*

Un huh, they were finished and they were about that long and you would roll them from this hand to that and back to see if they were finished.

*What kinds of things would you look for?*

Dents or cuts or--dents or cuts really.

*And then . . . so what would you do. . . ?*

And then we would put them in this big machine, there was a slide that went down, and as they slid it was kind of shaped like this, and as you put your hand full of bullets in there, then you would kind of watch them as they went down this slide that was kind of . . . went down and then they would go into a big truck, trucking cart thing there. And then there would be a lady, she was also an inspector but I don't remember what her title was, but she would check us all out and go through what we had already checked to see if she could find something in that big cart thing that we had missed.

*Oh, really.*

Yeah, Um hum. So it was nice, I didn't mind it at all.

*Did you sit down or stand up?*

We had a chair but seems to me like they didn't much want you to sit down, I think they kind of wanted you to stand. But we did both. I'm just remembered all this stuff. (Laughter)

*What about the ones that were bad, did you throw them away or . . . ?*

We had a little thing there that we put the bad ones in. And then they were inspected again . . .

*The bad ones were?*

Yes, to see if they would pass someone else's borderline. See if you were throwing away too many good ones.

*Oh, okay, and the good ones would then get packed up and. . . ?*

Then they would take those to packing and then they would be packed up because they were already finished when we had them.

*And you said you worked in packing a little bit?*

A little tiny while. No one like packing because it was really hard work and no one liked that. But when you ran out of work that's where they'd send you.

*And you didn't like it because it was heavy or. . . ?*

Heavy, yes. Heavy and hard work and no one liked to be sent there but we would go because there was no work.

*Was your job a union job or non-union?*

Non-union.

*Was it kind of assembly line type work or not?*

No, huh uh. But you were required to put out so much through the daytime. They wanted you to really work when you were there and we did. And I wish I could remember what they expected, but I don't remember that. Too long ago.

*Was this your first time ever to do that kind of work?*

Yes.

*What did you think of it?*

Well, I liked it, I liked it. Because we were with a lot of people we knew and . . .

*You knew a lot of people that worked there?*

I knew two or three. And we all went there together to work.

*Was this the first time that you'd worked for a big company?*

No, huh uh, no. I'd worked for air communications before then and other than that I was a hair dresser.

*Was the work stressful at all or not?*

It wasn't for me.

*Was there any pressure on you to work quickly?*

Uh-uh, no.

*But like you said before though, they wanted you to do a certain number, you had to look at a certain number a day?*

And on the machine there was a place for numbers, the number of bullets that went through this machine, so they knew what you were doing.

*They could tell how many you looked at that day?*

M-hm.

*So what did you think about your part in the war effort in World War II?*

Well, I didn't want anything to go through that wasn't right.

*What do you think about the plant's role in the war effort?*

The plant's rule. . .

*Role.*

Role, oh. Well it was necessary, you had to make the bullets you know. So I think that was what they had to do.

*What kinds of people worked at the plant, like men versus women or people of different races?*

Well, I think they hired just about--I don't remember every any one, but like Colored people, I don't remember ever working with any of those in my department. And there was always more women than men.

I think on these machines we worked on I think there was only women on those. But then the tool setters were all men, I think all of them were men.

*And what did they do?*

If your machine broke they'd fix it.

*But those were mostly men or all men?*

Yeah, I think so, all men.

*What about your supervisors, were they mostly or all men?*

Men, men, ah-huh.

*They were too. But you don't remember seeing anybody of other, different races there?*

Don't remember, don't remember any.

*Do you know if the plant provided day care?*

No, it didn't.

*Was there any day care available in the community?*

No, no, not that I know of. I don't have children and I really don't know, but to my . . . I know they didn't have day care out there.

*Do you know what people did with their children during the day then?*

Probably just a baby sitter, I expect.

*But there wasn't anything [inaudible].*

Uh uh, uh uh.

*Do you remember if there was a plant newspaper or a company newspaper?*

Yes, there was, but I don't think I ever read it. (Laughter). We would have safety meetings too, and that was interesting. They would tell if someone had gotten hurt, which was not very often. And they would--let me see what else would they talk about--I think our production and what was expected of us, kind of a pep talk thing.

*How often did they have. . . ?*

Once a week I think. I know more about it than I think I did. (Laughter) It's all kind of coming back.

*Yeah, that's what most people say. Do you remember any morale boosting efforts like a blood drive, or a bond drive?*

Yes.

*What were those like?*

The blood drive, they wanted you to give blood as often as you could and seems to me like the bonds, seems to me like they wanted you to buy bonds if you could.

*And how did you go about doing this?*

I didn't buy them, I spent my money. . .(laughter), but I do remember people buying bonds.

*Did people get awards for days without an accident or . . . ?*

Seems to me like so, maybe the department, maybe, got. . .because they really stressed safety shoes, safety shoes was the big thing. And I had such a teeny foot, three to four, and I couldn't buy safety shoes because my foot was too little. Finally, I think, and they would--I don't remember what it was, they got maybe points or something for everyone in the department to wear safety shoes and I remember I had an awful time trying to find shoes to fit me, and they really pushed me, even wanted me to wear bigger shoes you know, in order to wear a safety shoe, and seems to me like the smallest was a five. I'm not sure. But whatever it was it was really too big for me, but I think I ended up with some anyway.

*Well, did people have to buy those?*

Ah-huh, you had to buy them. But they were cheap and they were ugly. They were brown, ugly brown, and seems to me like they had a heel about like that, they were just [*inaudible*].

*Like a man's heel?*

Seems to me like they were, but they were really ugly. But they had that metal thing in the toe which really you needed it, really. In case you were run over by one of those carts and you were standing right close to them. Seems to me like they have something under the wheel to keep it from rolling, you know, but anyway I remember I had a time with the safety shoes.

*Do you remember if the plant ever received any Army/Navy E Awards?*

Oh no, I don't remember.

*When did your job end?*

I ended it and I think that, I think that I was there a couple of times. I think when my husband went into the service I think that I quit and went to him for a short while, then I come back and went back to work, I can't tell you when. It was in the forties but I don't remember which year it was, I really don't remember, '42 or '43 probably.

*And why did you quit your job?*

To go with my husband. He was in the service and I went to be with him.

*And where did you go?*

California.

*Compare your first days working at the plant with your last days working there. What had changed for you, if anything between [inaudible]?*

I don't think anything really. The work was there and you were to do it, you know. And I think it was just exactly like it was the first day I went there. Uh hum, I think so.

*Was the plant put on standby or was it closed after World War II, do you know?*

No, I don't think it's every been closed completely, has it?

*I don't know.*

I don't believe so.

*What has the plant done since in the years since World War II?*

I think they've continued working on a smaller scale.

*How was their safety record?*

Great, great. In fact I don't think there was ever. . . I have heard of more accidents there since then than I did when I worked there. I think there was one several years ago, seems to me like it was a bad one, up in where they had the powder or something.

*Do you remember any serious, hearing about serious accidents [inaudible]?*

That was the only one, here several years ago.

*And that was recent?*

I would say ten years ago maybe. I'm just guessing, but. . .

*Did they ever have any minor accidents there during World War II that you heard about?*

Not that I know of.

*Was there a particular area of the plant that was considered the most dangerous area?*

I think that, what did they call it, the powder room, loading, no, let me see loading, no, seemed to me like the powder, where they put the powder in it. That was the dangerous one. Let me see what was the name of that department. Powder room I believe, powder I believe.

*When you were first hired did they give you special safety instructions about . . . ?*

Yes, yes.

*What kinds of things did they tell you that [inaudible].*

Well, those shoes were the main thing. And let me see what else, see where I worked it wasn't dangerous because the bullet was already made. But now the powder room, like I say, it was kind of dangerous in there from sliding different stuff and making a spark maybe it would cause an explosion or fire or something, but I didn't work in there.



*Did you have to wear any other special clothing besides those shoes?*

No. Now when I worked on that line where you sat and the bullets dropped down off of a big something up here and they dropped down onto this little thing that went in front of you, this round thing, you had to wear a hair net or were suppose to. And in case your hair got caught in that little thing, and one day I felt something right here in my hair, scared me to death, and I jumped back before anything happened, but I did feel whatever that was catching in my hair there which would have been horrible.

*Oh really.*

And I just barely jumped back in. . .

*Were you wearing a hair net?*

Yes, but I could feel it, I could feel whatever that little wheel or something was, I could feel it. Oh, I was petrified because I know what it could have done to me. But that was a sleepy job, it really made you sleepy because you had to sit in front of that light and watch these bullets go around all day and not . . . then if a bad one went by you just picked it off see, pick it out off that thing. So any way.

*Were there . . . so you only had to wear special clothing like in certain areas of the plant?*

I think in this powder room they wore coveralls, special, but we didn't where I worked.

*Was there any time during your employment there that you didn't feel safe?*

Un huh.

*You felt safe always.*

Sure, yeah.

*Did you ever hear about anything from people in this community not feeling safe?*

Un un. No.

*So how was the pay at the plant?*

Gosh, I could not tell you, I have no idea. All I remember is it paid better than anything else around.

*Better than anything around?*

Yes. But I have no idea what we made.

*Was the pay the same for everybody in the same job class, everybody in your department if you'd all been there for the same amount of time did you make the same amount?*

Isn't that funny, I can't remember, probably, I expect. Can't remember for sure.

*Did most people save a bunch . . . save their money during World War II or did they spend a lot of money?*

We saved some, my husband and I saved some, and I don't think a lot because we spend money, but I know a lot of people that did, save their money, which we probably should have too.

*But you spent a lot?*

Anything we wanted we spent. (Laughter) Still that way. (Laughter).

*Did a lot of people move to this area to work there?*

I think a lot of people would commute back and forth. The ones that didn't live here would come from different towns, little towns all the way around.

*How far away?*

I know someone that come from (Warrensburg?).

*From where?*

(Warrensburg?), that's fifty some miles. And they come from Lexington and Higginsville, now these are little areas around, Liberty, and they just come that way. Then they had busses that picked people up and a lot of people would get in these buses and come.

*Tell me about the town during the war?*

The town, [*inaudible*].

*What did you do for fun here during the war?*

Well, hum, what did I do. I was busy working and . . . I know at one time I went to stay with my mother and my dad in (Warrensburg?) and that was too far to drive back and forth and you know we kept rotating two weeks here and then the night shift and I kind of liked the 4:00 to 12:00 shift. You had time of a morning to do whatever you had to do and then you still got your rest in the evening, so that was my favorite shift, but I don't know what we did because, let me see I stayed with my brother and his wife and my nephew a lot of the time because see my husband was in the service part of this time.

*So you didn't live alone then, or you didn't want to live by yourself?*

No, huh uh. Well I had roommates too part of the time, a cousin of mine and her girlfriend.

*How long had you been married when he left?*

I think we had been married, let me see, about two years maybe.

*What was that like?*

What.

*Having him gone?*

Horrible (loud). It was terrible, he was over there two years and nine months, yeah.

*And you were still pretty much newlyweds then.*

Yeah, we had been married not very long, so it was hard, it really was.

*But were there a lot of people in the area that were in the same position?*

Oh almost, yes, almost everyone that were our age and even going through all that we've been married fifty-four years so we made it pretty good.

*So what did . . . did people gamble for fun?*

Oh, I don't think so. Dance, I think most people went to dances and, my husband is a musician and when he was home I'd go with him a lot when he played and stuff.

*Do you remember if the plant or the local community planned any recreational things . . .*

I don't think so.

*. . . like did they have sports teams or . . .*

Not that I know of.

*Did the general population increase during the war or not?*

I think it did, uh huh.

*Do you remember if the plant set up or the community set up any temporary housing for people that wanted to come here and work at the plant?*

No, don't think so.

*Would you say that the Independence area changed at all during the war or not?*

I think it helped people, don't you think it would, you know all the people that worked at Lake City and brought a lot of jobs to the city, I think so. I think it helped a lot.

*Do you remember a curfew during the war?*

Huh huh.

*Do you think anybody disliked the plant during World War II because it made munitions or not?*

Oh, I don't think so, I didn't know anyone that did.

*Have you heard anything since then . . .*

Huh uh.

*. . . about people who dislike it?*

No, huh uh.

*How did the war affect every day life in this area as far as availability of housing or [inaudible].*

Very bad, the housing, very bad. It was hard to find an apartment and you just had to look and look and look to find an apartment.

*What about food, was it hard to get certain kinds of food?*

Yes, you had stamps that you had to get your . . . I remember they had coffee stamps and nylon hose you had to have stamps for nylon hose. And my cousin, here's how hard it was to find an apartment, she loved to make a little poem, she wasn't a poet but she loved, she could do all of that, and she made a poem and put it in the paper to get them an apartment and her husband had just gotten back from overseas and she had many many calls, even though the apartments were very scarce during that time and expensive.

*But she thought that she needed to do something that creative?*

Yes, creative to find them an apartment, and it worked. But your hose were, I don't remember how many, how we, how many pair of hose we got, but it was real hard to get nylon hose, sugar, coffee and I think that was all that was rationed, but we had little books with little stamps in them we had . . .

*And you got those how often, once a month or once a week?*

I don't remember, probably, once a month maybe, I don't remember. So you really had to watch, you know, what you did with those.

*So how did the war affect the quality of life then around here?*

Well, I think that, I think everyone was concerned, you know.

*Did many women work at the plant?*

Yes, more women I think than men.

*Would you say that most of these women had jobs outside the home before they worked at the plant or not?*

Not a lot of them.

*So for many, you think, that was their first job?*

Yes. And they went there like everyone else, like I said, to make money, you know. (Laughter)

*Did they keep working at the plant after the war or do you think after the war a lot of them wanted to go back and work in the home?*

No, I think they stayed there for a long time. In fact, I have a friend that was there for, well she retired from there not too long ago, and she'd been there for years, 25 years maybe.

*Did--of the women that left the plant after World War II--did many of them find jobs outside the plant or not?*

I didn't know any that did.

*Like maybe worked somewhere else in the area or . . .*

Huh uh, I don't remember anyone, don't know of anyone that did.

*What did you do? You left to go to California.*

Yeah, un huh.

*And when you came back from California did you work after that?*

Uh, let me see. I went back to Lake City for the second time, I'm sure I did, it's been so long ago. But I'm sure I went back the second time. Then, let me see, what happened, oh the war was over and my husband come home and we went back to Springfield because he's playing in this radio station. So I went with him there.

*And did you work again or . . .*

No, not then. But when I come back and went back into the beauty business.

*Do you remember any minorities working there during World War II?*

Huh uh, I don't ever remember seeing one, isn't that funny. Sure don't remember.

*Do you remember any labor shortages at the plant during World War II, like if they couldn't find enough people to work there ever?*

Huh-uh, [inaudible].

*They always had enough people?*

I thought so.

*Do you remember any discussions in the community, on the radio, or in the newspapers about who the plant hired and who they didn't hire, if there was any particular type of person they didn't want to hire?*

Huh uh.

*Tell me about relations between people of different races in the community during World War II. Were people encouraged to get along, do you remember anything?*

Not as much then as they are now.

*Were there laws about prohibiting discriminatory acts or prejudicial acts that you remember, or not?*

Huh uh, I don't remember any.

*Did many people you know of, this could be something since you weren't around here, that maybe you heard, but do you think many people lost their jobs at the end of World War II that had worked at the plant?*

They had several layoffs at different times I remember, and people would naturally lose their job. And they went strictly, I think, strictly by seniority, you know the younger ones were gone and the older ones got to keep their jobs. Which sounds fair doesn't it?

*What happened to the people that left the plant?*

Oh, I just, I really don't know but I expect they went back to being a housewife, don't you imagine. Because [inaudible] yes, the, you know, to go to work in a store it was probably, I don't know, but probably a minimum wage and it wouldn't even compare with the money they were making there, so I expect they did that, I don't know.

*Did the community change after the war ended?*

I don't think so, not that I know of, didn't notice it.

*Do you think that the presence of the Lake City Army Ammunition plant made the war more real . . . [inaudible].*

Um hum, I believe so. I think so.

*. . . the last year not?*

I think so really. You concentrated on that along with the war, I think.

*Reflecting back now on your wartime employment there, have your feelings regarding that job changed now when you look back on it from here? When you look back on it do you think differently now about what it was like to work there?*

No. I just, it just seems so long ago, which it has been. But I enjoyed my work there really.

*After World War II, what did you think was going to happen to the plant?*

Well, I thought it would close because of all of the millions and millions of bullets that were made and here it is what forty years later or fifty or whatever it is, and it's still in operation. So you wonder where all of these shells and all of these bullets are stored or where they're going . . . (Laughter)

*So you originally thought it was going to be closed?*

Sure, I thought the war was over and that was it. (Laughter)

*What kind of effects does the plant presently have on the Independence area?*

Well, I think that probably not too much. I don't think that people concentrate on that any more.

*Did they--did it used to be a bigger thing than it is now ?*

Oh yes, during the war it was. And there was so many more people working there and now there's not that many people and I think that they just don't think too much about it now.

*Are there any other things that you remember about working there, any stories that you remember that you could tell about it that I didn't ask?*

Yeah, you've been a great interviewer (laughter), but I can't think of anything, like I say my time there was very uneventful, but I enjoyed . . .

*Or anything about anything about the war, about living here during the war that was . . .*

I know my husband was in there three years and never did get a furlough even to come home, and that's a long time overseas.

*Where was he overseas?*

He was in New Caledonia. And, let me see, what else could I think of. I don't know.

*Well then I think I'll just have you sign this consent form and then if you could put your name and your address and your phone number up there and this way I'll be able to send you a copy of this and the draft report and the final report.*

There you are.

*Oh, and if you have any restrictions on it, you can mark that there or just mark no restriction.*

(End of Interview)

**CORNELIUS LUNDY**  
**June 28, 1995**  
**Kansas City, Missouri**  
**Deborah Crown, Interviewer**

*Today is June 28, 1995, this is Deborah Crown with Bear Creek Archeology and I'm interviewing Cornelius Lundy. How long have you lived in this area?*

In this area, 34 years.

*Where were you living when you heard the ammunition plant was going to be built?*

I was living in the city, which was on 2313 Agnes.

*And were you working or going to school then?*

I was working.

*What were you doing at that time?*

Construction work.

*And were you getting paid very well there?*

Well, no, not then no, I wasn't.

*Do you know what the land values were before the plant was constructed? How much it cost to buy land before the plant was constructed?*

No, I don't.

*What was the reaction of most people in the area when they heard that the government or Remington was buying the land for the plant? What did people think?*

They was happy to know that they was buying that to . . . that there would be jobs for people, you know, jobs for people.

*Did you or your family own land out there that was going to be purchased?*

No, no.

