

Avondale Mills Project

Interviewees: John and Lorene Kirk

Interviewer: Eddie Akin

Date: March 11, 1981

A: This is an interview with John and Lorene Kirk at their home in Stephenson on March 11, 1981. Probably the best way to get started with doing this with both of you is just kinda go over this questionnaire with each one of you and then we'll get in more detail on working at Avondale later. So, ladies first. Mrs. Kirk, what do you recall about uh your family background, where your family came from before they settled in Tennessee, and your growing up years? Just, you know, kinda set-set the stage for us about what you know about your family before you were born.

L: Well, it's kinda long story. We never have you know just had a permanent place. We were never in one place. Mommy and daddy both come from Alabama, from the Valley and he was a lumberman so we just uh followed around where ever he went, we went and when he got a tract of land at one place we move along with him and we lived in Tennessee, just back and forth, Tennessee and Alabama. But we moved to-to this part of the country to stay in uh, I don't know what year it was, but I was about ten when we moved to Valley and then we moved down here before I went to work at Avondale.

A: Now you were born in uh near Heflin.

L: Yeah, I was born in Tennessee.

A: Were you the oldest or youngest of the children?

L: No, I'm-I'm in the middle kinda. There was several older than me and about that many younger ones. In fact, there's fourteen of us and uh thirteen of us lived from the oldest through the baby, we lost one that lived to be a month old, the third one from the oldest.

A: Yeah.

L: And uh then we didn't lose another one until last year in November.

A: It's like, I'm the oldest of six and nowadays we think that's a large family.

L: Mm, hmm.

A: But, back then, I guess, twelve, thirteen kids was fairly common, wasn't it?

L: Well, our baby one was uh forty-fourty-six, I believe when-when Ruby died and she was seventy-one and there is one older than her and they're hadn't been a death in that length of time only Mommy and Daddy.

A: Yeah, yeah.

A: Now, you...

A: You said your-your folks moved fairly often, about how long would they be in one place for?

L: Well, I have gone through as many as three schools in one year.

A: Whew. That is...

L: Most of the time we go to a school, you know a year or two. But uh, we go uh like from oh, like from Sherwood in Anniston there over to Tallahoma to Sherwood and maybe back then to Alabama again and then Dad would get another track to work over at Tennessee somewhere and maybe back to Sherwood again and we go back there so it was just where ever his work was. He-he didn't always need us, but uh you know he had a small amount of work, but.

A: Did he do his own contract or would he do it with the timber company or with the landowner? How-how did that work?

L: Well, he-he was just an overseer for-for a group of men that worked. He worked for somebody else.

A: Yeah.

L: He didn't own business for himself.

A: Yeah.

L: He just worked for somebody else.

A: Do you...

L: He done been over the buying of timber and overseeing the cutting of it and taking care of that part of it.

A: Was most of it hardwood or pine?

L: Well, he-he cut uh whatever you make uh-uh ball bats and axe handles, and hammer handles, and-and golf sticks and that kind of stuff.

A: Yeah.

L: He cut oaks and well I remember, you know what they used to make from oaks-- hammer handles, axe handles and golf sticks, that sort of thing.

A: And so, he-he must've stuck pretty much with the same company....

L: Yeah.

A: ...as far as selling the stuff.

L: Well, most of it, I think what was manufactured.

A: Now what would they do, just set up a small saw mill?

L: Yeah.

A: And...now what....

L: They cut out that, cut out that and then they would, you know just move on.

A: Now that's- that's before power, I mean for the, they wouldn't have a power handsaw for instance.

L: I guess they uh, at the time, they did never turn the saw mill into a cane, a sugar cane, sorghum mill with a mule did they?

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: Well, they probably did.

A: Yeah.

L: I remember when we lived up at in Sherwood we lived back uh on the back side of this creek. It was in an uh an old lighthouse, and uh the mill was right in front of our house and we used to play around in the saw dust from that, that mill, you know...

A: Yeah.

L: I was small, probably before I ever went to school. But I remember that we played in the saw dust pile that was in the front of the house.

A: Now, he and his crew would operate the saw mill,...

L: Yeah.

A: ...would they get local folks to do the timber cutting? Or was his crew....

L: Well, he-he didn't do the-the sawing part of it like that. He-he would just go and-and look at the timber and select what to buy and uh have it cut. If he told you the tree would split, it'll split.

A: Yeah.

L: If he told you it wouldn't, there were no need sawing it because it split crooked.

A: He knew his business.

L: He knew the timber.

A: Yeah. Now...

L: But, when we moved back to Tallahoma he developed rheumatism bad then we kinda got in to farming now. We sharecropped and well, we raised cotton.

A: Now you said you were about ten years old by that time.

L: Yeah, yeah.

A: Uh, with all this moving around, how far were you able to get in your school? I know...

L: Well, I finished the ninth grade.

A: That's something, you know considering all these moves and-and a larger family.

L: Well, in that-in that time you didn't go through it like we did but uh we had subscriptions school. And I remember when we lived in Valley when you get finished sixth grade up there that was, you know the end of grammar school, then you went to junior high. So when you come down here to junior high you had to pay to go and when I went six months. And then if you couldn't pay to go on the, I mean seven months, and then if you couldn't pay for the other two months that was all the schooling you got, you had to pay extra for that two months.

A: Yeah, that is rough. And so, what you would have gone to Stephenson to junior high?

L: I come down there in the seventh grade and then I missed a year. Then I went back to Sherwood in the ninth grade. I skipped eighth and I went back up there in the ninth grade.

A: Yeah.

L: And then after all them years in-in uh in '74 I believe, I went out in Northeast State and took my GED test and got a diploma. That was after forty-eight years I believe.

A: Probably your diploma is worth a lot more than some of the folks that get a degree.

L: I said I value my diploma. I always wanted to go to school, I like to go to school, and I-I made good grades.

A: Yeah.

L: But uh and I-I just really like to go to school. And I tried to go to, a lot of times even after I married, I-I start back and go to night school and things and-and something happened, you know and I'd always had to quit. So there were some- then later that was going out there take a test and I just went and took mine. I didn't go to school to prepare for it, if I did, I'm sure I would've done better, but I passed it.

A: Yeah.

L: And uh, I took my diploma, we had a class reunion last year and everybody had to make a speech, and-and uh you know they-there were several in the class that didn't graduate with them and they always invite us to go. So last year, I took my diploma and when it come my time to speak, why I got up

and-and told them, you know that I-I was still not one of them you know that graduated with the class and all. But-but I said, "I still got something that I'm proud of." I said, "I done something that any of y'all do." I said, "You got a diploma, probably that don't mean anything to you back when you got it". But I said, "Now after all these years, I went back when I was fifty-eight years old and took my GED test and got mine".

A: Yeah.

L: I got a standing ovation.

A: Now...

L: That made me feel good.

A: Now your folks started sharecropping, was it cotton and corn or mainly corn?

