## BRICK WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE

## **Norm Davis**

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

June 28, 2007

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Brick Makers Oral History Project. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu, and today, I'm interviewing Norm Davis at Morin Brick Company, and it's in Auburn. Is that correct?

Norm Davis: Right.

**AL:** In Auburn, Maine, the date is June 28, 2007. Could you start by just giving me your full name?

- ND: Norman Davis.
- AL: And when were you born?
- ND: Nineteen forty five.

AL: In Auburn?

ND: Waterville.

- AL: Did you grow up in Waterville?
- ND: No, I grew up around Lewiston, in Auburn, South Auburn.

AL: So, what was Auburn like when you were growing up, in terms of what it's like today?

I think I've seen a lot of change. The mills and shoe shops are gone. I know that ND: they used to talk about rush hour in Lewiston, it was when Lewiston and Auburn, it was when the mills let out at three o'clock, followed by the shoe shops at four o'clock, and traffic was tied up for a bit. It you went out Center Street, if you got much beyond where Quizno's is today, it was more rural. John White's dairy cows were right where the Auburn Mall is. So that's all changed. The high school, when I was a kid, the high school, Edward Little, up on the hill, didn't exist, although I did go there the last two years of high school. They built it while I was young. A lot of dirt roads, very few in Auburn now, changed. I think the whole landscape has changed. I can remember taking a train from Auburn to go up to Aroostook County, where we had relatives, riding up on the train, that's gone. And I'm younger than most of the old brick makers, but, you know, I think the whole downtown area is totally changed, and pretty much for the better. People have moved out of the city, if you will, and live out in the outskirts a little more, I've seen a lot of growth in housing, residential areas. A lot of the bedroom communities, Minot, Poland, Turner, seem to have grown. A lot of people are commuting into town that didn't used to. New industries, that's the good thing, you know we're more diversified than we were.

AL: What did your parents do for work, when you were growing up?

ND: I raised by an aunt and uncle, uncle worked in a brick plant, aunt worked in a shoe factory.

AL: Now, was your uncle's involvement with the brick company, was, was that what got you interested, or give you a way in?

**ND:** It didn't necessarily give me a way in, it started as a job after school, and, you know, summers and things, never had any intent of doing it for a career. One thing led to another, Mr. Morin was good to me, helped me finish school, and I just felt I owed him something for using me so well while I was in school, and the rest is history.

AL: So, what did you do when you first started, when you were in school?

**ND:** Sanding brick, picking up broken brick, unloading freight cars that came in, worked on the kiln somewhat, firing them with wood, I did quite a bit of that, that's about it.

AL: Can you talk about how the Morin Brick Company has grown and changed over the years?

ND: Yeah, I've seen it go from molding brick on the ground, drying them in the sun, firing the kilns with wood, had a season of approximately a hundred days a year, molding brick, then it would last for another month or two in the fall, while they fired the last of the brick, and then pretty much shut down through the winter, they did very little shipping. That's all changed. They went from that to unmolding brick on wooden pallets and drying them in sheds outdoors, everything air dried, moving things around with forklifts, instead of wheelbarrows. Then it went from that to, instead of loading brick on dump trucks and taking them to a job, and then either unloading them by hand or dumping them in a big pile, through a packaging system, where the brick would be handled with equipment on the truck and forklifts on the job site. In the late '70s, well in the early '70s, we purchased a plant in Gorham, so it gave us double the capacity. Then in the late '70s, we converted this plant to an automated kiln, that just ran twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and gave us year round production, so that we increased our production somewhat, so it actually doubled production. It eliminated burning wood and all of the interesting things that went with getting enough wood,

because we used over two thousand cords of wood a year, and with the increased production, we would have been using twelve to fifteen thousand cords of wood a year, and over a million gallons of oil. So we get a lot of energy efficiencies within the system. And then all through the '80s and '90s, we continued to, as much as we could, apply the latest technology that was available. Finally, in, about four years ago, we determined that it really wasn't feasible any longer to run two plants, here and Gorham, so we brought Gorham's production here, so we increased our capacity once again. It was now large enough that we could put in still more machinery, automate things very well, so we no longer set brick by hand. It's done, other than special runs, pretty much we do it with robotics. We lengthened out our kiln, we get more energy efficiency out of it. We now use approximately thirty five percent of the BTUs to make a brick that we would have used thirty years ago, so, and that was the big thing, energy is so expensive.