*Do you think that land prices in the area rose or fell as a result of the government buying that land out there?*

I wouldn't think it had rose, I think it fell myself. I don't know enough about it. I don't know, I wouldn't know.



*Did you hear anything about whether or not most people out there that did own land, were paid enough for their land? Or do you think they didn't get enough?*

At the time, I didn't know into that part of the project. I didn't know how . . . I didn't know if they was overpaid or underpaid or what.

*Did you work on the construction of the plant at all?*

Yes, I did.

*You did, and what did you do?*

We laid the railroad tracks out there. Also, we did some of the maintenance work of the buildings. But, mostly my job was track work.

*And was that shift work, was the construction going on 24 hours a day?*

Just day work, just eight hours a day.

*And what was a typical day like working that kind of a job?*

8:00 to 4:00.

*What did you do, like you got there at 8:00 and what were the conditions like?*

Bad, it was cold, cold, cold. Too cold to work outside, but we worked.

*When was this, what month of the year?*

1940, '41.

'41?

'41.

*Was it in the winter then?*

Yes, it was and it was cold.

*Did most of the construction workers live in the town or in the city or did they live right at the construction site?*

Some was in the city and some was in the surrounding towns.

*Was there a work camp, like trailers or tents or anything set up for construction workers?*

No.

*It was just people that came in?*

Just came in to work.

*Did you ever see the whole construction site when you were there, when it was being built?*

Yes, I was there from the beginning to the ending.

*And what did that look like when it was being built?*

It looked so much, it looked altogether and different. When we went there, it was a lake, ducks and geese was out there, it was a lake.

*What did they do?*

Well, we filled it in, landscaped and start building.

*What kinds of people worked on construction? Were most of them local people or did they come from far away?*

I wouldn't think they did, other than the company people. The company people was far away, I don't know just where they come from. But, the working people out there was from the Kansas City area, that not meaning all was right here in the city, could have been some of the other little towns surrounding.

*When you say the company people, is that the Remington people that came in?*

No, that was the company that was building Lake City.

*Who was that?*

Well, let me see, was it . . . I can't remember, I think, was it Foley Brothers? I'd have to get some of my checks and I don't know where they would be to find out all of the companies. Some of them I don't . . . Kelloggs, Kelloggs, I can remember that name Kelloggs. I don't want to get them mixed up with Standard Oil, while I worked out there. I think Kelloggs was out there, I think. I hope I ain't mixing them up with Standard Oil.

*That's okay. How did people get along during the construction of the plant?*

Got along well.

*What about the local people and the people that came from somewhere else?*

All got along well, as far as I could see.

*Was there any racial tension that you noticed?*

Nothing like there's been in the world, if it did, I didn't know about it.

*Were there people of other nationalities that worked out there that you remember?*

Well, yeah. I don't know exactly what nationalities they was. It was different nationalities, but I don't know whether it was Irishmen or Italians or Mexican. I do know there was some Mexican and we didn't call them Black then, we said Negroes, Colored, I know we was out there. I know that, but I don't know, there might have been other nationalities, but I didn't know of any.

*So, you remember them being Mexican people that worked there for a while?*

Yes, some Mexicans, I worked with some Mexicans.

*What did they do?*

It was railroad, they liked that.

*Did they speak much English?*

Oh yeah, better than I can. (Laughter)

*Tell me about this city during the construction of the plant, what did you do on weekends or evenings or during your free time, what did you do for fun?*

Well, sometimes we worked six and seven days, you didn't have too much time to have fun. (Laughter). But, at that point, I don't know just what we would do for fun.

*Do you think that the few people that came in from other cities or towns to work on construction, do you think that they took away from jobs that should have belonged to people here or could have belonged to people here?*

I don't think so.

*Do you think this area changed during the construction of the plant or not?*

Yeah, I do believe it has made a change since then.

*Well, I'm saying when the construction started to when the construction was over, do you think it changed during that period of time?*

You mean, the plant?

*Like the local area, like the community?*

No. If I'm thinking right, if I'm giving you the right answer, even after they went in the plant, different people come in from different areas just like they did when they was building it. It all wasn't Kansas City people. We called them small town, small town areas, people come from all around. Maybe, I'm not giving you the right answer.

*Oh yeah, that's fine, that's good.*

It was surrounding and everybody got along well, nobody thought that you shouldn't have been there or I shouldn't have been there. It seemed like everybody got along with others.

*Do you remember the transition from construction of the plant to going into production?*

Yeah, I can remember this, I can remember when they told us we didn't have no more construction, they didn't have any more construction for us to do. I went to the Building Number One, I believe it was, and I asked for an inside job. I was told to get my birth certificate and they would give me one, and I got it and they did, and I worked inside the plant.

*Was that the very day that they told you the construction was over?*

No, that wasn't the day, that was I imagine two weeks later. Because I had to go get my birth certificate and when I come back and showed it to them, then I was hired inside into the plant.

*Do you think it was a smooth transition . . . that the plant made a smooth transition from construction to production? Or do you think it was kind of hard for them to really get going?*

To me it was easy. While we was out there on construction, the plant was operating.

*So, they didn't build it all and then start it all?*

Uh-huh. It was operating ammunition before we got through working outside.

*Oh, you just told me how you found out about getting your job at the plant, okay. Were they advertising for workers in the newspaper or on the radio? Do you remember?*

That part I don't remember. At that time, we had to go through the social security office, we had to go through the, what would I say . . . I'm sorry . . . had to go through the unemployment and the social security and the local union, we had to go through those three to get out there.

*To work at the plant?*

To work at the plant.

*Why did you want to work at the plant?*

I needed a job and to make a honest living.

*Was there more reasons to work there or was that the main reason?*

And I wanted to do something for the United States, for my government.

*Before you started working there, what did you think working there would be like before you started actually working in the plant?*

In the plant?

*Yeah.*

Well, I didn't have any thoughts about it (laughter), we was just coming out, just coming out, it wasn't out, coming out of the depression and everybody was just glad to get a job. Everybody was happy to get a job, a place to work. We weren't happy to be making ammunition to kill somebody, but it's a job.

*In which building or which area at the plant, did you work?*

Well, from time to time, we didn't work in one place at all times, you was moved up, you'd get a promotion, advance if you proved out, you'd get better jobs. So, you wasn't at no one place at all times. They would ask you if you want a better job, we have an opening over here and if you want to accept it, you can take it, and if not you can stay where you is. You know, there's no force to make you go.

*Where did you start, what did you start doing?*

When I started, I was janitor, service operations and I worked on up to production.

*Where in production?*

Tool setter, I worked up to be a tool setter.

*And what did a tool setter do?*

It's operating . . . called final inspection. When we run it, then the government, they run it last and if we made a mistake, they catch it.

*What were you inspecting, bullets?*

Bullets.

*You were inspecting bullets?*

Ammunition, ah-huh.

*Well now, the next question is, describe an average day of working at the plant? So, if you could maybe tell me about an average day working as a janitor. You know, when did you get there and what kinds of things did you do during the day when you working there and when did you leave?*

Housecleaning, cleaning the floors and restrooms and office.

*Did you go all over the plant or did you clean one building?*

Well, some did and some didn't. Some would go from one building to the other and some stayed in the same building. Fortunately, I pretty much stayed in the same building.

*What about as inspector, when you were inspecting bullets, what was that like?*

Well, that's like if you had a faulty bullet, it couldn't pass, you'd throw it in the waste and all your good bullets went through and your bad bullets was canceled out.

*Did you get breaks?*

Oh yes, we got breaks.

*And what did you do, how many breaks did you get during the day?*

I got two in the morning, two in the afternoon.

*And did you have a lunchbreak?*

Yes, we did.

*Did people bring their lunches?*

Could bring it or you could go to the cafeteria, but you had to eat in there, whether you brought it or didn't.

*You couldn't eat where you working?*

No, they wanted you to eat in the cafeteria, you could bring your lunch, but they wanted you to eat it in the cafeteria.

*Did you ever eat the food at the cafeteria?*

Oh yes.

*And was it good?*

Good, good, yeah good.

*Did they offer any vitamins or anything like that.*

Yes, we had first aid all around.

*How did your job fit into the overall production of the bullet? Like was it one of the first stages of production or was it one of the last stages?*

No, it's going to the last, no, well, I really couldn't tell you about the beginning of it, the way it started. But, anyway, we was the last, we was what you call final inspection.

*And right after it left you, then where did it go?*

It was ready to be shipped out.

*Was your job a union job or non-union?*

No, no. Non-union.

*Was it assembly line type work?*

Yes, it was.

*That's your final inspection job that you're talking about?*

Ah-huh, assembly line.

*Was this your first time to do that kind of work?*

Yes it was.

*And what did you think about that?*

I liked it.

*Did ya?*

I liked it.

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

Yes, it was.

*And what was that like? How did it compare with a smaller company?*

It was good, it was good, I liked it.

*How was it different from working for a smaller company or did it seem just like working for a smaller company?*

In some instance, it seemed just like working for some small company in some way.

*In what ways?*

Well, you was treated good, they didn't, what I'd say, make you do things you shouldn't do. They didn't expect you to do things you shouldn't do or was too hard for you. Anything that was hard for you, they'd tell you to get help. And I have worked for small companies that would tell you that. So, that's the reason I said they . . . in a way they would hardly work together in some portion.

*Would you say that your job was stressful or not? Was there a lot of pressure on you to work quickly or not?*

At times, at times they did. You had three units to work sometimes both of them, maybe two of them would break down at the same time. And you had to work fast to get them units to going. Because, production wanted to keep going, keep moving, you had to work fast and sometimes, it was stress. But, it wasn't at all times, but sometimes you had, if two of them machines break down at once, they don't want them machines laying out like that.

*Did you fix them?*

To a certain extent you did and then when they got some things, the maintenance people would have to pick them.

*What do you think about your part in the war effort in World War II?*

My part?

*Your part.*

That I played in it?

*Yeah.*

It was essential.

*It was essential?*

That's the way I would determine. It was helping the people over in the other countries, I was working hard to see to them being safe over there.

*What do you think about the plant's role in the war effort during World War II, do you think it was important?*

The roles?

*The plant, the ammunition plant?*

Oh yes, it was. I think it was essential to have them plants open in operation, I feel that way.

*What kinds of people worked at the plant? As far as, were there a lot of men, were there a lot of women there?*

Men and women.

*Would you say there was more women there or more men there?*

No, I think there's more men. I think there's more men than there was women.

*But were there a lot of women working there that you remember?*

A lot of women worked there.

*What about African-American people and White people, were there a lot of African-American people there?*

Quite a few, quite a few. Of course, we didn't call them that then. But, there was quite a few.

*Was the plant segregated?*

To a certain extent it was, it was some segregation in it, and there ain't no use in saying it wasn't. I think most of that was overlooked.

*Overlooked?*

Because we was trying to do our job. I wouldn't feel justified in saying there wasn't some segregation, that wouldn't be fair for me to say it, because there was in some ways.

*In what way?*

Well, it may be that I couldn't explain every detail, but in some ways, it was.

*Could you give maybe one example.*

Well, at one time, the cafeteria was segregated.

*Were there different cafeterias?*

No, there wasn't different ones, but at one time . . . in years to come, they did away with it.

*When did that change?*

I wouldn't know just when that changed.



*Did it change during World War II?*

No, [inaudible], I guess it was World War II. It wasn't, to my thinking, it wasn't noticeable too much. Because I would say most of the offices I've worked on was segregated, so I wouldn't say that one was anymore than any of the rest I've seen. (Laughter)

*Were there certain jobs that only members of a certain race did?*

Members of a certain race?

*Like, were there certain jobs that only White people did, or certain jobs that only Black people did?*

That's what I was trying to come to, that there was some.

*Like what jobs?*

Well, I don't know what just exactly what job, but they'd find their way down, if you was capable, you could do most any job. But, it was at one time, that's what I'm trying to tell. At one time, it was, but it changed.

*But nobody really has been able to tell us much about that, before it changed, and if you could tell us anything about what it was like then. You know, that would be helpful to us, if you could give me an example of maybe a job that only Black people did or only White people did?*

Well, in the beginning, as I said, that's was mostly Blacks jobs was cleaning up, maintenance. You didn't get any of them upper jobs, but eventually, it opened up to us. But, that was it, when we first went there, that was the biggest we did do.

*But then later you worked in production?*

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

*Do you remember when that was that you started working in production? Was it still during World War II that you worked in production.*

Oh yeah, oh yeah, ah-huh. Yeah, but I don't remember just when it was. (Laughter)

*Do you remember certain jobs that only men did or only women?*

Well, at one time, there was plenty of jobs out there that nobody did them, but mens. But, it seemed like in later years the women wanted them, they asked for them and they did them.

*Before that changed, what were some of those jobs that only women did or only men did?*

Well, like trucking, heavy trucking ammunition. Pushing those trucks you know, a man couldn't hardly push himself.

*So men mostly did that?*

Ah-huh.

*Heavier type of work, men mostly did?*

Ah-huh.

*What about supervisors?*

Well, they had some supervisors, I think.

*Were they men or women or both?*

Whether there was any women, I don't know, it could have been.

*It could have been just men?*

Far as I know. Supervisors, as far as I know, there could have been some jobs that women were supervising, but I don't know.

*What about Black supervisors?*

There were a few.

*A couple?*

(Laughter) maybe a couple. I may not be putting this to exact, but near as I can get it. I couldn't say there wasn't any, there was a couple that I know.

*Do you remember if the plant provided daycare facilities for women that had children or not?*

That I wouldn't know, there could have been, I don't know.

*What about in this community, do you remember ever seeing any daycares around here during World War II?*

There was some, but I don't remember where they was.

*Would you remember a plant newspaper or a newspaper out there that they did of the plant?*

They had what they called The Tracer, Lake City Tracer.

*Lake City Tracer?*

Ah-huh.

*Do you remember what kind of articles it had in it? What was in that paper?*

Well, you know, ah, whatever your title was or the title of the jobs, something like that, they'd have your picture and the title of the job you was doing.

*Did they ever have news about the war or any information about things going on at the plant there? Is that what that paper was for?*

Well, it would tell you what the production that they was putting out and what they was doing.

*Do you remember any morale boosting efforts, like buying war bonds or giving people awards for having so many days without an accident or anything like that?*

Oh yes, oh yes.

*What kind of things did they have?*

They would give you, so many working days, if the plant went without an accident, everybody would get a present or whatever. They'd have different things and you'd choose what you want.

*Oh, so you could choose a present for yourself?*

Well, out of the three or four or five different items, you choose the one you want. You know, I mean they didn't just tell you that you had to get that one or this one, you could choose the one out of the items that they had.

*What kinds of things did they have, do you remember?*

Cigarette lighters, clocks . . .

*Did you ever get an award like that?*

Yeah, I got a . . . let me see if I got anything here to show what I got at Lake City. If I had known earlier, I could have maybe . . . I've got some around here, I don't know where it is. There's some here somewhere.

*Did you ever buy war bonds?*

Yes, I did.

*And how did you go about doing that, did you just go somewhere and buy them?*

No, they take so much out and then they would send you the bond.

*Oh, they take it out of your paycheck?*

Ah-huh and that's the way you get your bond.

*Did a lot of people do that?*

I would think quite a few did.

*Do you remember if the plant received any Army/Navy E Awards?*

E Award?

*An E Award, it was an award that they gave out to some plants for excellence, do you remember if they ever got any there?*

I don't know.

*When did your job at the plant end?*

When I become 65, (laughter) that was all, no more.

*What were you doing at the very end there?*

At that time, when I ended, I was working in shipping and I was delivering parts to the different buildings.

*You were delivering parts to different buildings?*

Ah-huh.

*So you retired from there?*

Oh yeah, not because I wanted to, because I had to.

*Did you enjoy working there?*

Oh, I did. I wouldn't want . . . I don't know another place I'd rather to prefer working than Remington (*inaudible*). If I had to do it all over again, I'd ask for it.

*Compare your first days working at the plant with your last days working at the plant. What are the most significant differences that you can tell me about, between when you started and when you left?*

I was getting a little more money (laughter).

*More money?*

(Laughter). I was getting a little more money.

*That's pretty significant. What else was different?*

Well, my thinking ain't together, I guess there was a whole of things, but, I . . . hmmm, I don't know. I guess I can't think right now.

*That's okay. After World War II was the plant put on standby or was it closed for a while or not?*

Maybe, I'm getting ahead of myself, maybe you ain't, I am. Maybe, that's what I'm talking about, after . . . when the plant, let's see which war was World War II, was that the Koreans?

*Korean was in the '50s, World War II was in the early '40s.*

Mostly I'm talking and giving you is in the '50s. That was in the '50s, I'm mixed up on the times. What I'm giving you was in the '50s. Yeah, the plant closed down from, I believe, well there's VJ day and that was '44 or '45 and it didn't reopen until '51. Now, that's what I'm talking from '51. I guess we're mixed up on the . . . I am.

*That's okay, that's all right.*

Although, I did work there in '41.

*Well, maybe I can go back and ask you a couple of other questions then about 1941 and 1945, like between then, during that time in the early '40s.*

That's when I was speaking about the cafeteria and the differences.

*Well, what about during World War II then?*

It was better.

*It got worse than Korea?*

No, no, it was better. I said, during World War II, it was better.

*In the '40s it was better?*

No, it was worse.

*It was worse in the '40s.*

It was worse, better during Korea.

*Better during Korea?*

But, I wouldn't say that it was really bad, but there was noticeable things that went on that anybody would notice.

*Like what?*

Well, you didn't get some of the recognition that you think you should have had. I can't just name every item, but it went on and I guess, it's been going on for centuries. It was nothing new.

*During World War II like in the early '40s then, would you say that the plant was segregated?*

In the early '40s?

*When you first started working there?*

To a certain extent, I'm sure it was. It was yeah. As I said, we couldn't get nothing but janitor work. Finally, it went into other work.

*And when was that, that you went into production work?*

Hmmm, I imagine about '43 or '44, somewhere around there. That's been so long and my age, I'm doing good to give you any advice. (Laughter)

*Can you tell me about the plant's safety record?*

They had a good safety record, although some of us didn't follow it, but they had a good safety record. I think they had a good one. They wanted to see everybody work safe and nobody get hurt. It seemed like every time we had a safety meeting though, that's when you go back, somebody would get hurt. (Laughter)

*How often did you have safety meetings?*

Often, well you're going to have one once a month, but I think that sometimes maybe more often than that. I don't know. Some of them seemed like they had them every week. I think and probably did. I told them, my supervisor, I said, if we'd stop having these safety meetings so often, I say, I think you'd stop having accidents (laughter) well, people would get nervous. You can make people nervous and they have an accident.