L: Corn, just whatever you raised, sorghum cane, you know that kind of stuff.

A: Was it....?

L: We made our own sorghum. You know we had a mill.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: We grind the juice out and pour the sorghum out.

A: Did y'all-y'all raise chickens and all that too?

L: Mm, hmm. We had chickens and things like that, too. We had cows, but raised for eating. I guess, you know, fruit from the garden just like just regular famers.

A: Now what was uh church going life at that time? Did y'all have one nearby?

L: Well, we had Sunday school up in Pleasant Grove, uh schoolhouse we didn't-we didn't have a church house up -up there. We lived up in Sherwood, Madison County . We-we was raised up in and we always went up there.

A: Yeah.

L: But when we moved down to Tallahoma they didn't have a church house and we went to Sunday up-up there you know where we went to school every week.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: And uh, Mr. Mackey had a A-model car and as many of us that could ride would go in the car and we couldn't ride you know if it was pretty why they'd let us walk. It was, how many miles, three, four miles?

J: Yeah, something like that.

L: We had to walk back to school all the time and so we walked to Sunday school. And uh then uh, you know the revivals, why they had it up there. We always had prayer meeting, midweek prayer meeting at somebody's house, it just go from one house around through the community. And when time really come for revivals, like when uh-uh Mr. George Aiken you know preached. We had it at people's houses and when we get through with this supper and get the hay in the wagon and we'd all kids and old folks and go get up in the wagon.

A: That-revivals were usually during after laying by in the....

L: Yeah, in-in the hot summertime between laying by and dinner time.

A: You think that gave you a bit-a little better feeling in the heat.

L: Yeah.

A: Now the school, was it-was it the one-room country school?

L: No, it was a school uh-two-room and uh one teacher uh I think had the maybe first, second, and third, and the other, fifth, sixth. The fifth and the sixth, they just had the two last grades I guess or fourth, fifth, sixth, I guess they had three each.

A: Yeah.

L: But we had two teachers in those two rooms. But I went to-to big schools when we lived in Winchester and Chelsea you know we had you know city schools. We went to city schools you know just like any other city schools.

A: Did y'all-when y'all made these moves then y'all-y'all would stay in town and your dad will work out?

L: Just where ever. Just where ever. Sometimes we live in the country, and sometimes we live in town.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: Sometimes we go to town schools and sometimes we leave country schools.

A: Yeah.

L: Just where ever we had land.

A: Yeah. Okay. Mr. Kirk your time, I want you to tell about your childhood. Now, I noticed you were born right here in the Cove.

J: Yeah, I reckon right across the Cove.

A: Really?

J: Yeah.

A: Now, how long had your family been in this area?

J: Well, a while, been here all my life. I reckon my mother both of them come up from Tennessee. _

A: Now, you-you probably, since your family goes on back, what-where does the name McMann Cove come from

A: Yeah.

J: Well, it used to be McMahan.

A: Yeah.

J: I guess that where it got the name.

A: Are they still around here any of the family or....?

J: No, that family's all died off, I reckon.

A: Yeah, yeah. I noticed all these, each cove all the way between cities and these has its own names.

J: I don't think they are related to that bunch up there with you just a little bit.

A: What about-do you know anything about how your folks got together?

J: No I don't.

A: I was wondering since your mother is from Tennessee.

J: I think she came in here with her uncle and met Daddy. Her uncle raised her and we went back to Tennessee.

A: Yeah.

J: I mean, to the best of my knowledge.

A: Yeah. Now, where-where do you fall in-in the picking order of your family? Were you one of the younger or older?

J: Well, I was about the middle.

A: Yeah.

J: You see, there were two older boys than me and there's four younger than me.

A: Yeah. Now, I noticed that you also grew up on a sharecropping farm. Did y'all-did y'all usually work for one landlord or for several.....?

J: We worked for several all over the country and we would work somebody else's farm for two years.

A: Did y'all stay in or near the cove for most of this time?

J: Most of the time we stayed close. We didn't for about two years.

A: Yeah.

J: Just you know moved back over here.

A: Okay. You would be growing up during the '20s. Uh, pretty rough time for-for farmers, during that time.

J: It was a rough time.

A: Uh...

J: Wasn't nothing going on here.

A: Did your dad usually break even or did he have to...

J: Well, he...

A: get through the winter each year on...?

J: We raised everything and eat just about it. We always killed plenty of hogs, got our milk and butter, you know Mama canned a lot of stuff. We didn't buy a lot of stuff, just coffee, sugar, and a little bit flour, not a whole lot of flour, but we had...

A: Cornbread.

J: We had corn.

A: As they say the three-m's: Mill, molasses, and something meat.

J: Well, we'd always had plenty of meat. We killed four, five, six hogs, didn't we? We had a bunch of chickens. We had our own eggs. But then, we didn't buy a whole lot.

A: Yeah.

J: There weren't no electric lights, there weren't no refrigerator.

L: Kerosene and a box of matches.

J: Kerosene lamps and a box of matches.

A: Would the uh landowner furnish each year or did y'all have the mule and plow and....?

J: We brought our own stock.

A: Yeah.

J: Yeah.

A: And so what kind of shares did he operate on?

J: We got two thirds and he got one.

A: Yeah. Uh, now also, kinda like Mrs. Kirk, schooling would've been a problem, as far as getting to and from school.

J: Yeah, well we had to walk.

A: How far, would've it been in to Stephenson or?

J: I went over there to Edgefield a whole lot the old school house you see rotted in over there.

A: Yeah, yeah. Right there.

J: Mm,hmm. Around the corner.

A: Yeah.

J: Well, when they built that house, schoolhouse, why they had an old one over here at the church house. We moved over there then. So I got the bigger part of my schooling right there. Well I went two year on Crow Creek first what she's talking about. Then I finished the six grade there and that's as far as I ever went.

A: Yeah. Now were-were most of your schools similar to hers two rooms or...?

J: Yeah. But over here we had three.

L: I knew it was bigger.

A: That was the big one.

J: Yeah.

A: Uh, now, she said she was reared in Church of Christ, would-what church did your family go to?

J: Missionary Baptist.

A: Right here at Edgefield most of the time?

J: Well, most of the time, this church over here on, part of the time they did not have service over there. That was Methodist up there. Come the Presbyterian. There was no Baptist church around, so we go Providence Centennial during revival time...

A: Yeah.

J: ...to get away and then we leave about three, four o'clock in the afternoon and get back around twelve at night.

A: Now what-were-you saying earlier that my granddad pastored there for a long time?

L: I don't know if he pastored, but he always helped with revival.

J: Yeah, he pastored there for a long time.

A: Yeah, almost everyone that I talk to has-has some story about that. Uh.....

L: Nobody ever knew that Jerry Akin was your kin.