AL: I have a question. A couple people that I've talked to have said, it was using the wood to fire the bricks that gave it its color. What happens when you go to oil? Or how does that -?

**ND:** Oil, and then, well, about seven or eight years ago, we put natural gas in as well. No, everybody thought it was the wood that made the color of brick. No, the coloring is a natural thing within the clays. As they're fired, we're actually oxidizing the clay, or rusting the clay, and that's what turns it red. To get the darker blacks, around the edges, it has to go through, and become more of a scientific thing. I would have believed it was wood smoke years ago as well, but as we studied it, we worked with Clemson University, one of the leading ceramic schools in the world, and I did a lot of work with Clemson, went down to Clemson, it's actually the clay oxidizing or rusting, if you will. We do what nature would take thousands of years to do, in a matter of days, which will turn it red, and then when it reaches the maturing temperature, the peak temperature we want, we let smoke go through the kiln. It used to be wood that went

through the kiln, we now use natural gas, and we, the smoke starves the atmosphere for oxygen, and when that happens, the brick won't re-oxidize, or turn back to a copper color, it'll stay red and black. So basically, you're just choking the air out of the atmosphere. Years ago, all of this smoke would have just gone off into the atmosphere, off of the top of the kiln, of the old kilns, wood fire kilns. We now can redirect that smoke, down through the firing zone of our kiln, burn it off, so we have almost no visible emissions, and as it burns off, we're getting the benefits of the BTUs left in the smoke. So that's, that's one of the biggest ways that we reduced our energy consumption, is better control of our fuel going into the kiln, and redirecting the smoke and all of the byproducts of poor combustion, because we actually have to create poor combustion to keep the brick red and black, and rather than just putting it off into the atmosphere, and creating an environmental problem, we can redirect it and burn it off. So, you know, we're meeting a lot of environ-, exceeding environmental standards.

AL: Right, talk to me a little bit about some of the experiences you've had over the years with brick making. Are there any anecdotes or anything that stand out in your memory?

**ND:** I think we've had a lot of good people, a lot of dedicated people. Even now, we'll have employees come in at an entry level job, and there's some turnover there, but we've said for years, if you're with us for two years, you'll probably be with us for a career. Years ago, when it was a periodic plant, we just ran during the summer, with the old plants, there were a lot of, like myself, young people that came in and worked several summers, while we're finishing school, high school or college, and it's what put most of us through school. You met a lot of people who went on to very successful careers. Now, that's pretty satisfying. Other than those people, it's not uncommon to have people in the workforce thirty and forty years. We had a man, in fact the uncle, who I grew up with, retired a few years ago, because of health. His greatest disappointment was he had only a few more months to go and make sixty years for the

company. We had another man that started with the company, around nineteen sixteen, nineteen fifteen, sixteen, with horses and everything, and he worked right up until he was eighty four, I think, eighty three or eighty four years old. Now, he wasn't out, you know, whatever, but he was very, very active, very healthy. Currently, we have people that have been with the company that I worked with when we were in school. We have a lot of people, fifteen, twenty, twenty five, thirty years, and that happens where young people are trying to find themselves and what they want to do for a career. It happens in every industry, they move around, and they finally find what they want, they lock in. But, you know, we're pretty pleased that we have such longevity with a lot of our people.