*Do you remember any serious accidents out there anytime you were there?*

Well, I remember the time I was working there, but I don't know that I remember any at the time that I was out there on the job, that I was working. But, I probably, when they happened, I was home.

*Ah-huh, but what kind of accidents were there?*

Oh, they had a couple of powder blow ups.

*And did people get hurt?*

They found one man's fingernails.

*And what happened to him?*

Blowed him to kingdom come (laughter).

*What about minor accidents?*

Oh, that's what I was saying . . .

*There was a lot of those?*

Quite a few minor accidents.

*And that happened because people were nervous, you think?*

Well, that was me saying that. That may be what you better take out of it. (Laughter) I was saying that.

(End of Side One; Begin Side Two)

*Today is June 28, 1995, this is Deborah Crown with Bear Creek Archeology, I am interviewing Cornelius Lundy, this is side two. Was there a particular area of the plant that you remember that was considered the most dangerous area?*

Ah-huh.

*What area was that?*

That what I was speaking about, the powder area.

*The powder area?*

The powder area was dangerous. You had to be alert at all times, because it was dangerous.

*Could anybody go into that area?*

No.

*Did you have to have a special badge?*

That's right, a special badge, and only the working people.

*If you wanted to go visit there, you couldn't go in there?*

Unless they had a special day for you to do that.

*So, did certain people have to wear special clothing?*

Special clothing, special shoes.

*What kind of clothing or shoes did they wear, do you know?*

To name them, no, I don't.

*What did they look like?*

Heavy, thick and I think, I don't know whether it's called conduct sole shoes or what.

*Oh, their shoes?*

And the clothes they put on was thick. I don't know. I never worked there, I seen some of mens that was there, because I wasn't going in that part of it.

*Was there anytime during your employment there that you didn't feel safe?*

No.

*You always felt safe working there?*

Always felt safe.

*Did you ever hear about people in the community, either like in this Kansas City area or other areas that didn't feel safe, because they were afraid of chemicals or blow ups or anything?*

No, I didn't hear of any.

*How was the pay at the plant, did they pay well?*

It was good.

*How did the pay at the plant compare to jobs outside of the plant, like in the early 40s? Was it better or was it about the same or worse?*

I'd say about the same.

*Did people that worked the same job, get paid the same, like if a man and a woman worked the same job, were they getting the same amount of money?*

As far as I know, I guess they was. They could have been different, but as far as I know.

*What about a White person or a Black person, were they making the about the same amount of money for the same job?*

I think so. If it was different, that I didn't know.

*Do you think that many people or most people saved their money during World War II or did they spend their money during World War II?*

My guess would be that some saved and some didn't.

*What did you do?*

I sure ain't got any. (Laughter) I don't have any. (Laughter) I guess I didn't save.

*Were there certain things during World War II that people couldn't buy because of the war that you remember?*

Oh, many things during the war, I think that you couldn't buy. Unless you get, what would you call it, I don't know.

*A stamp?*

A stamp or something, you could get . . .

*Like what were some of those things?*

You couldn't buy shoes without a stamp, saving sheet. You couldn't buy tires for your automobile, unless you get a . . .

*What if you got a flat tire?*

Well, you couldn't just go buy it, you'd have to have a stamp or something.

*You couldn't just go to the store and get a new tire for your car?*

Uh-huh. I can remember that well, because I needed it.

*What did you have to do to get your tire?*

I'm trying to recall what you'd get, but I can't name it, but you'd have to get a notice to get tires.



*Did the plant or did the local community plan any kind of recreational activities? Were there fun things to do at the plant that the plant set up, like sport teams or pot lucks or dances or anything, that you remember?*

I don't remember dances, but they had picnics.

*Picnics?*

Oh yeah.

*For everybody and their families, I suppose?*

Ah-huh, I guess, the working people.

*And when were those, were those on weekends or were those during the week?*

Oh yes, it wouldn't be during the working day.

*You wouldn't do it during work?*

Uh-huh.

*What did people do for fun during World War II around here?*

Well, I'd say different things, which I couldn't name, just different things, I don't know.

*Did people gamble?*

That I don't know, they might have did.

*Would you say that the Kansas City area or the Independence area changed during World War II in the '40s?*

In what way, changed?

*As far as morals or peoples values, do you think that changed?*

I wouldn't think so.

*What about the way they looked at money? You said that earlier that you were just coming out of a big depression and then did that change during the war?*

Well, people was more relaxed, I may not can word it, but they was more appreciative to one another than they were. Any time you're in a depression, you ain't too happy with nobody. People was more jolly and more satisfied.

*Was there a curfew in Kansas City during the war?*

I don't remember but one curfew and I don't remember just when that was. When was that, I remember one curfew being in Kansas City to my remembrance. It didn't last too long, when was that, what happened. They had a curfew here once, but I don't remember what it was and the reason of the curfew. But, I do know we had one. I can remember that.

*Do you think that a lot of the women that worked at the plant had worked outside their home before coming to work at the plant? Or would you say that working at the plant was their first job? Or were most of them housewives before?*

I would say some of them had other jobs that worked and some, I imagine it was their first jobs.

*Do you think that a lot of women kept working after World War II or do you think that a lot of them didn't want to work after World War II?*

I think a lot of them kept working, when they could find work.

*Do you know what kinds of jobs they worked at, women worked at? Were there certain jobs in this community that were mostly done by women?*

I would say mostly wherever they could find work. And a lot of them worked at the plant, automobile plant, factories, packing houses at that time. Of course, they ain't down here now, but at that time, a lot of women worked at packing houses and Lake City. Some left packing houses and come to Lake City.

*Do you remember any labor shortages during World War II, like in the 40s, when the plant needed people to work there, but they couldn't find enough people or were there always enough people to work there?*

I don't know when they wanted people to come and they didn't get them. I don't remember that.

*Has that ever happened before or not, where they wanted people to come, but couldn't get them?*

No, I don't remember that.

*They always seemed to have enough people?*

No, I mean, I haven't known no place yet, that want people to work and couldn't get them. (Laughter) The people was ready to go to work anywhere, that's what I'm speaking of.

*Do you remember any discussions in the community or on the radio or in the newspaper about who the plant hired and who they didn't hire. Like if there was ever any talk of you know, a certain kind of person that the plant wouldn't hire?*

No.

*Tell me about race relations in the community during World War II?*

In the community?

*Yeah.*

Well, I can't think, it seemed to me that the race relation, I think was pretty good. Maybe all this thinking I'm saying ain't right, but as far as I can think, it was pretty good.

*Do you think that the presence of the plant made the war seem like a more real event to people around here, or not? Like if the plant wasn't located here, do you think that it would have been easy to forget that the war was going on?*

No, I don't. I think the plant was a help to people in every way. That's my thinking.

*When you were out there working with the bullets everyday, did it make the war seem closer to you, than if you would have been working at another job?*

Yes, because I was producing something, that I felt was doing something.

*Reflecting back now on your employment there during World War II, have your feelings regarding your job there changed at all, or not? When you remember working there, what do you think about, what comes to your mind?*

Well, this comes to my mind, that I wish I was a younger man and I could work back there. (Laughter)

*You wish you could go back today?*

I enjoyed it, I enjoyed working there. It was a pleasure for me to get up to go work, when I was working.

*After World War II, before Korea, what did you think was going to happen to the plant after World War II?*

I never did think it would reopen.

*You didn't?*

I never did think it would reopen.

*And what was that like, when you heard it was going to reopen?*

Oh, it was like, joy and happiness.

*Were you surprised?*

Well yes, I was. Because, I was the first one that was called back.

*You were one of the first to be called back?*

I was the first one that got a check when it went back into production, I was the first one.

*You were?*

Ah-huh. Yeah, I was the first one that was called back, labor.

*Well that's interesting. What kind of an effect does the plant have on the area now?*

I wouldn't know.

*Do people ever talk about it around here?*

Once in awhile you may hear someone, it ain't like it used to be. (Laughter). I don't know how it is now.

*Are there some people that think the plant should be closed?*

I don't know of anyone that thinks that. I never have heard nobody say it.

*What do you think? Do you think it should be closed?*

I don't think it should be.

*And why is that? Why do you think it should stay open?*

I think that you always should prepare for war in the time of peace. You don't wait until somebody a couple of miles from you, gets started to doing something to keep them from getting to you. That's the way I feel about it. I feel that the plant should go on.

*Do you remember any stories about your time working there that you can tell me, that I maybe didn't ask about?*

I think you covered near about everything. (Laughter)

*Do you have any questions for me?*

Yes, I do. I don't know how to ask it, but I do. I think I ask you though in the beginning before we set up the machine, I think I did. What is the nature of this?

*Ah-huh. I said that this is part of a documentation of the plant and we wanted to get, what we call, insider points of view. Where it would be, you know, you were there, working there, so that's why we like to talk to people that were actually there. Because, a lot of times we learn more from the people that were there, than we can ever learn from a textbook.*

Well, I do remember this, you said, how did you word that.

*I asked if you had any stories?*

This is not a story, but I remember, cleaning up the plant manager's office one day and he says, I think I made a mistake, I did something and he said, Lundy that's alright, says I wouldn't want a person to work for me that didn't make a mistake. He say, you see all these pencils here, you don't see no ballpen, you see all pencils. I write with these pencils, because I make a lot of mistakes and I have to erase them and if I write with that ballpen, I can't erase them. And, he went on to say, we get our ideas from you all. You all are doing the work, you're operating that machine. You see, on paper here, I know this paperwork, but I wouldn't know how to go down there and start that machine, but you do. He say, we helps each other. And, that's true, it's true. The working man, of course, he gets the less respect, but everybody know that. But, he's a help out to the higher ups.

*And the plant manager said that to you?*

He said everybody makes a mistake. If anybody don't make a mistake, anybody is subject to make a mistake. But, I have worked for people that didn't seem to think that you should make a mistake.

*But you always felt good about working at the plant?*

I loved it, I loved it and I had some of the best people to work under in the United States. The man I'm speaking of now, Mr. (Spire?), he's one of the best men. I admire him. Some of the superintendents and some of the plant managers have gone on to their reward. I don't know where he is, he's in Bridgeport somewhere, but they was nice people. I enjoyed working for them. Everybody treated me nice. I was treated nice and I appreciate it. Today, if I wasn't as old as I am and they said Lundy come back, I'd go back to work.

*Well, I'll have you fill this out and then sign it for me. This is what I showed you earlier, if you could fill your name out and your address, so I can send you that stuff. Could you spell the name of that plant manager for me, Mr. (Spire?), did you say?*

I don't know, no. I'll tell you why, because when he first come there, there was a fellow that was with him, he's a company man and he said, I don't know whether he said Spirey or Spire and he still didn't . . . I never did.

*Spirey or Spire or something.*

He said like a sparrow bird flying.

*Oh okay. When was that, was that in World War II?*

Ah-huh. Uh-huh.

*That was later?*

Ah-huh.

*And can you write Kansas City and your zip code, so I can mail that to you.*

Do you want my phone number?

*Yeah, if that's okay with you.*

Ah-huh.

*If I can use your tape in the report, you just mark no restriction, and if you don't want me to use it, then you can say that.*

At this date, I tell you, my talking, I'll tell . . .

*Oh, I'd be typing some stuff from it, I would just be, you know. . .*

You wouldn't put this out where nobody hear it, would you?

*No, this? This tape will go to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, and it'll stay there and if you don't want anybody to hear it, you can write that down.*

You know the reason I say that, I don't care, I don't think I've said anything I wouldn't want heard. I hates to hear my voice. I makes tapes and when I heard my voice, I said, my, my, I don't want to hear my voice.

*This will just be for other people to use for research and it's up to you.*

If they hear my voice, they sure wouldn't want to see me. (laughter) I have a bad voice, that's the reason I kept backing back from that.

*People just want to listen to your words.*

My wife, she can't get me to make no more tapes, with my tapes, I don't make none. Now, what you want me to do here?

*Well, if you don't have a restriction, like if I can use this to write the report with, then you mark no restrictions. Just check it with a check mark there and then you can sign your name.*

Okay.

*So, it's okay with you if I use this? I'm not going to play it for anybody.*

*Yeah, you can use it yourself, you ain't going to hear it but once (laughter).*

*And also a copy will be at this other place, this Geo-Marine, too. Well, thank you very much.*

(End of Interview)

ALICE McELDERY  
June 27, 1995  
Independence, Missouri  
Deborah Crown, Interviewer

*How long have you lived in this area?*

Gosh, about oh 65 years.

*Where were you living when you heard that the plant was going to be built?*

Right here in Independence.

*Were you working or going to school at that time or . . .*

No, I was a housewife.

*Do you know about what the land values around here were before the plant was constructed?*

Not really, I know that we paid around \$1,400.00 for our house.

*And that was before the plant was built that you bought the house?*

Well, yeah pretty close.

*What was the reaction of most people in the area when they learned that the government or Remington was buying the land on which the plant was to be built?*

Well, (laughter) as a housewife I don't remember that it was too important to me at the time.

*Was there talk of anything in the community about that?*

Oh dear, there was lot of talk about it and what it was going to bring into our area and the business that it would give, the opportunity for employment. But at that time I wasn't looking for any employment (laughter) and so I never thought about it. But there was lot of talk about it.

*Did you or your family own any of that land that was going to be purchased?*

No.

*Do you think that land prices in the area rose or fell as a result of that plant being built out there?*

Well, it's just my personal opinion, but I think it rose.

*Do you think that most people that owned land out there were paid enough for their land?*

I really don't know.

*Did you ever see the area where, when it was being built?*

Uh huh.

*What did that look like, can you describe the conditions at the construction site out there?*

Not really, we used to drive by to see what was going on. It was just farm land and then they went in there, we didn't really get into the development because the government had it fenced off and . . .

*About how long do you think it took them to build it?*

I don't know.

*Did a lot of people come into the area to help build the plant, do you remember?*

I don't really remember.

*Do you remember any kind of work camp out there or a place where all the construction workers lived or do you think most of them lived in town or . . .*

I don't remember any work camp.

*Tell me about the town during the construction of the plant? What were you doing in your free time around then?*

Raising a family. We've always been active in church work, the usual things that you do. And that's quite a ways out from the town itself. I really don't know a whole lot about what went on out there.

*Do you think the area changed while the plant was being built as far as businesses or housing availability or crime?*

I don't remember that it did. We were a much smaller town than we are today.

*What did you do before you started working at the plant?*

I was a housewife.

*How did you find out about the job at the plant, or get your job out there?*

Well, everybody was putting in applications out there. They were, a lot of the fellows had gone off to war and so I put my application in too and it was really by word of mouth, I had two or three friends that were out there working and they said you ought to go try and so I decided to go try (laughter) and was hired.

*Why did you want to work there?*

Make some money (laughter) was the main reason.

*Was there any other reasons for working there?*

Well, patriotic reasons. The war was on and they needed the help. I'll have to say my husband didn't really want me to go to work. (Laughter).



*What was he doing?*

He worked for Amoco Oil in Sugarcreek, and he was also, had his name in to go to service. He hadn't gone yet. But he was up to be called and so I thought I ought to go to work. But I didn't go to work near as early in the plant as lots of people did.

*Before you started working there, what did you think working there was going to be like?*

I didn't really know. I'd done like worked in department stores and some things like that, but I'd never worked in a plant like that. And I wasn't sure what they would put me at when I went out and put my application in. So I don't think I really knew what to expect. (Laughter)

*What did you think was done out there before you . . .*

Well, I knew they made ammunition and that there were high [*inaudible*] where they did certain things that were more money, more dangerous to work at. I really--I knew it was ammunition, but that's about all I . . . I knew there were big machines out there because some of my friends run those big machines.

*In which building or which area did you work?*

Three.

*Building number three?*

Three and 3A.

*And what did you do at the plant?*

Well, I started out in the box factory and my job was to put the stencil on and spray paint the . . . really they put all kinds but mine that I did were machine gun belts that they packed in these boxes and that's where I started. And when they needed somebody on the soldering line I worked on it. And if we were caught up there I'd go back to the box factory and stencil some more.

*You were stenciling on boxes . . .*

That held the machine gun belts, telling you where it come from, what it was, and the caliber and then on the soldering line there was rollers that the carts go along and you . . . the metal cans they put them in you had to solder the lids on. The they moved on down and to see if they'd leak. And then they're put in wooden boxes that we spray painted.

*Oh, okay, you solder . . . what was inside those cans that you soldered together?*

Machine gun belts, with ammunition in it. They were ready to go out the door and be sent to . . .

*Which job did you work at more than the other?*

They were pretty evenly . . .

*You were switched back and forth between those?*

Yeah, we were all right there together and we . . . it was not hard if they . . . if somebody didn't show up why I might go over and work on the soldering line, just kind of versatile. (Laughter)

*Can you describe an average day, like you know, tell me about how you got there and what you did for lunch and when you left?*

Well, we worked a swing shift and you'd ride a bus out there. I did. Some people had cars, but I rode busses out to work. You had a locker room and we had like coveralls that we could put on in the locker room. I don't think they all wore coveralls, but because I was spray painting or soldering, why they gave us coveralls that we wore.

*The plant gave you those?*

Yeah, and we'd put those on and go about our work. But lot of them that worked the machines or worked on the belts where they put the ammunition in the belts they dressed in their own dress, but because I was in the paint shop or the soldering well I had coveralls that I wore.

*Did you have breaks or . . .*

Yeah, you'd have a break and then your lunch was--I can't remember now whether it was thirty minutes or so, and sometimes I brought it and sometimes I went to the cafeteria.

*Were you free to walk around the plant then?*

No, not too . . . I could go down to the machines, I had some girlfriends there, if I had a lull I could go down and talk to them, but most of the time you're pretty well stuck because they can't leave their machines, and because of what I did I had a little more freedom than those that set at a machine and packed the machine gun belts or run them, well I had a little more freedom because of the kind of work I did.

*How did your job fit into the overall production of the product, like where, in what stage of production were you?*

I suppose close to the end of the line because the boxes were not filled yet that I spray painted, but when I soldered why those machine gun belts were already in there and I soldered the lid down tight. And then the metal boxes put in the wooden box and then ready to ship, so I'd say it was close to the end of the assembly line, if you want to call it an assembly line. (Laughter)

*Was your job a union job or non-union job?*

I don't remember belonging to any union.

*Was your job assembly line type work then?*

Well, yeah, kind of. The paint shop wasn't exactly, but the soldering was definitely assembly line.

*Was this your first time to do this kind of work?*

Um huh, yes it was.

*And what did you think about that?*

Well, it was different, rather exciting, and such a different atmosphere than anything I'd been into.

*How was it different?*

Well, you worked around a lot of people, men as well as women, which most of the things I'd been involved in was just women, like clerking in a store, and then to go out there, and it was noisy, lots of noise in there. It was just different and kind of fun. (Laughter)

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

Yes.