A: [LAUGHING] I was talking with Sunny Schrader earlier today and of course he had grown up down in Wadley. He said, "Man, Mr. George would scare me to death". He said, "Only later did I find out that he'll scare you to death at the supper table you would walk out and he would chuckle for about fifteen and twenty minutes". I said, "Well, listen, I said, "I know how he was." I said, one year right after Christmas it had snowed and I was out in the snow playing with a-on a rifle I got for Christmas, a little toy gun, and I lost it. And Pap found it, puts some grease on it so it wouldn't rust, put it back and gave it to me next Christmas.

J: Eh Lord.

L: One night at church up there, he'll- he was preaching and all of us kids had always been on the front row. And my sister, Mary, was sitting right on the front and she was just right in the front now. And he get preaching and was talking too loud. He get so loud in his talking you couldn't hardly understand him in your face and he got down out of the pulpit and he'd walk along in front of the seat, you know, he's pointing his fingers and he's saying, "You, and you, and you, and you are damned for Hell". He'd saying, He come right down and whacked Mary a little across the nose and it liked to have scared that gal to death she was a little thing, you know. And he'd just whacked her and she'll deny that till today she almost run now, it like scared her to death.

A: Whew.

L: She thought he was literally telling you, you know, he was just excited to say....

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

L: "you, you, you, and you are damned for Hell", he said.

A: Thought that was it.

L: Yeah, she thought it was. She was doomed right there.

J: Going back to the depression I worked for twenty-five cents a day. Of course, I was just a kid.

A: Yeah.

J: But didn't nobody make nothing.

A: I know it was right. In fact, twenty-five cents a day was considered pretty good. I remember talking to some people that worked on TVA. I know....

J: You could buy a sack of flour...

A: Yeah.

J...for twenty-five cents.

A: That was good stuff.

J: Get a forty-eight pound sack for forty-nine cents.

A: Now, this thing about the Depression brings us into-in the Avondale picture. Mrs. Kirk, how did you get start working at the mill? I know, most people back then didn't go in and fill out an application form.

L: Well, I went over there and asked for a job and they didn't need anybody right then and uh we moved out on to Russell Pike or even we lived out there. I don't remember if we lived out there when- when I went to see about a job or not, but they sent for me, by somebody, for me to come in and I went in over there, you know to see about the job. And they hired me, so I stayed in town with a friend who, you know, who momma, daddy didn't move back to town.

A: Yeah.

L: And uh I worked six weeks without any pay, that's when we learn when-when I went to work, you didn't get any pay for learning, training.

A: Yeah.

L: And there was six weeks limit, if you learn the whole job and you still didn't get any pay for six weeks.

J: They worked you that six weeks.

A: Yeah. And uh how-did you have anyone-any relatives already working there?

L: No, I was first one to ever work there.

A: Yeah, because I noticed you had quite a list of relatives that eventually.....

L: Yeah, they were all younger than me.

A: Yeah.

L: I went to work first and-and uh I was learning to thin and when you got to where you run a side or two-two sides of one whole frame, they put you to work on a job on running what you could, you know

you didn't have to run like on whatever amount besides the whole job was when you got where you could they'd add on to you all the time.

A: How much was your first paycheck?

L: It was five dollars and ninety cents.

A: Uh- uh I tried this on-on most people that I interview and almost everyone can remember, to the cent, that first paycheck.

L: Five dollars and ninety cents and it had-it would've been six dollars, but they withheld a dime for insurance. That's what insurance was.

A: Yeah, yeah. And what would-what would that have been an hour back then? What-you

L: You got paid-you got paid by the sides, but I don't remember what-what right off what the amount was to the side, but we worked, but I don't work. We worked for five and a half days, we worked till one shift running and we worked till Saturday, I mean till dinner on Saturday.

A: Yeah. And what about you, how did you get started with Avondale?

J: I just went down there and they hired me. You know they hired quite a few people.

A: Yeah.

J: Well, like her, I had to work for six weeks for nothing. And then they called me in and put me on half pay and then I worked one night and they told me I had to go back and learn for two more weeks, so I had to work eight weeks for nothing.

A: Now you said that they put you on half pay, what-what does that mean? I mean....

J: Well, half, you know, what-they was gettin you get two-forty a day, but...

A: Did they figure you were worth half the job?

J: Yeah. We were working ten hours and I....

L: We wouldn't gettin no two-forty when we first went to work there. We was working there when, well I was, and you went to work a little bit after I did when the NRA went into effect and all. We didn't make twelve that's when we started making twelve dollars an hour, I mean a week. We've been there years, I mean we. We've been there for years when they started making, or whatever year that was....

A: Yeah.

L: ...that they started making uh forty cents an hour.

J: I thought we were making thirty cents an hour.

L: I-I think we made forty-two cents a side and if I run two sides a day, well that's what I drew for a week.

A: Yeah.

L: For six, five and a half days a week, every week...

A: Yeah.

L: holding out six dollars...

A: I think before-....

L:...five dollars and ninety cents.

A:....before NRA the most talked about figure I've heard is, like you said, some will pay by the sides and others will pay straight hours, and usually it broke down about twenty-two and a half cents an hour for the most part.

L: Nothing to worry about.

A: No.

L: And that-that was a day like forty-two cents a side and if you run one side you wouldn't made but forty-two cents. And I think they started you out where you could run two sides on the job.

A: Now is that the part you were talking about on the half pay?

L: That would've been eight-two-eighty-four cents a day.

J: I was a pusher. I didn't work like that.

A: Yeah.

J: I worked by the hour all together.

A: Okay.

J: We just got so much an hour. Pusher operator.

A: So you said they trained you for one job for six weeks.

J: Yeah.

A: Then switched you over to another one.

J: Mm, hmm.

A: So you worked eight weeks without...

J: Yeah, well what happened uh the technician got hurt. He told me to learn to run his job you know. There was an opening on it. Well, I did. When Julio come they wasn't goin to put nobody there. That was his work. I was just doing his work you know.

A: Yeah.

J: So they called me in the office and asked me what my trouble was and I told them what I could have done. They said well you're not supposed to do that. Who told you to do that? I told them he did.

A: Yeah.

J: Well I think they chewed him our pretty good about it and he got mad at me. I told the truth though.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: You're running on tape there.

J: I don't care. He told me said well I'm going to give you a chance . I think you going to be a good worker. We'll put you on half pay . Well, I worked one night twelve hours and anyhow I drew dollar and a half for twelve hours.

A: Yeah.

J: And the next morning, when he come in, he told us, "Well, you better train two weeks and that I'll put you on full pay" and he did.

A: Still on twisters?

J: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Were you still having to work under the same guy?

J: No.

A: Did they switch?

J: I went to the second shift then.

A: Yeah. So, now the switch from just one shift to two occurred fairly quickly....

J: Yeah.

A:after y'all came on.

J: We trained on the first shift but then when you got trained you had to go wherever there was a opening and there was on the first and one on the second. The boy I trained with while-he had a little more experience because he worked on the twister and I got this other fellows work.

A: Yeah, yeah.