Some of the other, I think, satisfying things are some of the projects that we've done. It started back in the 1930s, and it continues through even this year, we'll have a project at Colby College, and we furnish every building at Colby College. Bates College, we've done all of their work for many, many, many years. We have two projects underway right now, as we speak, at Bates. We've done most of Bowdoin's work for the last twenty five, thirty years. We do a tremendous amount of work at Harvard University. Well, it's the whole downtown, waterfront Boston area, we've done any number of buildings down there, we continue to do them, a lot of buildings in the Boston area. We've, some of the other good things, we bought out another brick company that had manufactured brick the old way. (Name) Manufacturing was one of our customers that resold the brick in the Bangor area, and we bought them out a few years ago, so that gave us Gorham, Auburn, and Bangor, so we could pretty well cover the state. We also had distribution in Canada, which was another new market for us, and we've done that within the last ten or twelve years. And with other distributors that we have, we pretty much cover the whole northeast, from Halifax to western Pennsylvania.

AL: Wow, are there some that aren't with us anymore, that I wouldn't have a chance

to interview that worked for the company, that you could describe them, in terms of, you know, when they did it the old way?

ND: The one I spoke of and started way back in nineteen fifteen or sixteen, when he was mid '70s, I guess, or something, I said to him one day, Randall, you know, if you want, you could be our water boy. And what the water boy did is just wet the clay down in the brick machine and temper it, so that it would have the right consistency. He'd made brick then for over sixty years, been around a brick plant, was, you know, could do any task that you gave him, and he said, I don't want that job, that's an old man's job. He was around eighty years old, when he walked in one day in the early spring and said, start the machine up, I guess I'm old enough to do the water boy job. So, I said, well, fine, when we start it up, if you want it, it's yours. He ended up being one of the worst people we could have ever put on the machine, only because you'd go up and he'd say, this is a boring job, I've got to find something to do, and he was always off doing something else and not paying attention to the, the clay. He would be off fixing pallets, or he, you know, he was just still in his eighties and still very active and moving and didn't want to do an old man's job, you know. But it was funny, because a lot of years have gone by from the time I had said, if you want to be, do this job, you can do it, and he wanted to wait until he got old, but I don't know that he ever got old, because he never did like the job, because it was an old man's job, even in his eighties, you know, SO.

**AL:** Well, I understand that when, when they had the small brick places, making the bricks, that pretty much had to keep moving all the time, from one step to the next, and that, I'm thinking, that's probably how he -.

**ND:** Yeah, you did, I mean, everybody learned as many different tasks as they could, that made them a little more valuable and let them, if they could do other things, once the molding stopped when we got frost in the fall, it gave them a chance to stay on

another two or three months, while they burned the last of the brick. If they couldn't do that, there was nothing for them. A lot of these people went off into the woods working, cutting wood for the next year or two. Not with all companies, but with this particular one, they opened a sawmill in the 1940s, so that not only would they go into the woods and cut wood, wood for the brick plant, but they cut a lot of logs, saw logs and things like that, so they were in the sawmill as well. So, a lot of them worked in the woods through the winter months to keep busy.

AL: Now, I noticed a lot of people's jobs were described as strikers.

**ND:** Strikers, that was probably physically the most demanding job, and what that was is, is the people that actually molded the brick. It was demanding because of the way the machine was built, there was a lot of, it was just hard on your body physically, you had to jump on a foot press that, that pressed the clay on into the mold, and then you loaded up molds and then you ran down the length of a, of a yard where they unmolded them, and then you'd unmold and run back, and do it over and over again. Strike, strikers come from the thing that they did when they molded the brick, as they struck off the top of the mold, or wiped off the top of the mold with a stick and the sides of the brick to clean it up. It was hard on your back, because there was a lot of bending, it was a lot lifting. A mold full of brick is going to weigh, well, it would weigh more today because we use heavier molds, but when they used the pine molds, you're going to weigh forty five, fifty pounds. And you're bending over and unmolding it, on the ground, down by your feet. So, there was a lot of that, and it was difficult.

AL: Now, is that term still used in brick making at your plant today, or not really?

ND: Not really, because it's all done with machines.

AL: Yeah, and they, and I know that they had different terms, like water struck and

wire struck.

ND: Wire cut.

AL: Wire cut.