*What was that like, how was that different from working for a smaller company? Or was it different?*

Well, not really, because I didn't know any of the big shots. The only ones I knew would be the ones that were my supervisor or the head of the whole building and the rest of the people I didn't really know. So it wasn't too different.

*Was your work stressful or not?*

I never felt that it was.

*Was there any pressure to work quickly?*

Oh yeah (laughter), yeah you needed to be moved right along with it. There was one time on the soldering line, I can't remember for sure why they called me into the--Mr. Walter's office but it was a reprimand for something and I remember he used some foul language and I wasn't used to that and I told him I said, you can call me in and lecture me and ball me out, but I don't have to stand there and listen to this foul language and if you can't clean it up why I'm leaving. And he respected that. And I thought (laughter) I might lose my job over it, but I didn't. He treated me very nicely after that and, but I had worked for him in the dime store years ago when he run the dime store in Independence.

*You already knew your supervisor before . . .*

Not really. I worked for him when I was about 17, 16, 17 years old and he managed a dime store. And outside of him signing the pay check is the only relationship I had with him. But I did, I knew who he was and I was surprised when I got out there and found he was going to be head of that department. (Laughter)

*What did you think about your part in the war effort during World War II?*

Well, I don't know that I had a lot of thought about it. It was very evident because of what you were working on and it was--it made you think about it. I could step out the door, like on a break time, and I could see the bunkers where they were firing the ammunition to make sure it worked and you could see the tracer bullets and it made you very aware that there was a war going on and, of course, we were waiting for him to be called too. (Laughter)

*What was that like?*

Well, kind of scary. (Laughter), we had, I had two children and he was called up at one time and went and took his physical and told to go home and wait and it was a year before they called him back. I don't know what happened, but all that year we sat there waiting any time for him to be called to go out and it just didn't happen for a year. And that's kind of hard to live with, but . . .

*What do you think about the plant's role in the war effort during World War II?*

Oh, I think it was very necessary. We sent a lot of ammunition out of there, all kinds, I just happened to be mostly involved in machine gun belts and that kind of stuff.

*What kinds of people worked at the plant, like how many men were there versus how many women were there, and how many people of . . .*

Well, it seemed to me like in the department I was in there were quite a few men, but there were lots of women too. I think there were probably more women than there were men. But because of the department that I worked in it did require . . . a lot of the women run machines or put the bullets in the machine gun belts, but in the box factory there were quite a few men. And there were several men on the soldering line. I suppose because it was heavier work that there were more men working around where I did than in some of the other areas where the big machines were, women run them and they just called for a man if it jammed up, a man came and took care of it.

*What about people of other races? Do you remember ever seeing anybody out there of a different race?*

I don't remember it in my department. There were, I don't think there were any Blacks and there weren't any outstanding countries that I would, just like us.

*So you don't remember any people of other races there at all?*

Not really. There might have been people from different nationalities, but they had been raised here in the United States or they came over early from the old country, their parents maybe still came from Czechoslovakia or some place like that, but mainly they were like the rest of us.

*Were there certain jobs that only men did at the plant?*

Well, I'm sure there was, but I'm not really aware of them.

*Were there certain jobs that, like were there any female supervisors ever that you remember?*

Not in my department. Now there may have been on some of the machines in this same building and I think it was men that always came if a machine jammed up, I think it was a man that came and could start it up again. But in my, I can't remember any woman supervisor that I had anything to do with.

*What about, were there any women that worked as guards or in security that you remember?*

I don't remember.

(Recorder turned off and back on when telephone rang.)

*Did the plant provide any day care facilities for mothers who worked there?*

No.

*Was there anything like that in the community?*

Only you found your own baby sitters, there was nothing like today really where you can find day care centers.

*So what did you do with your children?*

I hired my neighbor to take care of them. She had small children and so she took care of my kids.

*Did you have some other friends there at the plant who had children too?*

Most of the ones I knew didn't, didn't have any kids.

*But you think most people had to do basically what [inaudible].*

I think they got their own.

*Do you remember a plant newspaper or company newspaper?*

No.

*Do you remember any morale boosting efforts that they had there, like a bond drive or blood drive or . . .*

I don't really remember, but I'm sure that there were some because I remember buying some, we called them war bonds, and I don't remember specifically that we had a drive for it, but I do remember buying some and it surely was because they had a drive, I just right off hand (laughter) don't really remember any big rally.

[inaudible]

Yeah, we bought some war bonds.

*How did you buy them, was it taken out of your pay check or did you just . . .*

You'd take it out of your pay check.

*Do you remember if the plant received any Army/Navy E Awards at all?*

I don't remember.

*When did your job there end?*

Well, I quit. My husband didn't really want me to work and the swing shift was hard because he worked days only and so I finally decided it was better to quit and stay home with the family.

*About how long were you there?*

Not very long, maybe a year. I'd have to look back, but it was somewhere in that vicinity.

*Compare your first days working at the plant with your last days working there. What are the most significant similarities and differences from, you know what you were like when you started and what you were like when you quit. You know, what you thought about your job when you started working there and then what you thought about it when you quit working there.*

Well when I first started out there of course I was excited about it and I enjoyed it. I was nervous because I'd never done anything like that before and it took a while to settle down and for the job to become routine. Because I'd never been in a place like that. And then I was surprised, I had never worked around a lot of

men. And I was not prepared for some of the things that took place out there at that time with that. And I think a lot of the women were in the same boat. And as my time out there progressed I became uncomfortable with it and . . .

*Uncomfortable working with the men that were there?*

Well, some of them, not all of them, but there was always a few that thought he had to pat you where he had no business patting you or, and then you begin to learn the girls that--I had one friend that worked on the soldering line with me and she was married, but she was really having an affair with the head guy out on the soldering line. And I became uncomfortable with that and there was a lot of that going on and I had, I guess I had had a sheltered life (laughter) and it didn't, it bothered me. Not that I'm any judge, but . . . and there were two or three that would like to be friendly with me and I objected to that.

*Was there anybody there that you could talk to about that?*

I never did. Maybe there was somebody you could have talked to but I didn't. It was not, they didn't force themselves or anything, but it was just that I was uncomfortable with it. And then the stories that would float around and talking to people that were doing it. (Laughter) It was, you could, it could be a temptation, you know, and I didn't want any part of it.

*Where there other people there that felt the same way that you did do you think?*

Um hm, yeah there was a gal that worked on the machine gun belts, filled them on a machine. She was uncomfortable with it, however, she didn't quit, but she wasn't married at the time either and she worked there for years at the plant. She moved into office work as well. But she was uncomfortable with it.

*Was it mainly supervisors that would do this or just . . .*

Well, quite a bit, but there was a guy in the box factory that rode the same bus I did and he wasn't any supervisor but he didn't want to leave you alone. (Laughter)

*Is that basically one of the reasons you quit, or is that the main reason you quit?*

No, that's not the main reason, but my husband wanted me to stay home and the swing shift was hard with a family.

*Can you define that, what is that, the swing shift?*

Well, it's like you worked eight hours day shift and eight hours like 3:30 to midnight, and then midnight until morning, until 7:00 in the morning.

*That was swing, was constantly changing [inaudible].*

Yeah, ever two weeks we'd change to another shift.

*It was every two weeks?*

I think it was every two weeks we'd change.

*So you worked all three of those then at some point?*

Uh huh, yeah. The worst one's the midnight, by 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning you can't (laughter) hardly stand it. (Laughter) You just are so sleepy that you can't hardly stand it. Then you get over that, along about 6:30 or 7:00 then you begin to perk up, but there is a period in there that's just torture. (Laughter)

*So was it hard to get used to, that shift or . . .*

Very hard, very hard. I could stand the 3:00, 3:30 until midnight wasn't too bad, but your night shift up until daylight was bad.

*What happened to the plant after World War II? Did it . . .*

Well it still functioned for a long time. I had this one girl I was telling you about, she worked out there for years. I don't think it's ever been closed has it?

*I'm not exactly sure if it has.*

I don't think that's it ever, they may have got down real small employment, but I don't think that's it ever been closed down.

*Did you hear of anybody losing their jobs after World War II at the plant, or not?*

I'm sure they must have, they must have been a lot of them that lost because there wasn't the demand that there had been.

*What has the plant done in the years since World War II?*

Gosh, I don't know because I haven't been out there (laughter).

*Do you know if they were running for Korea or Vietnam or . . .*

I don't really know. They must have or they, why would they have stayed open. But I don't really know.

*Tell me about the plant's safety record? Was it . . .*

They were very conscious of it and I think it was pretty good.

*Do you remember hearing about or witnessing any serious accidents out there?*

No, not where I was.

*Did you hear about anything like in the paper or on the radio about anything?*

Not that I remember. I know there were departments that they were very careful with, that were sealed off, but I don't remember hearing any real bad stories about it.

*Did you hear about any minor accidents out there, little things . . .*

Oh, I'm sure (laughter) there were but I don't remember worrying about it. I know that there's times you'd get burned with the solder and some of that. I think the paint shop was kind of bad because of the odors that

you'd would smell and using those spray guns, but I don't remember anything serious or minor that happened.

*Was there a particular area of the plant that was considered the most dangerous?*

Yeah, I was trying to think what it was, what it had to do with and I can't remember what it was. But I had a friend that worked in that department for a long time, and I know it was off to itself and he had to change clothes to go in and change clothes before he came out, but what he did in there I don't really know.

*Was there a lot of safety instruction given to new workers?*

Yeah, I went through a lot of instructions on how to do it and how to keep things safe.

*Can you give me some examples of some safety precautions that you had to take there?*

Well, we wore masks in the paint shop and they wanted that in there to wear that. We had a little shield when we soldered that we could use and goggles that we used.

*[Inaudible] for your face?*

Uh huh, and we usually had coveralls and then gloves so that the hot solder couldn't get to you to burn you. And just general precautions that they would go through with you on what I did.

*So I guess you've sort of already answered this, did you have to wear special clothing?*

Yeah (laughter).

*Did you ever wear, did you have to wear anything on your head ever?*

Outside of goggles I don't, no hard hats, I don't remember ever wearing a hard hat.

*Did people have to wear special clothing in all areas of the plant or just in certain areas?*

I think just in certain areas. I know a friend of mine just wore her regular clothes to work out there.

*Was there any time during your employment there that you didn't feel safe?*

No.

*Did you ever hear anything from people in the community about them not feeling safe, blow ups or chemicals or where they ever worried about it?*

Not really because there was very few people living around the plant, it was out in the country and I don't remember hearing any problems over that. Oh I think there was, you know passed through your mind that what if they bombed this place (laughter), but not really because we didn't have any of that, no bombs fell in our country, which was a lot better than a lot of countries. (Laughter).

*Did they ever have drills for that though?*

We had, I can remember a drill or two where we were to leave and go, but I don't know whether it was fire more than anything maybe.



*How was the pay at the plant?*

Well, we thought it was excellent (laughter). We thought it was good.

*How did that compare to the pay at jobs outside the plant? Was it more or less or [inaudible].*

Well it was a lot more than I ever made anywhere that I worked, but like I said I didn't work in any factories anywhere or anything like that so it was a lot better pay than what I had received in the past.

*Do you think everybody that was in the same job class was paid the same as long as they had the same experience?*

I think pretty much. They had, might have been, I'm not sure they might have had a different rating for machine gun belt to run those machines, I really don't know. But I made the same as anybody on the soldering line, the same in the box factory.

*Even as far as men and women were concerned, you got paid the same?*

Well, I think. I'd never really thought about looking into it, you know, you get your pay and that's all you think about.

*Did many people or most people save their money or spend their money during World War II?*

I don't know.

*Were you saving money or spending your money?*

Well, we tried to save a little, yeah. If we hadn't saved a little we wouldn't be able to do today what we do. (Laughter)

*What were people able to spend their money on during World War II, or what couldn't they spend their money on, what couldn't they buy or . . .*

Well, a lot of our gasoline was curtailed, we had to have stamps for that, we had to have stamps for sugar, it was hard to get sugar. I don't know about whether, in forty and so forth it was as difficult, but until the war was over there was a lot of things you couldn't get in that capacity. You could buy clothes and shoes without much trouble, it was a few of, like gasoline and sugar that we had trouble getting.

*Did a lot of people move to this area to work at the plant or was it mostly from people that were just [inaudible] employees come from just around here or . . .*

I think there was some moving in, but a lot of people drove from miles to come to work. They still lived in (Warrensburg?) or Harrisonville or Lexington, lots of outlying cities and they'd drive back and forth long distances to work. I had some in our department that drove fifty miles one way to get to work.

*Fifty miles one way?*

Um hmm.

*Did they car pool or did they drive by themselves?*

Well, I don't know, they may have car pooled. I imagine they did. (Laughter) Because there'd be several from the area, they came from all the little towns around to work up here. Some people moved in and some people didn't.

*So you'd say there probably weren't a whole lot of people that moved into this area though?*

No, I think there was.

*Oh, there were anyway. Do you think that they mixed with the local people really well or did they just keep to themselves?*

No, there was a good mixture. They didn't seem to be stand offish or anything.

*Were there any problems between the newcomers and the local people or not?*

I don't think so.

*Did the plant or the community encourage people to get together a lot, like did they have dances or . . .*

Not to my knowledge.

*Or sports teams or . . .*

Not like today (laughter).

*Tell me about the town during the war. What was it like to live here?*

Well, we were a much smaller town. I always thought that we were a patriotic town. It's grown tremendously since the war.

*What did you do for fun during the war?*

Well, there were theaters (laughter), you could go to the show, we had three or four theaters in town. And we were always close enough to walk, we didn't have to drive the car a lot. We were church active so that was a lot of our entertainment, was church activities.

*What kind of activities did you have with your church?*

Oh, we belonged to the choir and we'd have pot lucks and just general activities at the church. You might be at the church like today you'd go to church at 11:00 and maybe you don't touch the door the rest of the week. (Laughter) But it was lots of church then, Wednesday nights as well as choir practice on Thursday and Sunday services twice a day and your families were built around, a lot, around that. We had two weeks of vacation church school and lots of things like that we just don't do hardly anything any more. (laughter)

*Did anybody around here gamble that you know of during the war? Was there a lot of that going on or not?*

The people I had contact there wasn't.

*Do you think the general population increased during World War II or not?*

I just don't know.

*Do you know if there was any temporary housing set up for new people to move in here or not?*

I wasn't aware that there was anything set up.

*Do you think that there was higher incidents of illness because of all, because of more people in the area or not?*

No, I don't think so.

*Do you think water supplies and sewerage disposal was fine during the war or not?*

We've always had excellent water and as long as I've lived here, so I don't think there was any problem with water. I'm not sure about the sewer. I know we put in a lot of new sewers, but I can't remember whether a lot of that came on during the war or whether it was after the war.

*Do you think the Independence area changed during the war at all as far as people's morals or their values?*

I think it changed.

*In what way?*

Well, like I said earlier Lake City changed a lot of morals, it made a difference. And of course the war brought restrictions to, that we had restrictions on. So I think the war changed.

*Do you think people were more conservative before the war or after the war?*

Well, most people came through the Depression and we had learned to live within our income. I think when the plant came in a lot of people rose in income and they could spend more, do more, because of it. But it made a big change in our community because they were large employees, a lot of employees out there that made a big difference in our city.

*Was there a curfew at all during the war in the town at all, do you remember?*

I don't remember that there was.

*Did anybody dislike the plant during World War II because it made ammunition?*

If they did I wasn't aware of it.

*Did you ever hear about anything about people disliking it during Korea or Vietnam because it made ammunition?*

I don't remember any demonstrations against the plant.

*How did the war affect, well the war and the plant I guess, affect every day life in the area as far as availability of housing? Was there a lot of housing always available that you know of?*

I don't know. We owned our home, we'd bought it and owned it so we didn't do a lot of moving so I wasn't really too aware. I think there was, at the time we were looking, there were a lot of places you could buy if you had the money to buy it, which might have changed over a period of time with an influx of more people coming in. But I wasn't aware of it, because we already had ours and wasn't looking.

*What about food, was there always food available around or, you said earlier that some things were rationed.*

Yeah, we couldn't, we had to be careful with sugar. Food was not as easy to come by maybe as it was later or before because there was a lot of farmers kids got hauled off to the war too. But you could always get food, nobody went hungry. (Laughter)

*What about general, what about the quality of life during World War II?*

Well, it was, to me it was better than during the Depression when . . . when I got married we were making \$7.50 a week.

*\$750.00?*

\$7.50 a week (laughter) and wages came up good during the war, and you--were a lot more money. Of course things cost more too, but at that time you could buy gas for like 12 to 15 cents a gallon. But money was scarce and the war came along and it picked up. People that didn't have to go off to war begin to have better wages and work.

*Now you said there were a lot of women that worked at the plant? Do you think many of these women or most of them had jobs outside of the home before they started working at the plant or do you think this was their first time to have a job outside their house?*

Well, outside of working in a department store or baby sitting with somebody else's kids or doing ironings, I think a great deal of them were first time to work in a big plant anywhere.

(End of Side One; Begin Side Two)

. . . the only women that worked down there were people that worked in offices, girls that worked in offices.

*This is June 27, 1995. This is Deborah Crown with Bear Creek Archeology and I am interviewing Alice McEldery. This is side two. Did lot of women keep working at the plant after World War II or did they . . .*

I think a lot of them stayed.

*What about the ones that left the plant after World War II, did they want to find a job somewhere else, did they want to continue working, or did they want to maybe go back to working in the home only or . . .*

I don't know what the majority . . . the ones that I knew stayed because the job was still available. I knew three people that stayed out there because their jobs were still available and they could work. What the others did I don't really know.

*You already mentioned this, I don't know if the tape was running or not, but what kind of jobs did women find if they could find work, outside of working at the plant? You sort of mentioned this before.*

Well, yeah, I had, well she's related by marriage, she worked in sewing, like sewed up, run a machine in making sacks for dog feed or sacks for flour, whatever. Then others that worked at a machine and made clothing, lot of women did that in a factory. Lot of them did just office work or else clerking in a store, maybe working in a restaurant. I had girl friends that worked in restaurants.

*And you said you didn't really remember people of other races working at the plant.*

I can't remember that.

*Do you remember if the plant had any labor shortages during the war, if they really ever at one time really, really needed people there? Or did they always seem to have enough?*

I think, I just don't know. I really don't know.

*Do you remember hearing any discussions among people in the community, like on the radio or in the newspaper, about who the plant hired or who they didn't hire, like if they didn't hire a certain kind of person?*

I don't remember any talk about it.