J: And he got first and I got second.

A: So, were both, now y'all didn't get married until what year?

L: '41.

A: '41. So during the '30s, what-were you on the second shift most of the.....?

J: Most of the time.

A: Most of the time. And you were working?

L: Well, I started on the first and-and Mary was on the-on the second. So she got married before I did. She was younger than me, and she got married. And Momma was on the first so I just swapped jobs with her and I gave her my job and I went on the second, so that's how I come down to second.

A: Yeah.

L: So within a few years after that or-or whenever I don't know, my memory is, but anyway they- it got a-a full shift on both, you know, had a full shift on first and second and was going to start a third and me and one other girl started spinning room on the third. Had two hands

A: When did the third shift come in?

L: I don't remember, but what-when it started, but uh there was just us two that worked on the third shift when it started.

J: But it run part of it. So may spinning frames.

L: It kept adding on you know as it get more hands trying to until they got it all back and I got back on the winding and I-I worked them all back and forth . But then I got back over to first regular.

A: Now how did-how did the two of you meet? Or you have two different stories?

L: He just run me down till he caught. Oh, we probably went to school together up-up Bice, but I don't remember anything about him until after we went to work over at the mill

A: Yeah.

L: I never did know him before then to remember.

A: Did a number of couples working at the mill marry one another?

L: It was a habit.

A: Hard to break?

L: Yeah, I guess things started happening and it just kept going around and just went through the mill.

A: Yeah.

L: Like a disease. Everybody caught it.

A: Uh....

L: But you know, those good days we-we did good times and it was hard times, but I said I appreciate the good-hard times that I had because it made me value a dollar and know how to work and not be afraid of it.

A: Yeah.

L: I'd be afraid of the depression right now. I hear people worrying their head off what's going to happen to us. Well, just whatever comes is what's going to happen to us.

A: Well, that's the thing, those who lived through the 30's...

L: Yeah.

A: ...are going to be much better prepared for hard times than my generation.

L: I said uh people talk about recycling old tin cans and everything. Well, I may hair curlers out of tin cans and wrapped them with shucks and-and uh save wrappers, you know ties off of coffee and uh to make hair curlers out of 'em. Well, we recycled clothes. Momma made everything over, handing it down, made it over as long as they would wear, and then she'll make quilts out of it. There was never anything wasted. And it was that way with food. All the food was recycled. It was made into something. I use that on John. I'll make it up as soup or chili when it's beans or thickens up making it down to chili that kind of stuff. Well, I don't believe in wasting. I-I just didn't want to become a wasteful family.

A: Yeah.

L: There's always so many of us Granny lived with us and momma and daddy and thirteen kids off and on and uh you had to you know make every bite count and every penny count.

A: Now that they- you were talking about these good times and you mentioned the fishing earlier today. What were some of the things y'all did during in your free time?

J: Most of the time, I just, in the winter time uh, we lived on a farm you know we used to cut wood and hunting, you know, something like that

A: And then fishing in the summers?

J: Yeah.

A: Spring and summer?

J: Mm, hmm.

A: What about you? What did the women folk do?

L: We had quilting bees and all that kind of stuff. We done, you know, it wouldn't a thing like you sit around days you look at television keep up all with the soap operas. In fact, we never did have a radio before I was married, at home. I got a radio after I left.

A: You probably didn't have any electricity until....

L: Yes, we didn't have, but some had a battery radio, but-but we didn't have that I can't remember that- and I'm sure didn't never have a radio before I married. And we met at each other's house when momma would go and uh, well my momma was a seamstress and she can do anything. And uh a woman in our community bring her whole family and get momma make a dress for fifty cents. And uh we have to cook dinner and feed her whole family while momma made this dress for fifty cents and that was our entertainment, you know.

A: Yeah.

L: We had a big day, we had a field day. We would get out run the old hen down cook or make dumplings....

A: Yeah.

L: ...and-and that kind of stuff. Well, to us that was entertainment and you know we would go to people's houses at night and play rook or uh my daddy fiddled and momma you know picked the banjo

A: Yeah, yeah.

L:we danced and just things like that....

A: Yeah.

L:and made our own entertainment.

A: Well, now you mentioned your mother and father and their instruments as-is this a sort of thing that their folks had handed down to them or did they just pick up on that?

L: As far back as I can uh, I remember hearing daddy talk, he's always been musical in the family.

A: Did any of your brothers or sisters pick it up?

L: All of them but me, just about or some at least. I have some that sings and some that you know play different things.

A: Now, was most of this like you say just a couple of neighbors would get together or were there any big Saturday night specials?

L: Well we had it on Saturday night square dancing and one big event of the fall would be the cotton picking. You know, everybody had cotton picking. And you go to-like everybody come to our house and we have dinner and they pick cotton and everybody eat dinner. And we pick cotton and in the evening we have a dance that night and that went around on through the community.

A: Yeah.

L: Everybody get their cotton picked out...

A: Yeah.

L: ...if the weather lasted long enough.

A: You just had one of those?

L: Yeah.

J: Yeah. Everybody go.

A: This the sort of thing that was happening with you too?

J: Mm, hmm.

L: It happens with everybody then.

A: Much more of a community spirit.

L: Yeah, they have uh, well; they had everything back in our day. I'm sure John remembers it all too. They have uh a barn covering. Somebody's uh barn leaked, you know, had a cover, they had a barn covering. That was a big day, women could fix dinner, and men would work. And if they need somebody to pull the corn, they all gather up and pull each other's corn. Maybe your field would be too wet and mine would be just right.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: So, we miss a lot of that kind of you know fellowship....

A: Yeah.

L: That we had back in them days.

A: Did that sort of thing carry over into the uh-the-the mill situation? Did-did-did people who worked with Avondale socialize a lot or did they tend to go their separate ways after work was up?

L: Well, we had -had close friends that we uh, you know....

J: Worked with all the time.

L: ...worked with and we go out with. We go to uh dances with or we go to movies together. And in fact, one thing that we had uh, much of us on the second shift we'd never get to go to the show. They put me up to ask the show man if he'd show a show after ten o'clock. So, I went to see him and asked him and he said, "If as many as nine people would come, I would show it." So, of course, more than that went.

A: Yeah.

L: And uh, he'd show us a show a time or two a week, you know, whenever we want to go at ten o'clock where he would show a show for us.

A: Now, were-were there a lot of young people working at the mill?

L: Yeah, there were a lot of young people then.

A: Yeah, and uh, the-now you were working second also, right, throughout that time?

L: Mm, hmm.

A: What shift do you prefer?

L: I like the second better than the first. But I like the third; I worked the third shift about ten years. And I like the second shift all around. The second was good you get your work done in the morning 'cause we had, you know, when you are a housekeeper too and your cooking...

A: Get the kids out from the kitchen.

