

**STUDENT MILL WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

Beatrice Caron
(Interviewer: Marshall Karpel)

SMWOH #029
March 22, 2005

Q: This is an interview with Beatrice Caron for the Mill Workers Oral History Project on March 22nd, 2005, in Lewiston, Maine. I'm Marshall Karpel interviewing. Can you please state your full name, including maiden name, and spell it?

A: Yes, okay, my name is Beatrice C. Caron. You want me to spell it?

Q: Yes, please.

A: Okay, B-E-A-T-R-I-C-E, my middle name is C for Cloutier, my maiden name, C-L-O-U-T-I-E-R, and my married name is Caron, C-A-R-O-N.

Q: Actually, just to get us started here, just a little bit of background stuff. Where were you born and where were you raised?

A: In Lewiston, I was born on Lincoln Street. In them days they used to have like a nanny, or a lady that took, you know, that helped the doctor, so, I was born on Sunday at nine o'clock in the morning.

Q: What were your parents' names, were they from around here?

A: They came from Canada, yeah, so they both did. So they met over here in Lewiston. My father was, you know, like they used to call those all saints, you know,

St. Vital, and that's about a hundred and seventy five miles from here, and then my mom came from River of the (*name*) or whatever you call it, it's a, oh, *voyons*, it's a, it's like a dog, you know, it looks like a dog but it's a, (*aside*) how do you say Rivière du Loup? What's that animal? No, he's asking me where our parents came from.

A: Well, Canada, that's all.

Q: Q'est que c'est la mot en français? What's the word in French?

A: Oh, it's Canadian French, but my, like my dad came from France, and most of them, they did too, you know, like they were, came from boats and stuff like that. And his folks, too, they all, like his dad came about the same place as mine, my mom, and they met here, in Lewiston. So I was born here, I was born here.

Q: What was this place like that far back, the ethnic community?

A: Oh, yeah, well you see, like those people came from Canada, so there was mills and shoe shop and all this stuff, so that's why they came here, to make a little money, when they go back on their farm so, you know, they could buy stock and this and that. So that's why they came here to make money, and most of them left. My mom didn't leave and my dad didn't leave because they met each other, and they got married. And the rest of the family, they all went back. And on my mom's side, there's only two out of twenty one, there was three born here, from my mother, you know? Her maiden name was Caron, too, and her mother's name was Cote. It was all French, right. So they went back. But they left the oldest, most of the oldest one, you know, like on the farm, you know, for the animals and whatever. And they had gardens. Like on my dad's side, they had maple syrup. So, you heard about maple syrup, right? (*unintelligible phrase*), and they're in the (*unintelligible word*), you know, their picture, because they make good syrup and stuff, so they're right there and it's going to stay

there, you know, forever I guess, yeah.

Q: What was the area around here like, like back when you were growing up? Like what were the people like?

A: Well, there was a, it was a lot of French people, Canadian, you know, French people, and there was some that just talk English. So, and it wasn't too bad for me, but my folks, they found it a little harder, you know, because they could hardly speak English. And some of the supervisors, they didn't talk French, you know, so it made it kind of hard. Because that's why they call us the Mainiacs, you know, the team, the hockey team that plays here? Mainiacs, we're Mainiacs, because we were from Canada, most of us, you know, and my folks, I mean, you know, so.

Q: So just jumping right into your time at the mill, you were pointing out some of the pictures here. Obviously we can't get those on the tape, but if you could just sort of go through like what is it that a mill, I see you worked there for forty eight years?

A: Yeah, well they call me, I was sixty three when I retired. And then, you know, I retired, so then I was sixty seven, then they called me back and I worked part time because, you know, I was planning on Social Security, so I worked part time over there. Boy, I did all kinds of stuff. They hired me as inspector-mender, I used to fix bedspread and stuff, or take off the fringe, or if they bleached it, you know, like they were antique, they put it snow white. And then they had colors. The Bleachery at the dye house, well, we'd send them and they had orders for, like J.C. Penney, Sears Roebuck, they had all kinds of these companies that would buy from us, you know.

Q: But what did you do when you started there, like all the way through, right from the beginning?

A: Okay, when I turned sixteen in June, in July I went, you know, my dad brought me over, because I was kind of shy. So anyway, and he says, she'd like to have a job, so they says okay. So they said, well, she'll be on second shift. I says fine. So I liked it, because I was only sixteen and I wasn't going out with boys or anything at the time. But now, (*unintelligible word*), anyway. So I sign up and stuff, and then they put me on second shift in winding and twisting, they call it. And I used to doff, like there were bobbins, you'll see that at the mill, they show different bobbins, and we used to, like me I had like sixty of them, you know, set up, and then I had twelve that would come from up there, and then I used to fix it, you know, machine to start it to go, you know. And then when it was full, I put it on a, they call it a cheese thing, about this square, and I could put about sixty. And again I'd take it off, this guy would come around, take it off and spray it. Because, you know, rayon, it sort of comes down, so it was like a starch so it would hold the thread, so it wouldn't get all untangled. And then they'd bring it to this other department.