*Tell me about race relations maybe in the town during the operation of the plant. Were people encouraged to get along or was there . . .*

Well, you know, I don't recall any trouble. We lived as a child, I lived not very far from the Black community and I don't remember any problems. We didn't have lots of Blacks, but we've always had Blacks here in Independence and I don't remember ever having any problems. I don't think we mixed a great deal, however my dad was a Baptist minister and it was not uncommon for me to go occasionally with him to the Black Baptist church and if there was conflict I don't remember it. But we were, Blacks worked in people's homes which is not you know maybe we weren't on a level the same but I don't remember any problems particularly with the Black community and our White community.

*What kinds of people stayed on at the plant, who stayed on at the plant and who left right after the war?*

Gosh, I don't know. I just, like I said I had three friends that stayed on . . . I really don't know for sure who stayed and who didn't. (Laughter)

*Did, you said there were some people that moved to the area to work there. Did they end up staying here after World War II or did they just go back [inaudible].*

I don't know. I just remember some saying they'd moved into town and rented and others said they were driving from long distance. But what they did afterwards I don't know.

*Did the community change after the war ended? When the war was over, did it feel different?*

Well, I'm sure it did. I'm sure that there was great relief that the war was over. Whether it changed anything or not, I was glad my husband come home (laughter).

*Oh he did eventually go?*

Um hm.

*And how long was he [inaudible; telephone rang].*

He was gone about six months or a year, less than a year.

*Do you think that the presence of the plant made the war seem like a more real [inaudible].*

I think it brought it home more than if we hadn't had it.

*Reflecting back on your wartime employment now, have your feelings about your job there, have they changed at all, if you look back now?*

I don't think so.

*After World War II what did you originally expect regarding what would happen to the plant? What did you think (inaudible)?*

Well, since I wasn't working there any more I didn't really pay that much attention to what was going on. I know some of my friends thought they were going to lose their job and wouldn't be there, but Ora moved into the office work and stayed until she retired. So there was concern about it from people that still wanted to work. But I had already quit and so I wasn't too much involved with what it was going to do. But I know some of them worried about it, Ruth stayed for a while before she got laid off.

*What kind of an effect does the plant have on the area today?*

It's got a big impact. When they lay off out there the community feels it and, of course, as they don't need the ammunition why they do have lay offs.

*Are jobs hard to find in this area?*

They're not real easy. The steel mill's down, the automobile factories leads is gone and yeah it's not easy to find employment, good employment. Lots of cheap work but not good pay.

*And would you say that jobs at the plant are considered, are they considered good jobs?*

Yeah, they're considered good jobs. Anybody that can get on at Lake City's (laughter) real thankful.

*Do some people in the area think it should be permanently closed or not?*

Not to my knowledge.

*What do you think about it?*

I don't think it ought to be closed unless we don't need it. If we don't need it I don't think the government ought to keep going at a loss, but if, and I think it'd be dumb to become weak and not have provisions because there are plenty of countries that would take us down if they could. So I think we need to be strong military wise. But I don't have to deal with that (laughter) so I'm not going to worry about it. (Laughter)

*I might ask you how to spell a couple of things. You said your supervisor was Mr. Walters, how is that spelled, do you remember?*

Just Walters--W-A-L-T-E-R-S--I believe.

*And I already asked you about the swing shift. You said people came from Morrisonberg or Morrison . . .*

Warrensburg and Lexington, Harrisonville--there was lot of outlying towns, I'm sure Richmond was another one. I had a friend that worked on the soldering line that drove from Richmond, I'm not sure just how far that is. Lexington's got to be at least fifty miles. And they drove those every day. They could come in from Buckner and come up through that back road which cut off instead of having to come in to the front gate, they'd let them in at that back gate, which cut off a little, but they drove lots of miles to come to work.

*How do you spell Warrisonberg?*

Warrensburg?

*Warrensburg, okay.*

Gosh.

*Didn't know this would be a spelling test, uh? Okay, it's Warrensburg.*

There's a college down there, state college, and . . .

*And do you spell Harrisonville this way?*

Hm-hm.

*That's Harrisonville.*

Ah-huh.

*And is Lexington spelled like Lexington, Kentucky?*

Uh huh.

*And Richmond like Richmond, Virginia? And then you mentioned a friend of yours, a friend's name, was it Ara?*

Ora McCormick?

*How is that spelled?*

Ora.

*Do you have anything you can add that I didn't ask?*

No, not really.

*Then thank you very much.*

You're welcome.

*Now I'm just going to ask you to sign this release form, if you could fill out your address. You can sign that there.*

Do you want my address?

*Yeah, so I can send you the transcription and . . . Okay. And if you have any restrictions on the tape you can list them there.*

*[Inaudible].*

*If you don't have any then if you could check that, no restrictions. And if also we could get your phone number too in case I need to ask you any more questions. Okay, thank you very much.*

(End of Interview)



**DALE POLLARD**  
**June 27, 1995**  
**Lake City Army Ammunition Plant**  
**Deborah Crown, Interviewer**

*How long have you lived in this area?*

Seventy-eight years.

*Where were you living when you heard that the plant was going to be built?*

In Lexington, Missouri.

*And were you working or going to school?*

I was working at that time.

*And what were you doing?*

I was working for a newspaper.

*And about how much were you getting paid at that time?*

Oh, I would say around \$60.00 a month. Also, at that time, I had a Deputy Council's Commission and I worked along with the Constable.

*What were the land values in the area before the plant was constructed?*

Around \$100.00, \$150.00 an acre.

*What was the reaction of most people in the area, when they heard that the government or Remington was buying the land on which the plant was to be built?*

Well, I think they were happy about it, because they knew there'd be a lot of people hired and there would be employment in the area, which would help the economy a whole lot.

*Did you or did your family own land here that was going to be purchased?*

No.

*Do you think that land prices in the area rose or fell as a result of the government or Remington buying the land?*

Oh, I don't think that had a lot of difference in it. I think really, as time went on and wages increased and everything, that land went up on normal situations.

*Do you think most of the people that lost their land or whose land was purchased, do you think they were paid enough for their land, to buy land that was comparable somewhere else?*

I would believe they were. This is [inaudible] a lake area in here where we are right now, and of course, they drained it and then the rest of it, you can see, is hilly and rocky. So, I would say that I would believe that they could get land close around.

*Did you ever see the area when the plant was under construction?*

I worked here while it was under construction.

*What did you do?*

I went to work for Remington Arms Company in early 1941 and really I was studying processes and watching building. There was one small building at the west end of the plant that was being completed, and we set an office up in there. Then from that point on, while they was building, we went up and watched construction and how they was going to install the equipment in the buildings.

*Was the construction going 24 hours a day?*

Twenty-four hours a day and they had skilled craftsmen that was doing the concrete, brick work and carpentry work. It went fast.

*About how long did it take them to build the plant?*

Well, parts of it, I think after they started, I believe it was around nine months later that they had the equipment installed in some of the buildings.

*And how soon after that was it in production?*

I can't remember the exact date, but I thought it was late August, in 1941, that they came out with the first productions. I could validate that for you, but it was somewhere around there.

*What were the conditions like at the construction site here, when it was under construction?*

Well, like a big, normal construction product. This is a sandy area; there was dust and it was hot, and they would have to use caterpillar tractors to pull the trucks through, loaded with cement and sand and lumber. And they concentrated over here on the north side of this building. On that little hillside there, they cut all the lumber, no matter where it was going to be used.

*Did a lot of the construction workers that came here, were they from around this area?*

They were from every place. They had enough brick layers when they laid these big buildings--you see they're a block long--that they worked elbow to elbow and they would start in the morning and the wall would be up as high it was going to go at the end of the day on some of the buildings.

*Did these workers live in town or did they live right around here?*

They lived in an area, I'd say about 50 mile circle radius, some farther.

*Was there a work camp at all?*

No, not a work camp, per se.

*How did the local people and the non-local people get along during the construction of the plant?*

I'd say very well. And fact is a lot of people were not close to the plant, and where you see houses out here now, that was just farmland, and on the south side--you've probably been around the plant--there was no houses at all on the south side here. And if you go east out, like I did, to leave the plant here, there's not a house between here and Buckner, on this main road, even today.

*So it's relatively distant?*

And as you see up there, on that hillside, that's farmland, and that's Missouri Pacific's main line between Kansas City and St. Louis right over there, and our fence line adjoins that.

*Were there any people of different races working here during construction?*

Yes.

*And how was that relationship between them and White people?*

They never had any problem.

*Tell me about the town, about Independence or the surrounding area during the construction of the plant? What did people do for entertainment or free time?*

Well, mostly back in those days, it was theaters. You had theaters open and a lot of people, you know, holidays they got together and Fourth of July, big celebrations and Labor Day and all those, and those things have passed away. You don't have that anymore, where families get together. And they had major league baseball, not major league, but the other. Well, they did have Triple A ball, I would call it. And they had the Kansas City Monarchs, which was a Black ball team and they drew big crowds of people. And they had Smoke Park out there and they had a Fairyland Park and they had rides and concessions and all that. So there was a lot to do. Swimming pools.

*What was the transition from construction to production like? Was it a smooth transition?*

Very smooth.

*How did you find out about a job at the plant, working at the plant once it was built?*

Well, I read in the paper where they was looking for individuals to be employed when the plant opened. And I went down to Kansas City and had an interview, and based on that interview, I was hired. And a couple of months later, I got a call to come to work.

*Why did you want to come to work here?*

Well, one thing, for the salary.

*Was there more than one reason?*

No, that was the main reason. They were paying 65 cents an hour.

*And how did that compare with jobs outside the plant?*

Oh, it was considerably lower. And one reason, you worked seven days a week.

*You worked seven days a week?*

Ah-huh.

*And was it eight hours a day?*

Eight hours a day, they had three shifts.

*Which shift did you work on?*

I was 4:00 to 12:00 mostly.

*But did you switch off?*

Not very often. I had a choice in doing that.

*Before you started your job here, what did you think that it would be like?*

When I first come up there and looked at it, it was in July, really that I took a look at the whole plant, and boy, it was hot and dusty. They were still building the roads and I thought it was kind of a mess. But the production building was well organized. And I was working with the Chief Factory Clerk in keeping time and also track of the amount of the ammunition being produced. I had an option of moving around from building to building, which made the days seem short.

*Were most people not supposed to . . .*

Most people were assigned a job, and they worked in the small areas, say six or eight feet from them, operating one or two machines. Now there were 22,000 people here, and it may seem like a lot to you, but there was about 725 or 730 guards. And they had guard towers with big search lights on them and the guards would get in the guard tower and sweep the area with the search lights. And they had horses, had a stable here and they had horses, and certain individuals rode the exterior fence lines with those horses. When they were brought in, they had somebody to [inaudible] them down and feed them.

*So that was to make sure that people weren't just wandering around?*

Not only that, it was war time you know, and there was suspicion of anybody coming in.

*So the security was very strict then?*

M-hm, yeah. We got a, I think around 12 mile fence lying around.

*You said you got to move from area to area in your first job?*

Yes. See, we had a caliber 50 production and we had carbine production and we had 30 caliber and building for 20 millimeter, and that is the only item made in each of those buildings. And Building 10 was a machine shop that made tools for the production equipment. So, I'd move from there and check . . . we had timekeepers in all of those buildings, and they'd look at the timecards to see if they kept them up and if they were working and what absenteeism was and was it interfering with any of the production.

*What was an average day like for you at the plant when you first started? Like when did you get here and did you have a break?*

Being shift work, yeah, you got the ten minute break in the morning and a ten minute break in the afternoon. Then the lunch periods, you were allowed twenty minute lunch periods, because you had three shifts. And that was a paid lunch period. You was only working that way seven hours and let's say 40 minutes, because they had 24 hours a day.

*How did you get here? Did you drive?*

We carpoled. Now, there were trains that come out of Kansas City and there were buses that come out of small towns around that did bring people in.

*About from how far away did they come?*

Well, I'll bet people traveled as much as 40 miles, 50.

*Did most people carpool or take the bus?*

Everybody carpoled if they could and the buses were loaded. And even a train come out of Kansas City, east of here, and pulled over at little Lake City. There's a little town over there called Lake City and that's where they got off at.

*Was your job a union job or non-union?*

Non-union.

*Was this your first time to do that kind of work?*

No. I had worked with a county engineer, when I was in high school and the first year after I got out of high school, and kept records for him and also, we went out and surveyed country roads and grounds belonging to the county.

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

Yes.

*What was that like, how was that different from the other jobs that you had before?*

Oh, I didn't notice really any difference myself.

*Was your work stressful or not?*

No.

*Was there any pressure to work quickly ever or not?*

You had a certain amount to do and you knew what it was and you went ahead and did that. You take today's world, everybody wants to loaf. We don't have that value that we had years ago in workers. Today, they all do as little as they can. Back then, you did everything you could. No matter what they told you to do, you did it.

*What do you think about your part in the war effort in World War II?*

Well, I worked up here until September of 1942, and then I was drafted in the Army, went into the Air Corp and was in the Air Corp for about 20 months and went over to train a group on some caliber 50 guns and ended up in the infantry. And I went overseas and then served in combat and landed in England, across the Channel, went down into Southern France and served in the Seventh Infantry Division as a rifleman and as a sniper. Don't use the word sniper, I hate it. It still bugs me.

*So you did quite a bit during the war.*

And I got out of the Army, then, in January of '46 and came right back into work here for the government. And I don't know, along about middle of January, and I've been here ever since. I'll complete my 53rd year of government work, on the 2nd of October this coming year.

*That's commendable. What do you think about this plant's role in the war, during World War II?*

I think it played a major part into the war. They make good ammunition and they met all the schedules that was imposed on it and they developed different types of ammunition and we were ideally located, with the railroad track running by the plant, Missouri Pacific, with the river eight miles away, where you could load up barges, if necessary, and with an airport within 20 miles. So you had different ways to ship your ammo, plus your truck lines. Then we had major highway, US 40 six miles south of us, 24 two miles north of us, and it was just located in a good spot. And when they built the plant, they built it steady brick and mortar, and it's well built, as you can see today.

*What kinds of people worked at the plant? I'm talking about men versus women?*

There were a lot of women, because there were a lot of men gone and the majority of people here were women. Good workers.

*What about people of other races, were there people of other races that worked here during World War II?*

A few.

*But not many?*

I wouldn't know how many. There weren't a great number. One thing, in Kansas City at that time, there was not a big diversity of the foreigners living in Kansas City or had even come over and got naturalized. They were mostly Irish and England, there were Germans in the area. There were some German communities in the area. Concordia, which is 50 miles east of here, if you go down there, walk down the street, they spoke German. But I think as America's involvement in it, that everybody was for it and there was no problems. And even during World War II, they brought prisoners that worked in the river area, within 15 or 20 miles of here.

*Were they working for this plant?*

No. They was prisoners of war and they were watched and they worked along the river and cut willows in embankments and kept them straight. They did odd jobs like that. I think the Coast Guard monitored it.

*Was this plant segregated?*

No.

*Were there certain jobs that only men did?*

Yes, in the explosive area mostly. And the gunners were mostly men, that tested the ammunition and your maintenance men were . . . I don't recall ever seeing a woman in a maintenance job, like [inaudible] seam fitter, pipe fitter, carpenter, welder.

*Were there certain jobs that only women did?*

No. When you got into the production lines, they did most everything. Now, there was some physical aspects of production. They didn't have automated lines and the moving the ammunition, you moved it in the carts and you shoveled it out into the production equipment with large scoop shovels. And women didn't do that sort of thing.

*What about packing?*

They worked in the packing departments.

*They did that too, okay. Were there certain jobs that only members of a certain race did?*

No.

*Did the plant provide day care?*

No.

*Was there any of that in the community?*

Any what?

*Any day care in the community?*

Not back in those days, there were not any day care. That's only in the last 10 or 15 years.

*What did most of those women do with their children during the day, if they were working and their husbands were in the service?*

Well, their mothers and grandmothers, same thing today.

*Was there a plant newspaper?*

Yes.

*And what was that called?*

Lake City Tracer.

*What kind of articles did it contain?*

Only articles that pertained to the operation of the plant, like, some people and [inaudible] . . .

*People that worked here? It was about people that worked here?*

About people that worked here and about production and things like that. Now, that was a contractor newspaper. See, these plants are government owned and contractor operated, and the newspaper was run by the contractor, but it had to be reviewed by someone from the government, to make sure that an article didn't get in there that would bring embarrassment or anything to the plant.

*And the contractor then was Remington, right?*

Was Remington Arms Company.

*When did Owen take that?*

Owen took over the plant in December 1945.

*And has it been Owen ever since?*

Yes, it has, eight, nine years whatever.

*Were there any morale boosting efforts during World War II that you remember?*

Oh, they had all kinds of morale boosting. You know, they had flags or [*inaudible*] to see who would fly and then of course, there was American Red Cross drives and you had all of those things, which today you still have. But, there were a lot of groups that partied and we had get togethers.

*Did a lot of people participate, what was the Red Cross, was that like a blood drive?*

Yes.

*Did most people participate in those or not?*

Well, they didn't come out and have blood drives like they do today. They had blood drives, but you had the Red Cross drives for dollars.

*But a lot of the workers participated in that?*

I think you could almost say 100 percent, people were very patriotic back in those days.

*Did the plant ever get any Army/Navy E Awards?*

Yes.

*And what was that?*

An E Award was for excellence. This plant got the E Award, used to fly it out on the flagpole.

*What would the plant have to do to earn an award like that?*

Meeting all the goals, achievements and production records.



*And the next question is when did your job end and it hasn't ended yet.*

Mine hasn't ended. When the plant closed down in November 30, 1945 and I was still in Europe at that time, and I'd say around Christmas Day, come back home in 1945 and when I got back to the plant, all the people were gone, except small [inaudible] of people to lay away equipment. So, I came to work up here with Fifth Army--Fifth Army is repair and utilities--and what we did, was laid the plant away and we kept certain elements of it open, in order to make parts, to keep the seam lines and water lines and the plant in general, what I called, kind of a warm base. And then, we overhauled the production equipment, operating continuously for five or six years, it gets in bad shape. And then, we would cause marine it and lay it away, for future use. And did that up from 45 until we had to reactivate in December of 1950 for the Korean War. And then we geared up for that in really probably six months time in full production and working three shifts and they had about 13,000 people employed during the Korean. Then, it went back into standby after that and we just maintained it and then we had to come back in and reopen.

*How long does it take to reopen after it's been in standby?*

Oh, it takes . . . you develop a plan in six month increments. You have to buy raw materials and get them in and get your people aboard and so it's this point, you say well I'll be at this point and produce a small amount and the next six months, I'm going to increase that and approximately a year's time, you can be back in operation.