ND: Yeah, and wire cut is pretty much out the window now, that's, water struck is what most of these old timers did. And that term refers to, the mold was lubricated with water, they dipped it in a water box and got it wet, so that they clay wouldn't adhere to the, the wooden mold itself. And struck was when they'd strike, and that's where they get the striker, they were strikers, but when they struck, or wiped off, the top of the mold with a wooden stick, they'd just pull it towards them, they'd get off all of the excess mud off the top of the, the mold, and it kept the brick into the sides, where the mold was. About like if you want a cup of sugar, you'd round it up and just wipe it off the top, so it's an evened cupful, that's what striking is. So, you've probably struck a lot of times, sugar, not, not mud. Though, what they call the wire cut, today they call extruded, and the process is similar, although it's all automated. Clay is made, mixed much harder, with a lot less water in it, and it's extruded out through a die in the machine, there's a big machine forcing the clay through a die, about like squeezing toothpaste out of a tube, and it just comes out in one long, continuous column, about like Velveeta cheese, and instead of using a cheese slicer with a wire on it, or you, you know, you probably had one of those, basically it's the same thing. They just had a wire come down through that column, or that block of Velveeta cheese, come down through the column and slice it into individual bricks, that's all.

AL: And are those type of bricks used a different sort of thing than the -?

**ND:** No, they're not, they can be used interchangeably on, on most projects. It's, the water struck are a little more irregular, they look more like hand molded, handmade

brick, and then that's what they actually were. We can continue to replicate that, and produce the same brick, we just don't turn the molds over by hand, or we don't unmold by hand, there's just machinery that handles wooden molds. Because there's a lot of moisture in those kind of bricks, lot of water, as the bricks dry out and shrink, they don't have the uniformity, they, they shrink at different, a little bit different lengths. They still have to be within certain limits, but a few more irregularities, looking more like they would have made years ago. The extruded brick are a more mechanically perfect brick, because there's less than half the moisture in the brick that there was with the water struck. We can control the shrinkage better, we can control the textures better. With the molded brick, you've got one texture, that's it, with the, you know, the surface of the brick. With the extruded, you can run wires on it, you can roll different things onto the face, you can spray on *(unintelligible word)* on it to make it look like used brick, you can do any number of things with it, sand coatings, so you can get a little more variety, and it's used in different architectural projects, those just look a little different, so, and it depends on what the owner wants his project to look like.

AL: So, the people who owned Morin Brick for years, that was, was it Ron Morin?

ND: No.

AL: No.

**ND:** It started out JV Morin, John Morin started it, the company around nineteen twelve. He had eight sons and a daughter. Then when he passed on, the company was passed onto them. Many of them went on to do other things. One of them started Lewiston Lumber Company, in Lewiston. Another one had a sawmill in Auburn, another one worked on a railroad in New York, another one had a store, a little grocery store. Three of them, primarily, stayed here, working here. Then the one daughter, in that family, married a man that, I think, had ten brothers, or something like that, and she had

five sons and a couple of daughters. So, that whole Morin LaChance, the daughter married a LaChance, the whole Morin LaChance had a lot of boys and few girls. They worked around here when they were young, and after World War II, started their own brick plant in Gorham, which is what we went down and bought out in the early '70s, around nineteen seventy. I, I never saw it myself, but they used to tell a story about during World War II, there were five brothers in the service, they came out in <u>Ripley's Believe It or Not</u>, supposedly, and though their uncles had gotten married, because there were, you know, their mother had eight brothers and their father had ten brothers, there were five boys in the military that had eighteen uncles and no aunts, you know, no blood aunts, so that's pretty rare, but it was good for the brick business. Some higher power knew what they were doing, yeah.

Another interesting thing that has happened along the way, because of the experience I had with some of the older brick making and still being probably the youngest of all of them that were around, and we also made a few bricks up in Sidney, up between Augusta and Waterville, in the late, in the mid '60s, and I worked up there quite a bit, because of that and because we continue to make the old water struck type brick, that there's only one, two other plants in the country that do, I was invited by the ladies at Mount Vernon, to go down to Mount Vernon, George Washington's home, a few years ago, and what they wanted to do was build a barn and replicate what was there when George Washington was alive. It was a threshing barn, and it was an octagonal barn, eight sides to it, and it had had a lot of brick on it. So, what they wanted to do is dig some clay up there, at Mount Vernon, and make the brick right there, make them the way that George Washington would have made them. So, that's fine, but everything that they wanted to authenticate had to be the way it was. Well, it was a handful of brick, we could have made all those bricks in about four hours, but they would, you know, with the way we do today, but what they wanted to do, was authenticate it, and I can understand that, so they had some people from Colonial Williamsburg come up as well, and they really didn't get too involved with it, they did a