Q: I'm still a little confused about what it is you're doing with the threads, can you describe that a little bit more? I don't have an image in my head of what (*unintelligible phrase*).

A: Oh, yeah, okay, it was like a machine, you know, and instead of having the bobbins like this, they had bobbins on the side like that.

Q: What was the machine for, was it weaving?

A: Electricity, yeah, no, it was just to twist the thread on the bobbin, okay? And I had to take care of two sides. There wasn't, you know, well, there should be ten on each side. And it wasn't piece work, you know, I didn't have to rush, you know, I did my job and watch. If it break, then I would have a little, like a gun, something like that, and it would make a knot so it wouldn't, you know, come apart. Because once they

started weaving in the weave room, well, you know, it would, it wouldn't, the weaver, it would stop it, you know, if there's some thread that breaks it stops automatically. But I didn't work in that department, yeah, so the winding room, yeah. So and then they, it went someplace else.

Q: So, I understand that the thread ends up on the spool as, you know, thread.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: But what was it that you were actually, were you sort of like, like if it were yarn, were you spinning it together into thread? Like what was it that turns into the thread?

A: Well, like me, there was like they call it a card room, and there were the people that were doing whatever we needed, you know. Like if it was cotton, different size and everything, you know, they'd say well, the supervisor would take care of it, they'd say, well, I need so much of those to do so many bedspread, or like silk, I mean rayon, it was tablecloth, you know, mostly tablecloths, they had different size, different colors and stuff. And so, you know, after, well it was like in the card room first, okay, and then it would come in the winding room. That's when, you know -

Q: And what does it look like when it gets there, is it cloth, is it (*unintelligible word*)?

A: Yeah, well in the card room, I never work there, but you know, it was cotton, and then it would go like in a round barrel and then it would come up, and then it would twist, then it would make the strings the size that they needed.

Q: And then the strings came to you and you put them on the spools.

A: And then it came, me, it was finished, you know, I mean it was thread, ready, but I had to take one of those spools and put it down, and then I had to, you know, tie it like, you know, and then it would spin. Like there was a little, in another department, I worked there too and somebody bumped me off. There was a union, right? So if the work was going slow and everything, then they bumped, you know, the youngest girl. So I was the youngest girl, so they bumped me, so they put me on something else, you know. But that was thread. That was so fine that we doffed it, you know, like it took a day, like three shifts that would doff it. And there was a little traveler and stuff, you know, and it went up and down like, well, it turned like this so it would tip the bobbin. And some of them, we'd call the cheese or whatever. It depends, you know. Like the card room would make that, but it would be really thick like, you know, oh, it would be like a cotton ball but, you know, straight out. Then it would go, then it would spin. That's why they call it the spinning room. And the winding room is the same thing, you know. And then if they had colors, well they'd put like a chalk for different colors that's going to be dyed, you know, like blue, pink, red, whatever.

Q: Okay, so you started there. And then you mentioned that you got bumped off because of the union. What happened after that?

A: After that? They started, you know, it was slow in that department. I used to work on the third floor, so I had to go up the stairs. And then I was laid off, I was laid off for a good six months, so I went to look for other jobs and then I went to work a few weeks in the shoe shop. In the meantime, I had to report unemployment, you know, so I'd get a little check. In them days, we didn't make that much money. We had about seventy five cents an hour, yeah, so anyways. So I went unemployment, and then they called me back, and then I started in the packing and shipping. So then I worked there all, you know, til I was, I started in that department, well they threw me out

when I was seventeen, because I was underage, because I was working on machineries, so it was against the law, you know.

So that was in 1947, so I had, when I went back in 1949, then I was eighteen, so when I was eighteen then I went back again in July, you know, because my birthday was in June. So then I stayed just a little bit, that (*unintelligible phrase*), the steward, and she could take over whichever job she liked better. So anyway, so then they called me in the packing and shipping, since '49, well, yeah, in 1949 to, I work all the other years in the packing and shipping, yeah.

Q: What sort of things did you do there?

A: Packing and shipping? Well, we used to bundle. In the beginning, you know, when I started working, I was the thirty fourth bundler, so there was quite a few. So anyway, I used to, they had different papers for different styles, you know, different company. J.C. Penney was dark blue, like GSA was brown paper, that's the government. And then the second were green, and then the first quality, it said Bates on it, and then I used to, we had like a lady that would serve us and she'd give us a ticket to put on the, that was after, you know, the cloth room and everything. So a bundler is finished work, you know, ready to ship out. So then we had a table, oh, I think it shows here, yeah, we had like a table, like this here, and then at the end of the table there was a knife sticking out, and we used to cut the thread, it was string, you know.

And then, before that they used to make their own glue, so sometime if you kept a few days it stunk. So anyway, I used to take the ticket and, you know, press a little bit on it and put it on the spread, and then I finish tying my bundle. And we used to, like we used to call it trucks, it was flat trucks with four posts, so we used to stack them, you know. And then this lady, she'd give us an order to say how many she needed for that

order, so we'd put it on the truck. Then she put it on the scale, there was a big scale there on the floor, she'd weigh it, and she knew how much, you know, what she needed for her order, how much it weighed. And then she pushed the truck to the guys, they used to pack them. That's why they call it packing and shipping.