*So, it doesn't start out, you know, you don't wait until you get everybody hired and all that stuff?*

No, you bring them in and you start clean up and get your machines back in line and get operations and getting all your electricity and water and everything under control.

*Was the plant placed on standby after Vietnam also, or has it just been running ever since?*

No, it's been running. Our production went down and of course, our employment went down and probably went down to about 1,200 people after Vietnam. Then, we built up again to about 3,000 people and then in 1985 when we completed the plant, we cut back again. But, during that same period, from the time Vietnam ended over there we had foreign military sales. We were, and when I say we, the State Department and the government, was selling ammunition to foreign governments, to France, to England, to Turkey, foreign countries, Israel was prime, India, Pakistan.

*And that started in?*

That kept your work force up and your work load.

*About how many people work here now in production?*

Oh, in production, I can tell you, actually . . . you're talking about directs, working right with equipment?

*Yeah.*

Oh, I'd say about 700.

*But it doesn't run 24 hours?*

No. They work four tens, 7:00 to 5:30.

*Tell me about the plant's safety record?*

They have a tremendous safety record here, probably is one of the safest places to work is in an ammunition plant like this. Our accidents are few, our deaths, I think maybe seven or eight in the total years that they've been in operation. And if you take a look at an automotive plant and other plants, it's way above anything you'd find. And the reason is, we have safety, rules and regulations, you follow them or you get fired.

*And is that as true now as it was then? Was it that strict back then too?*

No. It's tremendously more strict today than it was back in those days. You've got different . . . you didn't use any earplugs and you didn't use any (nomex?) uniforms or safety shoes or anything like that.

*And now they're required to use them?*

Now they're required. Sometimes, I think they over do it.

*Do you recall any serious accidents from around World War II?*

You mean, at the plant?

*Ah-huh.*

Oh, I'd say, you know, you have a few serious accidents, people get hurt.

*What was usually the cause of accidents, even like minor accidents?*

Human error.

*So, you're saying if people followed the rules and do their jobs, then it's a safe place to work.*

See, you had a doctor, you had nurses aboard and you had nurses out in every building in World War II. Then after World War II, you didn't have any nurses out in the buildings. You've seen the hospital we've got downstairs, we have a doctor down there and we have four nurses, I believe that's how many they have and if you get a scratch, you come in and get it taken care of.

*And during World War II, they had nurses in every building?*

Every building, you had a nurse, that nurse's office.

*Was there a particular area of the plant that was considered the most dangerous area to work in?*

Oh, yes, in the primer mix area and explosive area and in the incendiary area, when I talk about incendiary area, I'm talking about making tracer mixes and stuff for tracer bullets.

*And were there special precautions out there then?*

Oh yes, everything grounded and if you wasn't in the building, you had to touch a bar to ground the static electricity out of your body.

*And could anybody go back there or did you have to have a special badge?*

No, you had to have a special badge. You think even today you do, now there's very few of us, you see a gold bar, I can go any place, there's not very many of them. If you had a badge, you had a building that you belonged in, that's the building you worked in, that's the one you went to or you had the explosive area, it would identify what area you worked in and that's where you went. You didn't roam freely around.

*Did most people have to wear special clothing then?*

Back in World War II, you didn't.

*Were they supposed to?*

No. As time goes on, new laws passed and you get OSHA and you have to do this and you have to do that.

*Was there any time during your employment here either back during World War II or now, that you didn't feel safe working here?*

No.

*Did you ever hear anything about people in the community not feeling safe?*

Oh, they did, I'll put it this way, when the atomic era came in they started building these silos to put some missiles in.

*Around here?*

Oh yeah, they was hundreds of them, missile sites around here. I believe, I seen the other day, where I thought it was 135 within a 50 mile radius of here and down there at Whiteman Air Force Base, that's was a control point. And they've just taken these silos out in the last two or three years. And the people were highly concerned about the possibility of an atomic war. We have exercises to go through all this too and we have exercises for if tornado comes.

*And do people practice those, and I suppose fire drills?*

Yes, we have fire drills constantly.

*During World War II, did people ever practice for possibility of an attack out here?*

No, I don't think attacks of any kind. They did have safety meetings, they had fire drills.

*How often were safety meetings, were they often?*

Oh yeah, every week and even today, they're everyday, first starting of work, first five or ten minutes is safety.

*Did many people or most people save their money or spend their money during the war?*

A lot of them saved it. You had a lot of farmers that worked around here. They worked here during the day and farmed at night or worked at night and farmed in the day. They bought a lot of . . . I know a number of them had bought farms and worked here and had those farms, there was people that moonlighted.

*What did people spend their money on during World War II?*

What did they spend their money on?

*Ah-huh.*

That's according to, you know, you had different types of people. You had people that booze and people that don't.

*Were there things that were unavailable?*

Well, during World War II, there were a lot of things unavailable. In fact, there was rationing, you only got so much of this and that. You could buy shoes, but when you got to an automobile, you had to get approval to buy tires, and you had to have stamps to buy gasoline and all that. So, during World War II, rationing, that's the only time I've ever noticed any rationing.

*Did people complain about that?*

Oh, for a while people complained. But, they were more concerned, you know, they had people in the service and they were more concerned that those people would get back home and everything. I think people just accepted it.

*Did a lot of people move into this area to work here or did they just commute?*

A lot of people moved in here to the area. There was some people with certain expertise that would come in, I know several that came in here that were from Britain. I remember an engineer being here, but other areas of the country, a lot of people moved in.

*Did these newcomers mix well with the local people or did everybody stay separate?*

No, not like they do today. People were more friendly and more cordial with each other 40 and 50 years ago, than they are today. You don't know your next door neighbor today, back then, you knew everybody within a mile of you.

*Were there any problems between the people that came in here, that knew all the new people and the local people or not?*

No.

*Did the plant or did the community plan any recreational activities that you remember?*

I don't think the community did, with the exception of like special holiday, like Labor Day, Fourth of July and things like that. But, the groups that worked here, all got together and had dances and picnics and things like that.

*Did they have any sports teams or anything like that?*

No. When you're working seven days a week and around the clock, you don't have much strength left.

*That's understandable.*

We had a baseball team during the Korean here, softball team.

*What was this area like during the war, the town? What did people do for fun?*

I wasn't here.

*Oh, you were in the war. Was there any temporary housing set up for people that moved into the area or did they find places to live?*

Well, I think they mostly found places to live. I don't recall any specific building.

*Was there a higher incidence of illness around here during the war, because of the influx of people or no?*

No, I think there's probably more today than there were then.

*How would you say that this area changed during the war, if it changed at all, like in terms of morals?*

Morally, I think anytime you have a war, all areas change. There's a greater mix of people and there's homes where the wife is gone or the husband's gone and the wife's working with a bunch of men around, you have a certain amount of that. You have that even with a limited amount, even without a war or anything going on, where there's large groups of people working.

*So, you're saying that people were more liberal during the war in their morals?*

No, I don't think that. I think their morals today are much more liberal than they were. I think back then, people were a little bit more religious and inclined to go church than they do today.

*Was there a curfew in the town in Independence during the war that you know of?*

No, not that I know of.

*Did anyone dislike the plant during World War II because it made ammunition?*

Oh yeah, you've got people that dislike it today and that will always be. But, it's such a minority that the numbers, that you hardly ever hear about it. Ever now and then, you'll see something pop up in the paper or somebody make some remark, it's immoral to make ammunition and you're making it to kill people.

*Would you say that, that feeling was stronger now, or during Korea, or Vietnam or World War II, or was it all about the same?*

I think it's stronger now.

*But there wasn't so much of that during World War II?*

No.

*How did the war and the presence of the plant affect everyday life in the area in terms of availability of housing? Was there always a lot of housing available?*

I don't think there was a lot of housing available. I think a lot of people just had to makeshift and some people constructed small houses and a lot of people worked here as I said, about a 50 mile radius around so, they already had homes.

*Of the women that worked here during World War II, would you say that most of them or many of them had worked outside the home before getting a job here? Or do you think this was their first job?*

I think this was their first job for a majority of them.

*Did a lot of them want to keep working after World War II?*

Yes, I think that has happened. I think that the work force today is about 50-50 between women and men and each year, I was reading an article not long ago where the women in the work force would be larger than the man work force in a year or two, it's reached that point.

(End of Side One, Begin Side Two)

*This is June 27, 1995, this Deborah Crown interviewing Dale Pollard and this is side two. Did a lot of the women that left the plant after World War II find jobs outside the plant or do you think it was difficult for them right away?*

Well, I think it might have been difficult, but they found work, because the war ended and people coming back required more commercial businesses to produce goods and quite larger work force in the commercial area.

*So what kind of jobs did women tend to work at back then?*

Mostly clerical.

*Do you think most of them wanted to find jobs or most of them wanted to work in the home again.*

No, I think that once they got out in the area of work, they liked it out there, enjoyed the freedom and additional income and I think that was an evolution area type of thing, that began to put more women out into the work force.

*Were there any labor shortages here during the war?*

No.

*They always seemed to have enough people.*

Always seemed to have enough people and I've always said, if we wanted to open this plant tomorrow and put an ad in the paper, there would be 4,000 or 5,000 people at the west gate looking for applications.

*Do you remember any discussions in the community or on the radio or in the newspaper around World War II about who the plant hired or didn't hire, like you know, if there was certain type of people they wouldn't hire, like older people or younger people.*

No, but there were numerous questions I can recall, that whatever religion you had gone to would help you get employment.

*You remember hearing that?*

Huh?

*You remember conversations about that?*

Oh yes, I do, numerous. Not only during World War II, but Korean and Nam, too.

*Can I ask what religion it was?*

Well yeah, I've had people to tell me, during this period of time, if you were Protestant or belonged to Masonic Lodge, you could get a job there and mostly if you were Catholic, you could easily get jobs. In factories during World War II, that was one of the main complaints you heard from most people, is that you had to belong Catholic Church in order to get a job. I think that comes from Remington Arms Company coming out of the East and most people from the Eastern United States are of the Catholic Religion and around here, I know, several people told me the way they got here, was to get a letter from the priest in the local parish, and that happens, still does.

*What happened to the people that left the plant after World War II? Did most want to stay around this area and find work here?*

Most of them stayed around the area and a big percentage of them were farmers and owned farms and they just went back to farming full time.

*Did the community change after the war ended?*

Yes, all communities change, you know. There was an influx of people with different skills and people working here obtained skills that they didn't have before and a lot of industry moved in to take advantage of some of those skills. So, there were vast changes.

*So, would you say that this area grew rapidly after the war?*

Yes, it did. Lou Springs was a town of about 4,000 and what is it 125,000 now? If you take in everything and all the buildings and you drive over there for miles and see new houses.

*Do you think that the presence of this plant made World War II seem like a more real event to the local people or not?*

I didn't understand the last part.

*Do you think that since the plant was located here and the war is in Europe and in the Pacific, but with the plant located here, did it make the war feel closer to home for a lot of people do you think, or not?*

Oh yeah, I think it did. For one thing you got a plant manufacturing ammunition, you got a son or daughter or somebody in the service and you know that's what they're going to be using and that brings it closer to you.

*Tell me about race relations in the community during the operation of the plant?*

I never did see any difference.

*Were people encouraged to get along or was there nothing much said about it?*

Well, nothing much was said about it, no more than they are today, you know.

*How do you compare, like your first days working here to your days working here now? What are some things that haven't changed and what are some things that are completely different?*

Well, to me, we've gone and modernized everything, got air conditioning, back in those days you opened a window no matter how hot it was, and you worked, you didn't complain, dusty, you came in and cleaned your desk. And back in those days, people were more prompt coming to work. Today, you've got a lot of people that never get to work on time. I set a goal when I went to work, that I'd never be late and if I go to the second of October of this year, I've never been late to work in my life. I always come to work about a half hour early and I start to work when I get here. But, our government or congress and them have ruined the work force. They've changed rules on leave and sick leave. If you got a sick cat at home, under the new law, you can stay home and take care of it. I don't know whether you've seen some of the new rules out and I think they're too lenient. People don't work eight hours, they only work six hours and first hour they spend reading the paper or eating their breakfast and the last hour of the day, they have to get ready to go home. And, if you say anything to them, the laws allow them, they can file a grievance. You can go out and ask them what their name and if they don't like it, they can file a grievance. So, we just don't have the work ethic we used to have.

*And it wasn't like that during World War II?*

No. People were dedicated, in fact, if they had to stay 15 or 20 minutes over, they never said anything. If one stays five minutes over, they want overtime.

*What else is different? Actually, how has your job changed? I mean, you started doing a completely different job than you do now, how did that change.*

Well, I worked up the career ladder, from the bottom to where I stand now, don't know what you want to call it. But, I spent hours studying and I spent hours going to government schools and I had 1,800 hours in the supervision. And today, if I had to do it over, I wouldn't never want to be a supervisor. No matter what you do, it's wrong. And this EEO is a good thing, if it was managed, but it's poorly managed by people that head it up.

*What is that?*

Equal Employment Opportunity. I believe it in hiring people, but then, if I go out there and say, hey, I want you to pick that piece of paper up off the floor and they said, it's not my job description and I said, pick it up anyhow, then I got a grievance filed. These things, they can file a grievance over nothing and you have to go through it, it goes in your record.

*So that's something that somebody would never even have thought of doing?*

No. No matter what you told them, why don't you climb up on the building and jump off, they probably would have done it.

*When were you a supervisor?*

I've been a supervisor for forty some odd years.

*And you still do that?*

Yes.



*What exactly is your title?*

Contract Operations Officer. A few years ago, it was called CEA, Civilian Executive Assistant to the Commander and then you're right under the Commander. Now, when the Commander's gone, like she is now, they issue a special order and I'm in charge. And that's a rarity, I think, among the government. I think it's where you have these government owned, contractor operated plants, I believe that's the only place they do it, that I know of. But, there is an Army regulation that authorizes it.

*So, when did you get this job?*

This job, 1978.

*And you've been here doing this since 1978?*

Ah-huh.

*And right before that, was when you were a supervisor?*

Well, I'm a supervisor now. All of the people, all of the division chiefs work for me. And the people work for them, they're a supervisor, but when they come in rating those people, they rate them, then I'm right now what you call a senior rater. I review and I can say I don't think this is right. That's the way the total Army system works. Then I was Contract Administrator from 1966 to 1978. And then from, I guess I'd say, about 1955 or '56, I was the accountant in finance and accounting office here, an Army Finance Accounting Officer. What we do here on the contractor, we used to pay him everyday for what cost he incurred and we'd write him a check and pay him.

*Everyday?*

Everyday, then we went to a week, now we pay them every two weeks, I believe it is.

*When did that change?*

Going to every two weeks, oh about eight or ten years ago, I guess. You see, they'll spend \$6,000,000.00 or \$7,000,000.00 a month, so you can't expect them to use their own money. So, when they give us a certified voucher and we got the defense contract audit agency here that audits their cost and the voucher goes to them. Now, I'm no longer a dispersing officer, but I am a certifying officer, so I sign that certified for payment and then we got a finance officer that makes the final things on disbursement.

*After World War II, what did you think was going to happen to this plant?*

I thought they would close it.

*Were you surprised that it wasn't closed right away?*

Well, there was three plants after World War II was over, they kept three plants going. They kept Lake City, Twin Cities, and St. Louis going, then we had competition among the three of us. Every quarter we met and compared our production and our cost and who was the low producer and who produced the best quality ammunition and that went on for a considerable length of time. Then they decided to close the St. Louis plant, because it was . . . you may not be familiar with St. Louis, but it was in an area that commercial plants were a part of it, well Chevrolet, Shell run a plant there and McQuay-Norris run it for a while and so they closed that plant up and then left it between Lake City and Twin. Then along in the early '70s with Twin and Lake City both operating, they decided to modernize one of the buildings and produce 5.56. And

it started Twin, but we had capabilities they didn't have, that's in my opinion now, of like, they couldn't produce 20 millimeter and we were producing 20 millimeter and we could produce 50 caliber and our layout here and our cost was better than theirs. So, they transferred, let's see, prototype modules up there and then they brought them in here, then we renovated the building here to meet that and put the new equipment at Lake City. So, consequently, Twin is closed now. You probably was up there, weren't you?

*Yeah.*

Talk to Mike Figgs?

*Yes I did talk to him a little bit. What kind of an effect does this plant presently have on this area?*

I think it has a major impact on the area, due to the dollars that it puts into the economy, both into labor and materials. Probably, they put in the area of sixty some-odd million dollars a year into the labor and probably that amount or maybe more into material. Now, a lot of our material if procured [*inaudible*] in Illinois and other plants that produce brass, where we have brass casing and propellant. But, we buy the normal, off the shelf items in the Kansas City area. There are certain things you have to buy out of the area, there's a small amount of [*inaudible*] you have to go outside the area to get them. It has a huge impact on the economy. On not only on Kansas City, but all of the surrounding small towns. I believe that a lot of the small towns had survived on this plant and that would have just gone under.

*Are there some people that think it should be permanently closed, around here, people around here?*

I've never heard anybody make that remark.

*And what do you think should happen with it in the future?*

Well, you know, there's always been war and there always will be. Of course, the war has changed tremendously on how you fight and what type weapons you use. But, it still takes ground forces to hold what you get. So, you have to have ammo to supply those ground forces and this is the only plant that has capability to maintain the necessary ammunition, small caliber ammunition for all of our services, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force and Marines. And it's permanently built, it's in excellent shape and they have no problems getting people to work here.

*So, you think it should stay?*

Definitely. I think it . . . I'm not saying that for my purpose or somebody else, but I think if he would produce the ammunition at a low cost and at the highest quality. And that's one of our TQM things, to be a high quality, low cost producer.

*What is TQM?*

Total Quality Management.

*You mentioned a place in North Carolina, I don't remember what it was called. It was a location in North Carolina, that I think this plant gets some material from?*

No, we got propellant from St. Marks, Florida. Now, during World War II, we had eight to ten sources to buy brass cups and it wasn't North Carolina, I was talking about East Dalton, Illinois. Owen has brass mill there and they produce the brass cups that we use.

*What was that called, East Dalton?*

East Alton. A-L-T-O-N. They had brass mills there. They also have some production facilities to produce ammunition. It's mostly commercial, but they do produce some quantities of ammunition for the Army.

*Oh, but they do most of the commercial stuff?*

There's other sources for brass, only about three left. I can't off hand think of the name of them. But, where we used to have eight or nine, we've got about three left, and with modernized building and the usage of ammunition, we could probably have no problem producing enough ammunition to carrying any contract that we would get into.

*And you also, I think, mentioned a couple of contractors that worked out of St. Louis, and I didn't get those names either. Who ran the St. Louis . . .*

Oh, St. Louis Army Ammunition Plant?