L: ...and get the kids in school and then I leave their supper cooked and they come in there eat their supper and wash the dishes and-and uh you know just get ready for them to warm up to eat at night. And then when I go to work, I knew I had my work to do at the mill and I do that, but if I work the first shift and come home in tired and feeling bad and didn't want to clean house or do something, well, you know, it's easy to do that than undone.

A: Was the mill pretty good about letting you off say when a kid was sick or a death in the family, that sort of thing? Did....?

L: Well, sometimes you have some trouble with it. But, as a rule you wouldn't. Mr. Boles, I remember one time, he told me that, uh I said something about having to go home my kids are sick. He said-he said, "Now, look you got to work, you gotta get you a babysitter." He said, "I'm not responsible for your kids." And I understood that, but he was, you know, well I breast fed my babies and they used to bring them to the mill and I go out-outside out there...

A: Yeah.

L: ...and feed my babies. And you know everybody did and there wasn't never anything said about it.

A: So, he-he wasn't always consistent.

L: Uh, uh. Well, he might have not been there at the time.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: But uh anyway whoever it was never did say anything.

A: Not right at the beginning. don't think he came to what year?

L: He come in...

J: He came in before '41.

L: He come in uh...

J: '39.

L: ...'39.

J: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

L: Yeah, you know me and him got in a fuss one day and I oh, he get so mad at you, he could kill you, just chew up and spit you out, and then shake your hand. And we was fussing and he-he was just really carrying on and I said, "You better watch it old man." I said, "I was here when you come, I might be here when you leave". And I was.

A: And sure enough, here you were.

L: And I was.

A: Now y'all started working when Bragg the Third was....

J: No, I never did work none for Bragg.

A: You didn't?

J: No, I-I....

L: I hired in for Hayes.

J: Old man Haynes.

L: Haynes, Haynes.

A: Haynes.

J: Uh, he hired me.

A: Yeah.

J: Bragg just left...

A: Yeah, Bragg left right after the strike....

L: Bragg was here during the strike. It was right after the strike that I went to work.

A: Yeah.

J: Old man Haynes hired me and he was a pretty high-paid man. Uh, I was already told I didn't know what he made. But anyhow they come up here and cut his salary and he quit.

A: Yeah, now I haven't heard much about Haynes at all. Was he already in the Avondale organization...

J: Oh no.

A: ...before coming up here?

J: Oh no, he was there when I hired in, so I-you know, by all I know I worked for him a little while. Not long, he didn't stay long after I went to work.

A: They must have cut his pay cause they weren't satisfied with what he was doing or was it just depression? I understand, everybody was-did you ever get hit with one of those ten percent cuts?

J: No, uh....

A: That happened a couple of times during the '30s.

L: We weren't making anything to be cut. If they cut ten percent it.

J: Mr. Comer cut the wages one time.

A: Yeah.

J: I think they pay forty cents.

L: Last time he cut it he stopped the mill off and got up there in the school room and talked to us.

J: Thirty or forty.

J: Yeah.

A: Mr. Comer did?

J and L: Mm, hmm.

A: What did he say? What's the reason?

J: Market was off those things are slow couldn't sell nothing.

A: Was this still back in the '30s or was this....?

L: He made-he made us promises you know that if it got better that, I don't think it was in the 30s or not, I don't believe it was that far back. We didn't have anything to be cut for until we started making forty cents an hour cause we wasn't. We thought we was really rich when we made two dollars forty cents a day.

J: I don't remember when it was. I went to work in '35 anyway. When old man Johnson was superintendent there when we got the wages I believe.

A: So there was Haynes then Johnson before Boles finally came.

J: Yeah.

L: There's more than that but I can't remember who they was.

A: Whew. Ya'll had a turn out.

J: Well, about a year there was a limit till Boles come there.

A: Whew.

L: Boles never would leave.

J: No.

L: He wasn't going nowhere was he?

J: See Mr. Haynes, Mr. MacElroy too for a while. And uh Mr. Johnson...

L: Emmett Liner didn't have it did he?

J: No, Emmett Liner he was just a supervisor over the spinning room. You probably know Emmett Liner. You know Melvin Liner? He worked quality control.

A: No I don't.

J: Quality control, yeah.

A: Yeah, I know.

J: For sure.

A: Now was that her father or her husband?

J: That was her father, he lives in Pell City. He's still living. I guess old Emmett's close to ninety years old.

L: He's old and ugly and ain't got a tooth in his head.

J: He lives in Pell City.

A: What-did he go on with Avondale at Pell City?

J: Yeah.

A: Is that L-I-N-E-R?

J: Huh?

A: How do you spell his last name?

L: Oh, Mel, uh Liner, L-I-N-E-R.

A: Yeah.

L: But, Melvin, that's the man.

J: Melvin is his boy. He still works with em.

A: Okay.

J: He's in Sylacauga at he works out of quality control.

L: He comes up here all the time.

J: He comes up here and runs these tests, what you call it?

A: Oh, uh, the-the time.

J: Yeah, studies.

A: Time studies.

J: Well, Melvin works with them.

A: Yeah . Now.

J: Did you ever know Bruce Mims? Probably didn't. He had already retired.

L: Was Johnson the one armed man?

J: No, Earnest was the one armed man.

L: Well he was superintendent wasn't he?

J: No, he was an assistant.

A: How -how did the structural work, the command structure, in a way?

L: It was Superintendent and then the....

J: Then they had a card room overseen and a spinning room overseer

L: And that was it.

J: That was it.

A: No foreman?

J: No foreman.

L: Well Mr. Boles told him what to do cause he's over the spinning room.

A: I guess it was a fairly small operation you know .

L: It was a whole mill. It was Mary Ann, it was a whole mill.

J: That's all there was back then.

A: About how many employees per shift?

L: Oh its.

J: Thirty, I guess, what...

L: Why it's more than thirty employees there.

J: I guess it was.

L: There's a-a card room, and-and the whole card room, and then the spinning, and winding, and spooling, and twisting and. There were a lot of people.

J. They had quit a few people.

A: Now did both of you work at Mary Ann your whole career?

J: Yeah.

L: I wouldn't go anywhere else.

[END OF DISC 1]

[DISC 2]

A: ...a-a changing to another one of the mills was it that you just liked Mary Ann or was there a major...?

L: Well, I-I like-I like Mary Ann, I didn't know anything about the other mills, but I had practically cut my teeth in Mary Ann and I didn't want to go anywhere else. He come up with this that uh that it was company policy now that a man and his wife couldn't work together and uh I didn't believe that. I thought that uh he wanted us more to go over there and he had send me in order to them so that it wouldn't....

A: Now were you working in spinning?

L: I was winding then.

A: Winding.

L: So I told him I wouldn't go and he said, "You mean to tell me you won't go." I said, "No, sir, I won't go." I said, "I'll go home, if you want to send me home." I said, "I won't say a word, but I won't go to High Jackson.

A: Yeah.