little bit, so they asked if I'd be interesting in working with it, but I couldn't, because there wasn't, time wouldn't permit. The funniest part of it, and I still think about it, is how much society has changed. I believe if you can do a task, it doesn't matter if you're man or woman, you should be able to do it. There are women driving front end loaders and trailer trucks that do an excellent job. What they wanted to do is use young interns, and they were going to use young ladies as well as young men, to make the brick, and that's fine, except they were so strict on all of their authentication, if you will, and I'm not a racist either, don't have a problem with it all, what color your skin is, yellow, black, sky blue, pink, that's fine, we're all made equal. Well, George Washington had made brick with primarily his slaves, and it was the men that did it, not the women, so the authentication went right out the window immediately, but that's okay, I mean, I understand what they wanted to do, and they wanted to, so people visiting Mount Vernon could see how bricks were made in those days. Anyway, they spent the whole summer, they didn't get enough brick made for the project, so we ended up making the brick here and sending them down to Mount Vernon, and mixing their brick with it, and it came out very, very well. It was a little difficult on our side to try to make something that was made down there, but we made it.

But my first visit down there, they wanted, you know, I said that if, they had no idea what size to mold the brick at, because of the shrinkage and everything, so I said, well, I'll gladly take some of your material back and experiment with it and see what the shrinkages are, so we can figure out how big to make the molds, and it was just before 9/11, about a year and a half before 9/11. So, I took a plastic pail and we put about half a pailful of clay in the pail, so I walked back to the, went back to the airport and went to go on, and I walked up to the ticket counter and, do you have any baggage to check? Well, I said, I really don't want to take this on the plane, because it was just a down and back thing, the same day, but I've got this pail of mud that I've got to send back. She said, yeah, mud, and I said, it is. I said, but it's important mud, it's George Washington's mud, you know, George Washington, George and Martha are letting me

take this home, you know, so. Yeah, sure, she said. Well, I said, x-ray it, open it up, if you want to, you know, the cover just snaps on. She opened it up, so then the first thing I knew, everybody behind the ticket counter and half of the people out back are laughing about here comes a guy with a pail of mud.

AL: Well, that's a neat story.

**ND:** Yeah, yeah, it was interesting, yeah, we've had a lot of fun things like that along the way. The brick industry's been good, it's, it's demanding, a lot of businesses are, but it's been good to me.

AL: So, you would say with the more automation, it's not as physically demanding?

ND: Right.

AL: These days?

ND: Right, yeah.

**AL:** And I saw some pictures with the men wearing just bathing suits, making the brick, that was in the early, early days.

ND: Right, right, that's all gone.

AL: Yeah.

ND: Yeah.

AL: Are there any people that you know are still around, who did the process at that

time, that I, that I might be able to interview?

**ND:** Boy, they're all, there was one that molded brick, not out in the open yard, out, you know, on the ground, but did mold them, well, there are two people, one of them did mold them on the ground.

AL: The one was Henry Berube?

ND: Henry Berube.

AL: I interviewed him, yes.

ND: He did it on the pallets. In fact, there's one that made brick with Henry, Merrill Givens.

AL: Merrill Givens?

**ND:** Right, and he made brick with us in Sidney, where we made them on the ground, as well as down here. I didn't see him in years, he stopped by to visit. A lot of these old timers come down to visit. He stopped down, oh, three or four months ago, or something, but. So, he's around the Lewiston Auburn area, somewhere, it may be Greene, or Portsmouth, but he's around, Merrill Givens, Merrill Givens.

AL: Is it G-I-V-?

ND: G-I-V-E-N-S. But those are almost the last two. There were a lot of Gigueres, that made brick the old way, that aren't around anymore.