*Ah-huh.*

The corp plant was run by McQuay-Norris.

*Can you spell that, I don't know what that is?*

M-C-Q-U-A-Y N-O-R-R-I-S, in St. Louis.

*Who was right before that?*

Then, I told you Chevrolet Shell.

*How do you spell that?*

Chevrolet C-H-E-V-R-O-L-E-T.

*Oh, like the car?*

Yeah, it was Chevrolet Motor Company was the one who run it.

*The ammunition plant?*

General Motors Division. Why sure, a lot of the American Safety Razor Company operated a plant.

*Gosh, I didn't know that. And Shell was like Shell?*

Ah-huh. S-H-E-L-L. Now, they had an operation as part of that plant. Of course, it's totally down now and has been for a long time.

*Are there any buildings left out there?*

Oh yeah, there are buildings, I guess there's offices in some of them. Yeah, they were good working mortar buildings.

*Because I know, that when I was up in the Twin Cities, Barb (Gritsim?) out there said, she said I think Honeywell was using some of their buildings there for storage, but they had sold almost all of their equipment.*

Yeah, Honeywell also operated over at [inaudible] Illinois.

*Do you have anything else that I didn't ask? I try and have a complete set of questions, but, sometimes people can tell me some good stories that I don't . . .*

Well, I will say one thing, that they ended up with, that in my experience here, that if they ever turn the plant over to total operation to a contractor, it will be a disaster in cost and maintenance of the facility. So, it pays big dividends to maintain a government staff to be a watch dog over a contractor, big dividends.

*What do you mean about the maintenance of it?*

Well, you know, if you're getting so much money to produce some item, and say you don't take care of the building, but you've got that cost built into that item, that's much more money that you make. And we had an incentive contract here one time and you found out as soon as you went into that cost incentive type contract, what it would come back on maintenance. You learn these things over long periods of time. One of the biggest mistakes they would make, would be to let a contractor just have the plant and run it. Because, a contractor cannot take a plant over this size and run it and maintain it. It still takes skill and money.

*If they tried to do that, they would end up not making any kind of profit at all?*

Bankrupt them in a couple of years.

*I guess I never thought of that.*

The chart back there is a chart of the plant.

*How many people does it take to maintain this plant?*

If you went down to zero base, you ever heard the word used zero base?

*Uh-huh.*

Zero base is where there's nobody on this plant. Now, here's what you got to do, to keep this plant the way we want it. We want to maintain a warm base, you start and say well, I've got to have some plumbers. It's going to take this many, and now, I've got to have some carpenters, I've got have different type maintenance men, I've got to operate the water plant and I got to operate the power plant and I got to operate the rail system. And then, I got to have general maintenance men, and I'm coming up with numbers. We started with zero and we're going to come up with these numbers and say okay, this is what you want, this is what I think it's going to take me to give you what you want. Now, you're going to sit down at the negotiation table, you over there and me over here. I'm the government man and you're the contractor and you're going to tell me, I need 500 people to do this. So, I'm going to say, well now, let's take a look at this, I think that you overstated what you need to do and we're going to negotiate it. So, probably what we would come up, is 350, just to maintain the buildings to they deteriorate, the electric system, the heating system, and what have you. Now, that's starting on zero base. You can also do that in saying well, I'm going to come on board and I am going to need to get into production.

*That's 350 people without being in production?*

Without being in production, all we're going to do is maintain this plant.

*If nobody was here, and just had people maintaining it, you would have brought 350 people?*

You think you can do it with that?

*And then you go into production?*

And then go into production. Then, you're going to come into and say okay, to me, you're going to tell me how many people that you think you need.

*I think I'd need 1,000 people at least.*

How many rounds are you going to give me for 1,000 people? What product mixer are you going to use?

*(LAUGHTER)*

See, there's a ratio to produce a 5.56 ammo round, is a lot cheaper than to produce a 7.62, which is slightly bigger, I can show you over there. Then, you go into the 50 caliber, which is still bigger and then you go into the 40 millimeter which is in bigger rounds there and so, really, I don't know how good a formula it is, but you use the smallest round in so you come up with the correct labor, you say, it takes 20 times as much labor to make that big round as it does that small round and that's the way you start.

*What if you had 22,000 people working here in production, then what would you need to maintain it?*

We produce more ammunition with about . . . today we could, with about 7,000 or 8,000 than we produced in World War II with 22,000.

*Has the technology changed a lot then?*

Oh, technology has changed vastly. Automated, quadraplexing and stuff like that, where a machine pushes one time [*inaudible*] and then you got automated feed systems that feed the ammunition into the next system and move it.

*So, is the production workers job now more diverse than it was before?*

Oh yes. He'll get into the modernized production line, they have to be skilled people. See, that produces ammunition from the start to the finish without really much hands on. It's all automated even to the pack out, inspection and all.

*Inspection's even automated?*

Sure.

*Well, if you could fill that out for me, and you can give me your address here if you like, and I can just . . . it will be a place for me to send you a copy of this tape and the draft report and final report and the transcription.*

You have GSN, no you don't.

*Do we have what?*

GSN.

*What's that?*

That's an army telephone system, that the Army uses, that we don't have to pay for we just pick the phone up.

*Anywhere around the country?*

Worldwide. See, we don't use an area code like you use in here, we use seven digit numbers. It'll come in on our regular phone line, now mine would be number 463-9113, while this is 796-113, but if somebody from Rock Island wanted to call me from up there, they would probably use GSN.

*Nope, we don't have that, we're just a contractor. Okay, and then if you could sign it there. Okay. Thank you.*

(End of Interview)

**ROSALINE PRIEST**  
**June 26, 1995**  
**Independence, Missouri**  
**Deborah Crown, Interviewer**

*How long have you lived in this area?*

I've lived right here in this house 56 years and I lived . . . I don't know, I went to high school here, so it's been a long time.

*Where were you living when you heard the plant was going to be built?*

Right here.

*In this house?*

Uh-huh.

*Were you working or going to school then?*

I was working.

*You were working. Where were you working?*

At Craddock Garment Factory.

*How much were you getting paid?*

Oh, I don't have any idea, I worked piece work. I just got paid what I made. It wasn't very much.

*Do you know what the land values were around here before the plant was built? How much land was worth?*

No. But, they were much lower, I know. But, I don't know what they were.

*What was the reaction of most people in the area when they heard that the government or Remington was buying the land on which the plant was to be built?*

Well, I think the people that thought they may get the work there are glad, because there was lots of employment then.

*What about the people that owned property there? Were they happy or not?*

I don't know. I suppose they weren't happy, if they had to give their homes or something, I don't know.

*Did your family own any land that was going to be purchased by the government?*

No.

*Do you know if land prices in the area rose or fell because the government bought that land or do you think they stay about the same?*

I don't know, but, prices all over started going up, you know, because there was a more demand.

*Do you think most people that lived out there when the government bought their land, do you think that they were able to buy comparable land to what they had before? Do you think they were paid enough?*

Oh, I don't know. I haven't any idea.

*Do you remember the construction of the plant when it was being built?*

Well, not much of it.

*Can you describe what the construction site looked like?*

I never was out there.

*Oh, you never went out there, okay.*

They were still building on it when I started to work out there. I mean, they were still, you know, they kept putting things up all the time.

*Did most of the construction workers that worked there, did they live in town or did they live right out there at the plant site, do you know?*

Oh, I think there wasn't any place out there for people to live.

*What kind of people worked at the plant during construction? Do you know the kind of people who built it?*

Uh-huh, because I don't know, I wasn't there during construction. I worked over in the city.

*Did it seem like a lot of people moved here when the plant was going to be built?*

Yes, they did, people came in.

*Did they? Do you know . . .*

They lived in kind of like trailer courts, a lot of people did then.

*Were those in the city?*

No, out here in Independence.

*They were in Independence. Okay. Do you know where they all came from?*

No, just around.

*But there were a lot? Did you notice a big difference in population? Did the population all of a sudden go up when the plant was being built?*

Oh yeah, I think so. Ah-huh, and people came in from around all these small towns to work, too.



*How did people get a long during the construction of the plant? Like, were there any problems between local people that had lived here for a long time and these new people that came in, or not?*

Not that I know of.

*What about problems between people of different races? Were there problems with that?*

Uh-huh.

*Not that you remember, okay. Tell me about the town during the construction of the plant? What did you do in your free time during that time?*

Oh, I don't know. I just went . . . I went to work and came home. I went to work on the bus and came home and I had my little boy and I was just busy.

*Ah-huh, but what did you do with him for fun?*

Oh, we went fishing, did all kinds of things like that. We used to dance and oh, lots of things.

*Where did they have dances?*

Oh, well I don't even remember anymore, but, just around at different clubs that you would go into, you know.

*What was the town's peoples attitude toward the construction workers, these new people that came here?*

Oh, I don't know. I think . . . I don't think it bothered them.

*Do you remember when the plant first went into production and I'm wondering about what the transition from the plan being under construction to going into production was like? Was that an easy transition or not?*

Oh, I don't remember about that.

*You said you were working at a garment factory before you got your job at the plant. How did you find out about the job at the plant or get a job there?*

Oh, well, it was, people would always say they're hiring out at Lake City or something like that, you know. They wanted people who had experience around machines and things like and I was [inaudible] that's an assembler.

*Why did you want to work there, if you already had a job someplace else?*

Oh, because they paid more money.

*Was there more than that reason, or was that the main reason?*

That was the main reason.

*What did you think was done at the plant, before your first day there? What did you think that job was going to be like?*

Oh, I knew it was making you know, ammunition.

*Did you think it was going to be easy or hard?*

I didn't think it was to be hard, but then nothing seemed very hard. You know, you just went to work and did it.

*In which building or area in the plant did you work?*

I worked in 3 and 3A.

*Those are building numbers? Building number 3 and Building number 3A?*

Ah-huh.

*What were they, what was in those buildings?*

It was ah, 50 caliber, and I worked in the case department.

*What exactly did you do?*

Well, when I first started, I worked on final trim and then I was transferred up to ah, headturn and then I worked there.

*What are those? What would you do at those jobs?*

In final trim, oh, I did, we picked up the cases and straightened them and put them in this little, kind of a shoot in the machine and then it went down in the machine and it chopped off the end and made it the right length. That was one of the, well, as it says final. It was one of the final things that happened to it. And in headturn, it took off the, it cut the head down, it made little curls of this copper, cutting it off, you know, and you had to fix the machine to have them go just so. And, cases came down in a box and ah, you dumped the box on the belt. But, before you dumped a box, you had, there were four different gauges, you had to put the cases through. And then, if they were all right, you dumped them on the belt, and if they weren't, you shut the machine off.

*So they had to fit this certain gauge?*

Yeah, they had . . .

*And if they didn't you turned off your machine?*

Yeah, yeah, right now. The pocket had to be a certain depth and then ah, and the shell had to . . . you turned it around in a gauge and it had to just perfect. Because, I guess that the way it would go in the gun, you know.

*Can you describe an average day? Like how did you get there and what did you do when you got there at first and then, what did you do for lunch and when would you leave?*

Well, some of the time I went on the bus, and some of the time people came by and picked me up. And, what we did when we got there, we went to our lockers and we had lockers and talked to our friends and went to the time clock and timed in.

*What time did you punch in?*

Oh, well I worked C Shift. You worked 8:00 to 4:00 and 4:00 to 12:00 and 12:00 to 8:00. See, it went around the clock.

*And those shifts were called A, B and C, is that it?*

Yeah, and I worked the C Shift.

*So, that was 12:00 to 8:00?*

No, it was, you worked all three shifts. It rotated every, I believe it was every week, you worked a different shift.

*Was that hard to get used to?*

No. (Chuckles). Because you knew it was coming up.

*How do you define the word shift, is the A Shift always from 8:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon?*

No.

*But you were on a shift that was called the C Shift and sometimes, the C Shift would work from midnight to 8:00 a.m.*

Yeah, but the same people. You all ways stayed on the same shift, but you changed hours. I can't remember if you changed every week or every two weeks.

*But you always worked with the same people?*

You always worked with the same people.

*Oh, okay. So what did you do for lunch then?*

Went to the cafeteria and they had a good cafeteria.

*What did they have?*

Oh, just like what they had at the farm cafeteria, just everything that you wanted. It was really good and it didn't cost very much.

*How long did you have for lunch?*

I'm afraid to say. I think it was a half an hour.

*And then when you got off work, what did you do right after you were done?*

Timed out and went out and got on the bus or to the car and came home.

*How did your job fit into the overall production of the bullet?*

I don't know what you mean.

*Like where was your job in getting the end product, you know what stage was that?*

It was a case, finishing up the case. The case that went through the first of a four draws and went through the draws and then it went, oh I don't know, to another trim and then it went to head and stamp and then to headturn. And, that's where I worked most of the time. And then, to the [inaudible]. And then . . .

*So, was it pretty close to being completed when you had it?*

The case was, but then it had to go and you know, and have the powder put it and have the bullet thing put in it. This was just the case.

*Was your job a union job or was it non-union?*

Non-union.

*Was your job assembly line kind of work or was it like working in a line of people?*

Oh yeah, I think so. I mean, I always worked the same job and the cases just came down on the belt, you mean like that or . . .

*Ah-huh.*

Yeah.

*Was this the first time you ever did this kind of work?*

Ah-huh.

*And what did you think of it?*

Oh, I liked it.

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

Yeah, big like that, ah-huh.

*And what did you think about that, what was that like working for a big company?*

Well, you had your supervisors and that's as far as I knew. Just the supervisors, you know, the supervisors, but they gave us prizes and different things like that if we did . . . I know they gave us sometimes dresser sets and all different things.

*Do you think that the work there was stressful or not?*

It wasn't for me.

*Did they put pressure on you for you to work quickly or not?*

No, you just had to keep up with . . . I mean, you know, if things are going through a line, you just keep up with it, just do . . . But, no it wasn't, they didn't put pressure on you.

*What did you think about your part in the war effort in World War II?*

Well, I knew it had to be done.

*What did you think about the plant's role in the war effort?*

Well, I knew it was really important and like I say in headturn, those . . . the ends of those cases had to be just so or they would stick. That's what they told us, now they would stick in the guns and these guns, a lot of them are mounted on planes and then if a shell was stuck in there, that would really be bad.

*Why would that be bad, couldn't they just take it out?*

I don't know, but that's what they said.

*Oh, maybe because the gun was outside the plane? I don't really know how that worked?*

But anyhow, that was real important that they were just right.

*Did you have to stop the machine a lot?*

Oh yeah, whenever the gauge, whenever something wouldn't go through the gauge just right, you just shut the machine off.

*What kinds of people worked at the plant when it was in production? Like as far as men and women, were there a lot of . . .*

Mostly, women, because the men, the young men had gone to war.

*What about people of different races, were there a lot of different . . .*

No, just . . . there was one section of Colored people and that's all there were. They worked on head and stamp.

*They all worked in the same area?*

They all worked in the same area and we never even hardly saw them or talked to them or anything.

*Were there any other people of other nationalities there, from other countries that worked there?*

No.

*Would you say that the plant was segregated then or not? Like as far as you said, they only worked in head and stamp. So when you worked, it was separated. But what about when you were coming and going, did people mix together or not?*

I don't know. I never did, there weren't many. There weren't many Colored people and I never did see any of them. I don't know how they went.

*Were there certain jobs that only men did at the plant?*

Well, there were more men tool setters. At first, all the tool setters were men, and then towards the end, some women got to be tool setters.

*What did a tool setter do?*

Fixed the machine, got the machine to going.

*Oh, it was broken, he would fix them.*

Ah-huh.

*So were there just certain jobs that only women did, that no men did, that you remember?*

Well, like feeding the machines, I don't believe any men did that. Most of the men that were there, were tool setters, because there were only a few men.

*Were there certain jobs that only members of a certain race did?*

Well, like that head and stamp, that was . . . I mean, I don't know why they had it that way. But, that's the way it was.

*Were there any other people besides African Americans working there? No, just them?*

Ah-huh.

*Did the plant provide daycare facilities for mothers who had children?*

I don't think so.

*No, okay. Were there any in the community, that you remember at that time?*

No, I don't remember of any. They mostly had, see my boy. . . ah, her husband, he was just little and I always had somebody stay here.

*Did you have a relative or a friend?*

A girl usually that would stay and like, she would cook the meals and send him to school and things like that.

*What did other people do with their children, if their husband was in the war and the wife wanted to work at the plant and they had children?*

Well, that's all you could do, you just send them to some relatives or have somebody stay at your house.

*Did a lot of people do that?*

I guess so, I don't really remember.

*Was there a plant newspaper.*

Ah-huh, The Tracer.

*The Tracer, okay. Do you remember what kind of articles it had in it?*

Oh, about each department, it would have articles. And, about safety and things like that.

*Do you remember any morale boosting efforts that they had there, like if they had any blood drives or if they had any campaigns for people to buy war bonds or any other awards?*

They had campaigns to buy war bonds. But, I don't remember anything about blood. What they had also, had all the drinking fountains, they had like salt pills that you could take, you know, because it was so hot and you sweat so much. And, then in the cafeteria, you could always buy vitamins with your meals, they had these vitamin pills, that you could take.

*Why was that?*

Keep you healthy. They stressed being there every day and not being absent, too.

*Did you get any awards for being there every day?*

I don't believe so. I don't remember.

*What was the war bonds, buying war bonds, what was that all about?*

Well, just like it is now, you bought bonds and I believe, they took it out of your paycheck. I don't know.

*Did you do that?*

Yeah, but I don't have any of them now. I don't have any of those, at least.

*Did a lot of people do that?*

Yeah, I think so.

*Do you remember if the plant got any Army/Navy  $\square$  Awards?*

Oh yeah, they did. But, I don't remember what they were.

*When did your job end?*

When the war ended. It was actually, two weeks after that, because I don't know how they figured it, but I was on vacation when it ended, I was in South Dakota. And so, I went out there, kind of by myself for two weeks and I was in that department, just cleaned on the machines.

*That's all you did for two weeks, was clean them?*

Ah-huh.

*After World War II, was the plant put on standby or was it just closed?*

I don't know. We called it closed, but I don't know, I guess, it was probably standby, I don't know.

*What was that like when they closed it?*

Well, just everybody, you know, nobody went to work and they didn't have any jobs. But, everybody got unemployment. Everybody had unemployment coming, so then for, I don't know how long it was, two or three months, everybody had something coming in.

*Oh, that's good.*

And the people that came in from out of town, they you know, went back home.

*Did a lot of people come into work at the plant here during production or were most people from this local area?*

Oh, most people were from the local area, but some people came in. And, the buses ran to all these little towns around here and people came in on the buses.

*From how far away?*

50 - 60 miles, the buses may go that far, could come in.