L: Because I didn't want to go I said, "Well, I don't want to go" and I said "It's a concrete floor, it hurt my legs, and I'll be standing on concrete all day when I don't have to."

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: He said, "Well, you might have to." I said, "No, I don't have to, now," I said, "I can go home and I don't say a word." But I said, "If you need anybody to go over there put John over there if you don't want us to work together." "Oh, no, I can't put John over there". Well, I said, "You can't put Lola over there either." So he give up on me; he didn't send me.

A: Yeah. Now, Mary Ann all of them were making carpet yarn by then weren't they?

J: Yeah.

L: Mm, hmm.

A: Uh, different-different grades or-or did all of them pretty much make the same sort of stuff?

J: Well, when they put the grade plant in, it was on the wool system.

L: We never did make wool.

J: They-they ran wool.

A: Yeah.

J: And uh, the markets played out on the wool.

A: And so went back to synthetics and blends?

J: Yeah. Mm, hmm. They had to change out.

L: But I like Mary Ann. I like the way the machinery was. It was, you know, our kind of machinery it was what, you know, were used to running and everything. And I-I just liked the mill. It was old.

A: Yeah.

L: But-but I just liked it. I liked to work there.

A: But now, this difference in wooden flooring and concrete, many times does the machinery do better on the wooden floor because it-it can take more of the well, the shaking, the vibrating?

J: I guess so. In a way, yeah.

A: Because the concrete might hold longer and then crack or have problems.

L: But everybody that works on concrete floor over there tell me about how their legs hurt and they just break all to pieces. And I said, "Mine's broken up without getting on concrete."

A: Yeah.

L: But, I wouldn't have gone if it would've been wooden floor because I didn't want to go.

A: Did-did y'all take advantage of things like going down to Panama City?

L: I never went in my life.

J: Only one trip. I made one trip.

A: Got-got enough deep-sea fishing for you?

J: Yeah, I didn't like it too well.

J: We all got down there and burnt up though.

L: I would've gone one time, but I never did, uh...

J: Well, back then you had to ride an old school bus-school bus.

A: Yeah, yeah.

J: Well, before then it was just an open truck.

A: Whew. You had to really want to go bad.

J: Yeah.

A: Now, I understand from some of them that did go, you went down and camped out at Sylacauga overnight.

J: Yeah, we stayed at Sylacauga overnight, going and coming.

A: So, it was a full week, I guess or so.

J: Yeah.

A: Well, they -did they always close or do they still just shut the mill down for vacation?

J: Yeah. They uh, Grace will be down, I mean, Mary Ann will be down this week. Grace will be two to three weeks later on then High Jackson.

L: Well, ever since we've been working we had the, Mary Ann had the week of the Fourth of July off.

A: That's nice.

L: And then, the other mills got started and they took it was going to rotate it and Mary Ann never had it again.

A: Really?

L: Never had it again.

A: It goes around the whole company, you know.

L: Yeah, but two or three mills goes around at a time and it's was supposed to go around at Stephenson.

J: When Mary Ann goes there's another one somewhere else, maybe in Georgia or maybe down in the country somewhere.

L: Yeah, but they don't got that many.

J: Well, they got plenty.

A: The yarn division?

J: Huh?

A: The yarn division or the whole outfit?

J: The whole-whole outfit.

L: The whole plants.

J: They schedule two plants at....

A: Yeah.

J: ...at camp at one time.

L: Well, sometimes they-them big plants they can't, you know, but one go at a time.

A: About-about how many people from here would go down to Camp Helen, on average?

J: Oh, back when I went, there wasn't about eighteen or twenty, I guess.

L: Well allot would go.

J: We went to old camp, it got blown away you know.

A: Yeah, yeah.

J: On the gulf.

A: And then, when back during World War II, what the navy took it over.

J: Well something, I don't know what.

A: And after the war, they built on down the...

J: The other side of

A: Yeah.

J: Panama City.

A: Now when did-what year did you become head of spinning or spinning supervisor?

J: Oh, I don't know. I worked a little bit everywhere though, I believe '45 or '46, I guess, I don't know.

A: Was there any big raise involved with it?

J: Not much. Well some too and then Mr. Boles moved me out to weighing cotton and checking yarn.

A: Yeah.

J: I stayed out there oh, probably eighteen months maybe a little longer. I don't know. And then I worked at the packing room. I packed yarn and shipped for quite a while then I went in mill.

A: How did you feel about the outside work?

J: I liked it. Got along. I was sitting out before then during the war. I know Paul Worther he done-he done office work and weighed uh cotton and-and shipped yarn. And he had to go to the army, and I went out there and did his job and when he come back why I had to go back you know and give him his job.

A: Yeah.

J: Of course I didn't do no office work. I just weighed cotton and shipped yarn.

A: Yeah. Now in many ways the-the mill is like a large family.

J: Yeah.

A: How are family disputes handled? Did most people work out problems between themselves, or their supervisor, or did it always get a Boles?

J: Well....

A: You know, say if one person felt another person wasn't pulling weight and they were being overworked, you know something like that.

J: Well, I give Boles credit for that he knew what was going on. I mean, he-he made all three shifts.

A: Whew.

J: That's right.

A: Are you kinda saying that Avondale was his life, huh?

J: That's right, but uh...

L: He liable to come sashaying in there at three o'clock or two in the morning as he was at twelve o'clock in the day.

J: Couldn't tell about him.

A: Whew.

L: Yes, sir he come in there any time.

J: All hours of the night you can look for him. Well, if-if he was going to be gone for home, I work the third shift, he always gave me a telephone number where I can reach in case I needed him,

A: Yeah.

J: But he made every shift and he wasn't out of town.

A: Yeah. He kinda check and see...

J: Yeah.

A: ...who was showing up, who was

J: Mm, hmm.

A: ...who was always late or absent.

J: He sure did. Old man was a good mill man.

A: Yeah.

J: And, he was good to me. Sometimes me and him got into it pretty bad but he was good to me.

A: Yeah.

J: He was a funny fellow if you were in a good humor, why he'd get awful mad and if you was mad he'd be in the best humor you ever saw. Not a people person.

A: Yeah, yeah. Come into that office ruffled feathers, he could smooth.....

J: He'd be in a good humor.

A: Yeah.

J: He could cuss you out. You was in a good humor then he chew you up good then. I guess I quit two or three times when I was working for him. Never did get put on the railroad. Old railroad tracks used to be there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

J: He'd tell me sit down and talk to me.

A: Yeah.

J: So I sat down. Next thing I know I'd be back on the job.

A: Yeah. Did that most of that sort of thing have to do with personnel or with-with problems with machinery?

J: Well, just, well, I guess I was a little hot-headed back then too.

L: Now you admit it. Been denying it all these years.

J: Well, I tell you he'd tell you a tale and when the time got good and right he'd back out of it and I'd get after him pretty hard about that.

A: Yeah. I know-I know back in the-the 30's they had a mill baseball team, especially when Bragg the Third was up here.