AL: And a few of the Morins still alive?

**ND:** There are no Morins at all in the company. There's, there's one LaChance left, and some of their children that don't work with the company. There is John Morin, who I believe is retired, he drove truck years, he lives on the road going up over off Washington Street up towards Martindale Golf Course, and there's Bert Morin, Ethelbert Morin, who lives on the Hotel Road in Auburn.

AL: And I have heard that name.

**ND:** Yeah, he's retired, but in the, John hasn't been, he was around when he was a young man, he hasn't been around in a little over forty years, he hasn't worked there. Ethelbert's been even longer than that, but they, that's the only two -.

AL: They were some of the early, early, they would remember some of the early days?

ND: Yeah, well, their fathers would have been the sons of, you know, they were third generation. They were third generation Morins, and, you know, in their seventies, almost eighty, so, you know.

AL: Well, that's amazing.

ND: So the two of them.

AL: Now, was Morin's, was there other competing brickyards in the area, or maybe not competing, but other ones around?

**ND:** Well, there were many, many, many of them years ago. We've got friends, and her father collected antiques, he was an antique dealer out in West Auburn years ago, he's passed away now, and we were out there for dinner one night, and he showed this

old book, it was an Androscroggin, I don't know if it was a registry, what it was, but we looked in it, and I counted up countless, I mean we're talking thirty, forty little brick works. What would happen, none of them made a lot of brick, but when the mills were built, schools and churches, and you know, there were a lot of brick, a lot of streets, the roads were made with brick, the sidewalks are made of bricks around Lewiston Auburn, and a lot of the sidewalks, if you went back today and took the black top off, there's still brick underneath them, a few of the streets, unless, I don't know many of them that have been all dug up, Spring Street was only done just a few years ago, it was brick underneath. So there was a real demand for brick, and none of them made very many brick. They made five, six, eight hundred thousand, maybe a million at the most. So there was, it was interesting, I found in it, that there was a little brick work across from CMMC Hospital there, right on the corner of Sabattus and Main Street, there was a little one right there. Down on Bartlett Street, across from the hockey rink, what do they call it now, the Coliseum?

AL: The Coliseum.

**ND:** Across the street, where they park the school buses, that was a brick plant, right up until about nineteen fifty, fifty one. In fact, Morin's ran that, the last of it, *(unintelligible word)* first. Dennis Brick, in Auburn, just as you come down out of Auburn on Washington Street. As you come down over the hill, just beyond Ness Oil, there's a road off to the right, there's a spring water place in there, there was a little brick plant in there, up until, boy, I'll say the mid '70s, there was a little place there. And there may be, I don't know, the old timers are all gone, but there may be Dennis' around, the last name was Dennis, there may be some there. One, that worked when he was in high school at Dennis, was Mike Roy, that runs Roy's Hamburgers.

AL: Oh, really?

**ND:** Yeah, the only reason I know that, we went to high school together. We weren't friends or anything, but I was in a class with him at one time, we had to do a report, and he did a report on making brick.

## AL: Oh, wow.

**ND:** Or something like that, and the only reason that I even remember that, I don't remember another report, I don't remember anything about that class other than that, I was doing the same thing down here. So he might, you know, and I think he really only just did it one or two summers, or part of a summer maybe, I don't know, I don't know what he did, but that's all I know about it, period, that and fifty cents, you get a cup of coffee.

AL: So, there were a lot of just very little individual -?

**ND:** Little, very little, small ones all over. They made brick in Farmington, they made brick in Hartford, they made in brick in Elliot, Maine, they made them down in the Biddeford Saco area, which you know. Brick was made in Cambridge for Harvard University, they were made right near there. The Lowell Lawrence area, there were a lot of brick made, and way back, you know, in the 1800s, early 1900s, transportation was an issue anyway, so they had to make brick very closely. I feel kind of privileged working with some of the old timers, this Randall Proctor, the one I mentioned that wanted the water boy job when he was old, told about taking brick to deliver to down near Portland, there were a lot of brick made in the Portland area, but there was a job down near Portland, that they were doing from here, so took the horses and wagon, they could only haul three hundred brick at a time. Today, we had a truck go out of here yesterday for Canada, that had thirteen thousand brick on it, but you could only haul three hundred brick in a wagon. And he left in the morning, went to Portland, stayed overnight somewhere on the way back, and got back the next day, so it was a two day