*Did most people come in by bus or did most people just drive?*

Most, well I don't know which was the most, but, they did both. But, a man that I rode with at one time, he lived in (St. Joe?) and that's 60 miles north of here. And, he drove down and he drove here to Independence and picked up a load of passengers and drove on out to the plant.

*About how far was that?*

Well, it was about 60 miles up there to, like I say to (St. Joe?) and then he would pick up the passengers and it was another 10 miles out there to the plant. And he did that everyday, morning or whenever it was, you know, at the end of the shift. He had five children and an invalid wife, I don't see how he ever did it, but he did.

*When you carpoled like that, did people help him pay for gas?*

No, they charged so much.

*He would charge to drive people to the plant?*

Ah-huh.

*Was that expensive?*

I can't remember now know how much it was, but it wasn't very expensive. But, I just don't remember, it might have been like \$2.00 a week or something like that, I don't know.

*Compare your first days working at the plant, like when you just started your job, with your last days working at the plant, like, just when it stopped, when you were laid off. What are the most significant similarities and differences between your first days there and your last days there?*

Oh, I don't know. In the first days, well, when I worked there, they were just starting it up and some days, we wouldn't have very much work at all to do, and we would just kind of just fool around until they, you know, because they wouldn't have . . . the cases wouldn't come through, because they had lots of trouble.

*Just starting up, they had trouble just starting the plant up?*

Yeah, getting the machines to work and do what they wanted them to and everything.



*So, what did you do with your time, did they ask you to go home early?*

No, no, we stayed right there and read a magazine or something like that. We had to stay right where we were supposed to.

*You couldn't go sit in the cafeteria?*

No, we couldn't go the cafeteria. We had to stay right in our division.

*And you would have to sit there for a long time with nothing to do?*

Yeah, you would bring magazines or talk and stuff like that.

*But, then how long did it take them to get it up and running?*

Oh, I don't know. It took quite a while for them to get it so, you know . . .

*So, you had something to do the whole time?*

Yeah, I mean, that wasn't everyday. But, they wanted people there, so when they did . . . when the cases did come through, they could get them on out.

*What about the way that you were personally--you know, how you felt about your job when you first started, compared with when your job ended or how you felt about the war or what you were doing?*

Oh, I was glad it was over, because the boys would be coming home.

*Even though you were losing your job?*

Oh yeah, well yeah, that wasn't important. What was important, was that they got to come home, the war was over.

*What has the plant done in the years since World War II?*

Off and on, it's been running. Sometimes it's closed down, but then it starts up again.

*Was it running for any other wars? Was it running for Korea or Vietnam?*

I don't know, I think so. But, they had, so they said, lots of you know, shells made in storage. But, I don't know.

*Tell me about the plant's safety record?*

Well, this plant had a good safety record.

*Do you remember hearing about any serious accidents out there?*

I don't remember what they were. But, I mean, a plant as big as that would have some accidents, but not like you'd think that they would.

*Do you remember how they would happen, if there were any serious accidents ever? Do you remember hearing about any of them?*

I don't remember any special ones.

*What about minor accidents, like what were some things that could happen to people?*

I don't know. Really, it was a pretty safe place to work.

*Was there a particular area of the plant that was considered more dangerous than any other area?*

Well, loading area, I think was considered pretty . . . where they loaded the powder, you know, into the shells. I think it was considered pretty dangerous.

*Were there lots of safety instructions given to new workers out there?*

Yeah, you had to wear safety glasses and safety shoes and you know, tight fitting, not loose, sloppy clothing.

*What did that look like? What did those goggles look like?*

Oh, the ones I . . . they looked just like these, only they were heavier.

*They looked like just regular glasses?*

Ah-huh, only they were heavier.

*What about those shoes?*

Well, they were really nice, some of them. They had . . . all of them had steel toes, you know, but you couldn't hardly tell it. And you could . . . at that time, you had to have shoe stamps to get you a pair of shoes and you could go up there and get a pair whenever you needed them. And, they didn't cost too much either. They had a building where you could buy supplies.

*What were the . . . you needed a stamp?*

Huh?

*You needed a stamp to get them, a shoe stamp? What's a shoe stamp?*

Well, just like, they had meat stamps, you had to have stamps to get your meat, and stamps to get your shoes and stamps to get your gasoline and stamps to get your sugar.

*So this was like the same thing for those special shoes?*

Yeah. No, you didn't have to have them for these special shoes. That's the reason, it was kind of nice. You could get these shoes, but . . . and they really looked enough like, some of them did, like regular shoes, you could wear them on the street.

*So you bought them from the plant?*

Ah-huh.

*Oh, okay. So then, they were yours after that?*

Oh yeah.

*Did the plant provide any special clothing or anything for you?*

Not in the area where I worked.

*In other areas, did they?*

Well, maybe they did, I don't know.

*But you had to buy your own clothes, what did you wear? When you said you couldn't wear loose fitting clothing, what did you wear?*

What I like to wear most, was kind of a coverall.

*Did a lot of other people wear that same kind of thing?*

Ah-huh.

*Did you have to wear a hat or anything on your head?*

Uh-huh. And they didn't have . . . now, I think they have a protection for the ears, but they didn't then.

*Was it loud?*

Oh yes. You couldn't . . . I couldn't talk to you sitting there and me sitting over here. You wouldn't be able to hear me.

*So, you couldn't really talk to the people that you worked with all day long?*

Well, you just got right up close to them and talked into their ears. (Laughter)

*Did they give you lots of instructions about safety, about what you should and shouldn't do?*

Not just personally, but you had these safety meetings all the time.

*How often did they have those?*

I don't know, either every week or every two weeks or something like that.

*And who would be in those meetings?*

Oh, your supervisor and he was the one that had them, and all the workers. And they usually shut the machines off while you had a safety meeting.

*Wow, okay. That was during your shift then?*

Ah-huh.

*What are some examples of some safety precautions that you had to take when you worked there? Besides, I know you had to wear special clothes, but what else are some things that you couldn't do because it was too dangerous to do it? You know, precautions that you had to take?*

Keep your hands out of the machines (laughter) and I don't know.

*Stuff like that, okay. Was there any time during your employment at the plant, that you didn't feel safe?*

No.

*You always felt safe working there?*

Yes.

*Did you ever hear anything about people in the community not feeling safe?*

No.

*How was the pay at the plant?*

Well, it was better than you could get any place else. And first, you didn't start in at so much, but you got raises right along, just automatic raise if you stayed there.

*And you said, jobs outside the plant didn't pay as well?*

No, uh-huh.

*Was the pay the same for everybody in the same job class? Let's say, a man and a woman worked at the same job for the same amount of time, would they get paid the same?*

Oh, no, because you got paid for, well you know, for the length of time you were there.

*But if they were there the same time, they would get paid the same or not?*

I don't know. Like I say, the men were tool setters and the women were operators.

*They had different kinds of jobs, okay.*

And the men were . . . most the bosses were men.

*Were there any women that were supervisors, or do you remember?*

I can't think of any woman that was a supervisor, it was just the men.

*Did many people or did most people save their money or spend their money during World War II?*

I would say most of them spent it. (Laughter)

*What kinds of things did they spend their money on?*

Well, the thing of it was, you just couldn't . . . there wasn't anything to buy, very much to buy, you spent it on, oh I don't know. Just like you do now, spend it for pleasure, but, it was a hard job, it wasn't so much that you didn't have the money to buy something, you couldn't find anything to buy.

*Nothing was available?*

Uh-huh.

*So, what kinds of things couldn't you buy?*

Well, like I say, you couldn't buy coffee all that you want, nor sugar, nor gas . . . you couldn't buy gas, only just so many gallons and just everything. It was rationed.

*You said there were a lot of new people that moved here when the plant was being built?*

I don't know if there were a lot, but there were some.

*There were some. Did they mix well with the local people?*

Yeah.

*So, did people all just sort of get to know each other then?*

I think people then, were lots friendlier. You just went and did the best you could and that's the way you did it.

*What did the newcomers and the local people seem to think about each other?*

I don't think they paid any attention.

*But they all seemed to get along pretty well then?*

Ah-huh.

*Did the plant or the community encourage people to get together a lot? Like, did the plant have any recreational activities or anything like that, that you remember?*

Uh-huh.

*No, okay. Did they have any sports activities that you could be on teams?*

Oh yeah. I played on a basketball team for them. But, it was just our little group.

*People from your area?*

From headturn, yeah.

*How did you do?*

Oh, all right, I guess. (Laughter)

*Was almost everybody on a team like that of some kind or not?*

No. And then we would go bowling. Now that I think about it, we used to get off of work, even get off of work at midnight and go bowling after midnight.

*Did you go to places around town?*

Yeah, you didn't have gas to go any place else.

*Tell me about the town during the war. What did people do for fun? Well, you said you went bowling . . .*

Well, just things like they do today, kind of, I mean, visit, but, things you couldn't do, because you didn't have to do with, you know.

*Did people gamble?*

Not anybody I knew.

*Did the plant ever plan any dances or pot lucks or anything like that?*

Uh-huh. Not that I know of.

*No, okay.*

(End of Side One; Beginning of Side Two)

*Was there any temporary housing set up for people that moved to this area or not, for them to live while they worked at the plant?*

I guess, some of them that I know, lived kind of like at ah, I don't know what you would call it . . . not much. Some people that came in lived in tourist cabins and things like that.

*Did they buy them or did they pay rent?*

Paid rent. But, most people lived at home and came in on the buses, you know, because the buses ran so far and didn't cost much.

*Were water supplies and sewage disposal in the city adequate for that or was that ever affected?*

No, I don't think so.

*How would you say the Independence area changed during the war, as far as like morals or values? Did people's values stay about the same or was there a change?*

I think they stayed about the same.

*What about people's ideas about money, did that change at all? Like compare before the war to when the war was . . .*

Well, money wasn't worth as much, because jobs paid more, you know, when the plant came here, everybody had to pay more for somebody to work for them.

*Was there a curfew during World War II?*

I don't remember, I don't know.

*Was there anybody that disliked the plant during World War II because it made munitions?*

Because it made what?

*Because it made bullets?*

Oh, not that I know of.

*But did you hear anything about people not liking it during Korea or Vietnam?*

Uh-huh.

*No, okay. Did many women work at the plant?*

Yeah, more women than men.

*Would you say that most of these women had worked outside the home before working at the plant, or do you think this was their first job working outside the home?*

Oh, I don't know, probably about 50, 50. But, they tried to hire people that had worked before, I think.

*Did many women stay on at the plant after the war?*

Uh-huh, it closed.

*Do you think most of them found jobs in the community after the war was over, or do you think that they went to just staying in their home again and working in their home.*

I think most of them probably found jobs.

*In the community?*

Ah-huh, but, a lot of them, you see, that came in on the bus, they lived in little towns around and they just went back home.

*Do you think more people from this area found jobs than people that lived outside the area here?*

Oh, I don't know what people outside the area did.

*What kind of jobs did you have around here after the war? What kind of jobs did women do?*

I don't really . . . I don't know.

*What did you do, did you find another job?*

Yeah, I worked at (Barbie Frox?) for eight years and I sold Avon and then after that, I worked up here at the hospital for about 25 years.

*Were most of the minority people that worked there from the local area or did they move here for work?*

I don't know. We didn't ever mix, I never even said anything to them.

*Were there any labor shortages at the plant, like were there ever any times at the plant that they really needed people to work there, but couldn't find any people?*

I don't think so.

*Do you remember ever hearing anything in the community like on the radio or reading anything in the newspaper about who the plant hired or who they didn't hire. Like, maybe they didn't hire older people or if they didn't hire farm workers or they didn't hire certain minorities. Do you remember hearing anything about that or not?*

I don't remember anything like that. I know if you were too old, they didn't hire you, because they were afraid they'd get hurt, you know. And there weren't many, it seems like about 30 or 35 maybe, was as about as old as they were out there.

*Did the community change after the war ended or not?*

Well, not that I know of.

*Do you think that the presence of the plant made the war seem like a more real event to the local people here, or not? Like do you think that the same sentiments would have been felt by people here about the war, regardless of whether or not the plant would have been located here?*

Yeah, I think it was mostly the boys having to leave and go to war, or to me that's what was so hard. But, there were lots of other plants around, like airplane plants and different plants. So, you didn't pay too much attention to it. Like, I said, you just went ahead and did what you had to do.

*Tell me about relations between people of different races at the plant? Were there laws or rules out there that prohibited discriminatory or prejudicial treatment that you remember?*

Uh-huh.

*No. You don't remember any laws, posters or anything like that?*

Uh-huh.

*Reflecting back now on your war time employment, have your feelings regarding your war job at Lake City Army Ammunition Plant changed regarding it? Have you felt basically the same about your job as you always have?*

Yeah, I feel about the same.



*And how is that?*

The only thing that I wished they would have had was something for the ears. But, then my hearing might not have been good now anyhow, I don't know. But, I sure don't hear as well as I did. But, it was . . . if you just went along and did your job, it was alright.

*After World War II, what kind of a role did you expect the plant to have in this community? It shut down and what did you think was going to happen right after World War II?*

Oh, I didn't know, I didn't think about it. It was just one of those things that happened. The war was over and the plant you know, things just changed.

*What kind of effects does the plant presently have on this area? Do you think it affects Independence at all?*

Yes, I think because there's employment there that we wouldn't have.

*Are there people in this community that think that it should be closed or not?*

I don't think so.

*And what do you think? Do you think it should be closed or not?*

No, well I don't think it should be closed, because it's lots of peoples livelihood.

*That's all the questions I have. I might ask you to spell a couple of things here. You mentioned that garment factory you worked at earlier. How is that spelled?*

C-A-D, I don't know. C-R-A-D it must be, Craddock  
C-R-A-D-D-O-C-K, I guess. I don't know.

*C-R-A-D-D-O-C-K or just one D?*

I don't really know. I can't remember anymore. It might just be Cradocks, it might just be one. I'm the poorest speller in the world (Laughter).

*And you said part of the production process was a certain kind of oven?*

Oh, a kneeling, kneeling oven.

*Kneeling oven?*

Ah-huh, that's where it's hot. Oh, and was it hot in the summer.

*What would go on in there?*

Well, the one that I worked right by, the cases came down on this thing and then went around through a blaze, you'd see the . . . and then it went into some cooling water and then the cases would go on out you know. But, the people that worked with it, they had real long things looked like pokers and if the case would fall over, they would have to get it and straighten it up.

*And that was a hot area to work in?*

Oh, yeah. It was awful hot, it would be like 120 or something.

*But, do you know how that's spelled, kneeling?*

Uh-huh, I don't really have any idea.

*And you mentioned a town called St. Joe.*

Ah-huh.

*Is that it's name, St. Joe?*

Or St. Joseph maybe, I don't know. Do you know Linda, is St. Joe the name of the town or St. Joseph?

Linda: St. Joseph.

St. Joseph, she said.

*And then one of the places you said you worked at after you worked at the plant was called Barbie Frox, is that right?*

Ah-huh. B-A-R-B-I-E Frox.

*I didn't spell that right then. Now, I'm just going to ask you if you would sign this consent form. You can just fill out your name, your address and your phone number on top and sign your name right down there.*

You had to talk more than I did--and your voice--that gets me, it didn't bother you, did it? (Laughter) I guess I better put Independence, huh?

*Yeah, if you could put your whole address on there, so I'll be able to send you the tape and the copies of the report when it's done. Okay, and then if you have no restrictions at all on your tape, then should you check that one there. Okay, well thank you very much.*

(End of Interview)

**APPENDIX A**  
**RELEASE FORMS**

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWEE

Name: Francis Braxton  
Address: 455 / S. Oak  
Independence Mo 64055  
Phone: 816-373-8525

I am providing this information voluntarily. I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of this taped interview and copies of the draft and final reports for this project. Upon request, Geo-Marine, Inc., will provide me with copies of notes taken during this interview and of the tape made during this interview.

I also understand that tapes and transcripts of this interview will be archived at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and will be available for research purposes to qualified persons unless otherwise specified below. Copies of the tapes and transcripts will be kept by Geo-Marine, Inc., 550 East 15th Street, Plano, Texas 75074 and by Bear Creek Archeology, Inc., Hwy. 9 East, P.O. Box 347, Cresco, Iowa 52136, for their use in preparing project reports.

Restrictions:

No Restriction  
 Restrictions (specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/6/98

Interviewee(s)  
Signature(s) Francis Braxton  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/16/98

Interviewer  
Signature Deborah H. Crown  
\_\_\_\_\_

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWEE

Name: Cornelius Lundy  
Address: 4000 W Abashi Kansas City Mo 64130  
Wabash  
Phone: (816) 21-4511

I am providing this information voluntarily. I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of this taped interview and copies of the draft and final reports for this project. Upon request, Geo-Marine, Inc., will provide me with copies of notes taken during this interview and of the tape made during this interview.

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Restrictions:

No Restriction  
 Restrictions (specify):

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/26/95

Interviewee(s)  
Signature(s) Cornelius Lundy

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/28/95

Interviewer  
Signature Deborah L Crown

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWEE

Name: Alice McEldery

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: 816-461-2961

I am providing this information voluntarily. I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of this taped interview and copies of the draft and final reports for this project. Upon request, Geo-Marine, Inc., will provide me with copies of notes taken during this interview and of the tape made during this interview.

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Restrictions:

No Restriction

Restrictions (specify):  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/27/95

Interviewee(s) Signature(s) Alice McEldery

1120 So. Osage

Independence, MO.

64050

Date 6/27/95

Interviewer Signature Dwight Crown

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWEE

Name: Dale T. Pollard  
Address: Lake City Army Ammunition Plant  
Independence, Missouri 64051-0250  
Phone: (816) 796-7113

I am providing this information voluntarily. I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of this taped interview and copies of the draft and final reports for this project. Upon request, Geo-Marine, Inc., will provide me with copies of notes taken during this interview and of the tape made during this interview.

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Restrictions:

No Restriction  
 Restrictions (specify):  
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Date 6/27/95

Interviewee(s)  
Signature(s) D T Pollard  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/27/95

Interviewer  
Signature Deborah L. Crown  
\_\_\_\_\_

CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWEE

Name: Rosalind Priest  
Address: 1401 Harvard  
Independence, Mo 64652  
Phone: (816) 836-8893

I am providing this information voluntarily. I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript of this taped interview and copies of the draft and final reports for this project. Upon request, Geo-Marine, Inc., will provide me with copies of notes taken during this interview and of the tape made during this interview.

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Restrictions:

No Restriction

Restrictions (specify):

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Date 6/26/95

Interviewee(s)  
Signature(s) Rosalind Priest  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date 6/26/95

Interviewer  
Signature Deborah A. Crown