J: It had done played out when I went to work there.

A: It had?

J: Yeah.

A: I was wondering about that.

L: No, we had a-we had a baseball team since I've been working there; used to play Sherwood all the time.

J: Well it wasn't sponsored though.

A: Yeah that's-that's the thing. The company, in fact, talking to....

J: They built that ballpark over there and fenced it in.

A: Yeah. They said that-that uh Bragg would bring in semi pro kids and have them work in the dock, they wouldn't know anything about mill work, just so they could play baseball.

J: That's right. Yeah. He was tough. He would spend that money

A: I think that might have been why old man reigned back in to Sylacauga. He was spending it on himself too. I was talking with uh....

J: Yeah, he sho could.

A: Yeah, uh, A.D. McMillian, you wouldn't have known him. He-he was secretary of Avondale for forty years.

J: Yeah, I know of him, I know him though.

A: He probably, yeah, signed memos or checks or some but uh he said, yeah, he said, one time.... uh who was father? Bragg, Jr. I guess, right? So anyway...

J: He was old man Donald's and old man Hugh's brother.

A: Yeah, he said one time, he said, "Well, I just sent-I just sent the uh the uh dividend check of-of Bragg the Third's up to Stephenson." His dad said, "Never send him a dividend check, he'll blow it. " He said, "Just put it in his account down here."

L: No need to have it if you don't spend it, I say.

A: I think Bragg got a little spending before he had it, [LAUGHS] what what's happening.

J: He could sho spend it.

A: Yeah he told about how -how there were two or three banks up in Jackson County, he'll take a ninety-day note from one...

J: Yeah.

A: ...and then get another one to pay off that one.

L: Yeah and stay behind all the time.

A: Yeah.

L: Have money and not ever pay it back.

A: Yeah.

J: He spent a lot of money. I don't -we borrowed before little old bitty kids walk up to him down there. He was there the same time we was.

A: Yeah.

J: And we borrowed money. He'd take out and maybe wouldn't have but three or four dollars and he'd give it to them wouldn't even have any money. They'd want to borrow it.

A: Yeah.

J: Parents worked at the mill you know.

A: Yeah, right.

J: Of course, Bragg wasn't even there then.

A: Yeah. Now over the years, it looks like y'all done fairly well by-by Avondale. When did you, I noticed you bought your first house, what there in....?

J: I bought it from Avondale.

A: Was it one of the village houses there?

J: Mm, hmm. Yeah.

A: And then when did you buy this one?

J: In uh '57.

A: Well, uh, I noticed it's-it's a fairly nice house.

J: It's an old house.

A: What's its history? Do you-do you know much about its background, the house?

J: Well, yeah, I know when it was built. But, it's been a long time ago.

A: Yeah.

J: I mean, I remember bought the time when it was finished. I don't remember when it was built.

A: Yeah.

L: I thought this house was about eighty years old.

J: No, it's not that old.

A: Well, we hope not. Not if he remembers it being built.

J: Well, I remembered right after it was finished

L: Mike Wimberly built it.

J: Yeah Mike Wimberly, but we paid a dollar for a labor.

A: Whew.

J: His carpenter worked all day.

A: Which then was good money.

J: Yeah.

L: It cost 4,400 dollars I was told to build it.

J: Mm, hmmm.

A: So, you change that into nineteen –eighty dollars

L: It said that uh built with the best lumber that they can buy.

J: He ordered all this panels and stuff.

A: I, yeah, I noticed these door facings are beautiful.

J: He ordered all that stuff.

L: Well, one of the boys stripped this off in this room, but that's all-all the room that they stripped it off of, they didn't get any further, the rest of it is dark.

A: Really?

L: Except the mantel.

A: Oh, that, well, that-that is really beautiful.

L: If you just had the time to get into it you could make a beautiful place out of it.

J: There's four of those mantels in there.

A: Really?

J: Yeah.

A: What, double fireplaces on both sides?

J: Yeah. Mm, hmm. That's a pretty old house, but it's not that old. I know I was real small my mother used to come over here to deliver ice. They hadn't been living in the house, I don't think two or three years. But, I don't remember anything about the building of it, you know.

A: Yeah.

J: But they haven't been living in here too long when she come ovser here.

A: Now, was he a farmer here or...?

J: Yeah, yeah. He didn't do much farming cut a little cedar.

A: Yeah. Now, back-back to the Avondale thing, y'all finally stepped down, let younger hands run it. What years did you retire? Did you retire at the same time?

J: Oh, no. She retired a long time before I did.

L: I just quit.

J: She quit.

L: I quit in uh, '69.

J: We fooled around. We bought a beauty shop down town and there wasn't anybody to look after it and uh, taking money out of our pockets, you know to keep the thing running.

A: Yeah.

J: I didn't quit until I was sixty four years old.

A: Mm, hmm .

L: And I've been doing it ever since. Jump out of one bad career and another one. Have gone down to selling bait, tackle and boats, and some guns. I sold guns a while.

A: You need to get your-get your hooks into my brother-in-law on that stuff. One-once you get him going....

L: Really? I'll get a hold of him.

A: That would be a steady source of income.

L: Where is he? I get a hold of him.

A: He's down in Scottsboro.

L: And what's the name?

A: McNutt.

L: Oh, I guess he fooled around down there with ole, who is it down there at Murphy place.

J: I don't know who they sold it to. New owners down there.

A: He's a big bass fisher.

J: I like to . I don't catch very many , but I like to try.

A: He-he has four mounted on his wall, huge things. He eats most of it though.

J: I sure like to try it.

A: Let me get this off.

TAPE CUTS OFF

A: You had just mentioned that you had done some coal mining before.

J: Yeah.

A: ...going with Avondale.

J: Mm, hmm. I worked about a year a half, two years, I guess. About two years.

A: Now would y'all take a mule down in the mine.....?

J: No, we pushed it ourselves, even when I worked there.

A: Whew.

J: Push the car, put about fifteen hundred pounds in a car.

A: How many people did it take to push it?

J: Two and we got a dollar and a half a tunnel. That was after all the slack coal, you know how it.

A: Had been washed off.

J: Yeah. Just lump coal. We got a dollar and a half for it and you had to buy all your know powder, fuse everything.

A: Was it pick and shovel work or did you have any machinery?

J: Yeah, we had to shoot it. We had to shoot it.

A: Yeah.

J: We had old wreck haulers you know those you had to crank with your hand.

A: Yeah.

J: Drill your hole, tap off your shot, treat your shot, bam and then if you happen to hang one that's when you had to do to pick it.

A: Yeah, to get the overhang out.

J: Dig it out, dig it out.

A: Yeah.

J: Cause you couldn't shot it anymore, it wouldn't shot.

A: Yeah.

J: I guess I worked there about two years, something like that.

A: I guess you had to know what you were doing with that stuff too, didn't you.

J: Mm, hmm. Had to watch that top because it would crack and pop all the time you know.