trip to Portland. There were a lot of brick made down around Pineland Hospital down there. And he told about taking, when they got their first truck in the 1930s, taking brick down there to Pineland, and did a job that they were furnished, that was furnished from here, but yet there was three little brick works only about two miles down the road, and we came all the way from, from Auburn to come down to Pineland, but he could deliver them with a truck. It's kind of an interesting thing how it's changed, from horses, and horses were gone by the time I was around, but they bought their first tractors in the late 1930s, and to watch how it's gone, you know, we were still, although we were using tractors, it makes everything quite, totally different than the way you do today, things like that.

AL: Yeah, I mean, they used to shovel it off the side of a ledge, right?

**ND:** Well, yeah, what they did is, whether it was horses or tractors, they dragged *(unintelligible word)* over it to break the clay up, scoop it up and then bring it in, in a pile, and then they put it into a pit and soaked it. Probably what you saw shoveling was after the clay had soaked and become very soft, so they got all the hard lumps out of it, which if you molded a brick with a lump in it, as the clay dried, the lump doesn't shrink, everything does around it, so it breaks the brick. That's what you probably saw, shoveling out of that pit into the brick machine.

AL: So, does this area have really good clay? Is there types of clay that are better than others?

**ND:** Yeah, it, it varies, and as far as really good, it's very good for what we do, if we looked at, and it makes some of the most durable brick in the country, structurally strong, the brick are either water struck or extruded, wire cut brick, far exceed all the STM specs. They're very strong, they're very durable, but to manufacture with it, as opposed to using shale and clay mixture, like many plants do further away, and there's

no shale available up this way. It's not easy, it's a very difficult clay to work with. So, yes, it makes a very good end product, it's terrible to work with, as far as, especially when you see what other plants do.

**AL:** Is there anything I haven't asked you, that you feel is important to talk about, in terms of brick makers?

ND: No, I think, it's interesting, I mean I'll run into people quite often that, you know, still remember when they did it when they were young. Back during the, oh, during the '60s, early '70s, there were a lot of people who go to work on government jobs, and we had someone in here every time you turned around, from the Department of Defense, doing background checks. You don't see much of that now, because we don't use as many college kids as we used to, but just out of college and trying. But there was one that worked for us, ten or eleven years ago, one young fellow, and he went away to college, but I've heard from him, I think five different times, I've not heard directly, but I've heard from somebody doing background checks for him, and he's working his way through the pecking order of the government and getting more and more and more secure jobs. He's getting very well up there now. Though if you knew him when he was eighteen years and haven't seen him since, the government, you know, until he's fifty, will always check all the way back, even go back to school teachers sometimes. They'll check your whole history, (unintelligible phrase). And I work with young people a lot, and it's something I try to impress on them, you know, everybody screws up a little bit when they're young, but be very careful, because you never know really where your career is going to take you, and they will do background checks, not on just that young foolish thing I did, I mean, and I have to keep looking, you know, these politicians we have, and not that I'd encourage these kids to go off into politics, but look at these politicians we have and they start doing background, you know, and like him or hate him, George Bush, all they could do is dig up dirt from, you know, when he was in the National Guard, Air National Guard, he didn't do this or that, or he got caught for drunk

driving in Kennebunk once, or Bill Clinton did this or that, you know, '60s, forty years ago. Well okay, yeah he did it, he was young, it was a stupid young indiscretion, but it still got dug up, now if it continues to me, and they did it yesterday, that bothers me, but if it was forty years it's behind them, but you know, I try to impress on young people, but you know, I see a lot of these people still getting checked on, we haven't seen in years.

AL: Well thank you very much for your time, (unintelligible phrase).

ND: Good, I hope it goes well.

End of Interview brick.davis.norm.wpd