A: Did y'all have any accidents while you were work...?

J: No, no. Never did while I worked there wasn't but two of us in that one place me and another boy.

A: What would the coal company, how-how....?

J: It was private owned.

A: Yeah.

J: We just worked for a fellow who owned the land. He had it opened up you know.

A: Was it pretty close to the surface where you were working?

J: No, it was about uh, well, it was about uh thirty, forty feet from the top down from the top down uner the top fluff you know.

A: Yeah.

J: Installed these little wagon lines, hauled it off the wagon.

A: Yeah. So the mule part came once you got it up.

J: Yeah. Back later on I worked a few days over here in dry coal what we call the dry coal. Ball Mining Company come in there.

A: Yeah.

J: And uh they opened up a mine. They had a mule that pulled the cars out of the mine.

A: Yeah.

J: I just worked over there two or three days. I don't know. My brother worked over there quite a while.

A: Now you would use, okay, you augered it.

J: Yeah had a little flex all and you cranked it brag and bit you know and you bored it cut across your stump and you pushed your way in that pocket.

A: Yeah.

J: And you dilled a seven foot hole back there.

A: Okay, yeah.

J: You put your powder back in there and put your dummy in front of it and tap it real tight.

A: Yeah.

J: It would blow that coal out.

A: And then how would you put the coal in the car, just shovel?

J: Just shovel, yeah.

A: And how much could you put up in a day?

J: Oh, it was about four or five ton in a day, two of us.

A: Two together, I guess.

J: Yeah, some days-there are some days you wouldn't have any at all, you have to wait till September.

A: Yeah. Did-did many of the people who later worked with Avondale go through this same experience? Were there many....?

J: Yeah, they had a few, Pearson boy over here.

A: No, I don't

J: He done quite a bit of coal mining before he went to Avondale and Sloan Wilson. He used to work for Avondale, done some coal mining.

A: And then the other thing-thing around here, I guess as an employer would be the two railroads.

J: Yeah.

A: Uh...

J: Yeah.

A: Did-did many employees have, say a woman working at the mill and her husband working on the railroad?

J: They were a few. There wasn't too many.

A: Yeah.

L: Kenny Steele for example.

J: Well Liza Roberts, too.

A: Yeah.

L: Yeah.

A: But, most folks work in the mill was it...

L: A majority of 'em- a majority of 'em did.

A: Husband and wife both or maybe wife in mill and husband farming, that sort of thing.

J: Horace Driver worked there. You know he got killed, got electrocuted over there at Mary Ann.

A: Yeah.

J: Years and years ago. His father was a second foreman on the nc at same mill that he worked for . They were quite a few you know that worked there.

A: Over the years.

J: Over the years

A: But like you're saying, most of the folks, it was husband and wife both working.

J: Both worked there.

A: Yeah.

L: Yeah, you'll need be surprised if the ones the-the children gone and work then too. Follow them footsteps.

A: Yeah. But hey, the prime examples uh Wallace...

L: Ballard.

A: Ballard, yeah.

J: Ballard. Tinker woks over there too, don't he? What this Rogers? Rogers works over there too,

A: Yeah.

J: At one time Richard worked over there didn't he?

L: Really did for a time.

J: He worked at the co-op.

[TAPE CUTS OFF]

J: We continue to find these new work situations.

L: Oh, I-I could, I could write a big book on things I-I have done besides hair fixin and taking in sewing and everything, uh

J: And how did you end up in Nashville?

L: Well, he had a sister that lived there. This one that we lost last year, and uh her husband worked in stove foundry and she worked at a-at a pants factory and so I go up there and keep her kids some you know in the vacation months in...

J: Yeah.

L: After I quit school, before I started to work at Avondale, I went up there to stay with them and I got a job there. I don't know she may have got laid off or something. Anyway, I-I went to work in-in this box factory. And the first job I got in was uh what you call creasing.

A: Yeah.

L: You know what creasing is?

A: Probably taking that corrugated cardboard and making....

L: Well, it's already creased. You know, they are cut out and they got the corners nicked out of 'em and they're creased. You-you take a whole stack of 'em like this together and where they're creased you bend 'em like that you-you just work back and forward like that, you get them all creased. But then-then they go in the next thing and do uh each thing is put in a machine like this and uh you let it down, it's set under this machine on a cover like a candy box did.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: And it goes under this machine thing and slaps it down one time. But when it comes out that it's-it's put up together and then-then comes the turn down job. And the girl goes around and says "Turn that down." You know, a glue like thing.

A: Yeah.

L: And then you got the lids made. Well, then it goes on down and makes another one and then stacks 'em, you know...

A: Yeah.

L: ...it puts 'em together. And when you stack 'em and get 'em ready to carry you-you put them together like-like this. Like you stack three in a row of course they all be in the same size then the next one you stack 'em at an angle like that, and the next one straight, and the next one an angle. And I carry 'em high as to the ceiling.

A: Whew.

L: You get a stack so high, once you pick 'em up you know it may be get them over balanced but then you have to run a little bit and back up...

A: Yeah.

L: ...to balance to keep 'em from falling and then I worked a while in a- in a hosiery room and I was uh inspector in that,...

A: Of that?

L: ...part of the time and- and boarding. I-I board what you call boarding most of the time, It was men socks that had clocks on them you know everybody used to wear clock socks back in them days. And you just put it on the board and you-you had sharp scissors that-these clocks, the way they was knit in there they had a thread that went all around it. The sock, it didn't...

A: Uh, huh.

L: ...cut off. We had to cut that loose clip it loose on both sides of 'em

A: Now one would think hosiery and-and a mill here would be in the same line of work, but I imagine there are some big differences in it?

J & L: It's altogether different.

L: Uh, I-I never did knit or anything like that you know.

A: Yeah.

L: But all I did in-in-in the hosiery mill was board them and inspect them and inspector said if it was good throw it out it was you know one thing if it had a fault in it, why put it out. But-but, I-I really enjoyed working at that box factory it was hard and it-it was hot. It was really hot in there. Of course, there was no such thing as air or anything.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: And I was just a girl too and that was the first job I ever had. It really thrilled me.

A: Yeah.

L: I guess I wasn't more than fourteen or fifteen...

A: Yeah.

L: ... when I worked in there.

A: Now the hosiery was it cotton or were they using nylon?

L: No it was-it wasn't cotton, it was something silky-like.

A: It was probably nylon.

L: I-I guess it was.

A: That far back.

L: You know the men's socks?

A: Yeah.

L: And-and you-you seen em with it was, uh what we called clocks at the time, designs that goes up the sides of the legs.

A: Yeah.

L: And some of 'em have-had patterns. Well, that pattern on the underside of the sock would be-have a print all the way around it. It wouldn't-it would be a loose thread underneath there. Only place it knitted was in that pattern, but the thread was on-on the bottom side so we had a board it and cut that off.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: Interesting.

A: Very.

L: Very.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