So then it went, you know, the guys would send them in a chute. But eventually, it was all, you know, what do you call it, automatic, you know, like on rolls and stuff, it would go down. We used to be on the, well it was in the cellar, but we were on this, it was the cellar but there was another floor, like the cloth room, and then the shipping room was down on that side, so. And then I used to do, you know, different things for that, bundling. Then it went to plastic. Box work first, you know, like, we used to bundle with the paper, and then box work. And we only had two size, and we had snow white and antique, we had twins and full, double, that's all. And then after a while we had -

Q: These are bedspreads?

A: Yeah, bedspreads. Let's say the Washington, okay? Okay, so we had just two size at the beginning, and then gradually, you know, as the year went on, we had different colors. Well, mostly the Washington it was antique and snow white, they call it antique, it was like a beige. So we used to put them in boxes, and the box was stamped already, twin or full, you know, double. So that's the boxes here. And we used to put a tissue paper inside the box, and then we'd put a certificate, you know, it was guaranteed, and then we put the other ticket on top, you know, it was a guarantee.

Q: You mentioned in the actual area that there were a lot of Quebecois people who had come down, a lot of people from Canada (*unintelligible word*). Were there any conflicts between the different ethnic groups that were there, you know, people that were already here, people that had been moving in, people who were coming in and taking work or people who already had work here, things like that?

A: No, just like me, there, I came from another department, okay? So, they needed a lot of bundlers, you know, to ship the spread and stuff. And so, actually I was upstairs for a few years right at the nineteenth, probably til twenty, so I got some seniority. So these people that, you know, you had to sign for the job because, you know, union, anh? So we had to sign for the job, but I already had signed upstairs where I worked, and since the work, you know, there was hardly any work up there for me, they put me downstairs. And all the group, like I was the thirty fourth girl, but there was like ten, fifteen others, they weren't there that long. So I sort of came in at the same time as them, so I went ahead of them. And so one lady quit. She says, you're not supposed to. I says, hey, that's the rules, right? If you have seniority and stuff.

Q: But not so much inside the mill, but in the actual community, that people were living, like people who were coming down from Canada versus people who were already here, other type, you know, other people that were immigrating. Was there any sort of conflict going on between people?

A: Not that much, you know. Like sometimes the supervisor would give the women a hard time.

Q: Really? Well actually I'm doing this interview for a gender course, so I'm very interested in the relations between the genders in the mills.

A: Yeah, take advantage of the women.

Q: Was that actually something that happened a lot? I've heard that.

A: Well, I know for a fact on one. Yeah, so, that's why she wanted to quit. She was seventeen when she first started at the mill. Well, she was there forty eight

years, too, at the Hill. Yeah, so, we're mill workers. Not my dad, my dad had, you know, he was working in shoe shop and then he work for a lumber company, and then he owned his own store, grocery store, on Sabattus Street. Where the Black (*name*) is?

But it wasn't too bad really, you know. But some of the girls we were working with, you know, well, we sort of mix, you know, when we're talking, half French and half English, you know, and they'd say, talk English, you know, there was Irish people.

Q: Oh, so there were Irish people, Irish immigrants as well?

A: Yeah, yeah, so.

Q: No conflict there as well?

A: No, no, I mean, you know, got along pretty good. I liked the place anyway, you know, and I tried to get along with everybody. You know, I mean it makes it easier on the person, and if you like your job and the people, that's half of the battle, right? Yeah, I got along pretty good, you know, with the people, most of the people. All of them really. Just, one girl once, I tore her off, I says, gee, I says, you should change your attitude. She looked at me, she was shocked. I says, you work at Burger King, and I says, you know, part time, and I says, if you talk like that with the people, I says, gee, I says, you're going to lose your job. My God, she change and everything. When they send me on second shift, I was carrying my son there, she says, Bea, I'll give you a ride home, I go right by your house. That was it.

Q: Actually, I've heard similar things from the other people that I've interviewed, that, I mean when you work next to somebody for that long (*unintelligible phrase*).

A: Yeah, it makes it hard, you know, yeah. Sometimes they want to try to

take advantage of you, you know, I mean, but, (*unintelligible word*) work, you know.

Q: Actually, was there a lot of that going on to get a different job, or to get better working conditions or anything like that?

A: Well, some of them, you know, they, I was, well I was working with this, she was almost blind. So anyway, those two, we were (*unintelligible word*) then, you know, then it was (*unintelligible word*), after my daughter was born. So anyway, we used to, and when I came back, having my son, I used to, you know, it was standing machine, right, and then we had those flat trucks like I was telling you about, and the girls, we'd change every four hours, you know, one would take the spread, the girls in back of us, they used to put the spread in the bag, plastic bag, and then we add the tickets, and then we go like this and it would seal, and the other girl would put it on a truck. Her name was Doris, she says, Bea, there must be a good (*unintelligible word*) coming, she says, they're going fast, she said. I says, no, I don't want it. She says, look, look. It was funny.

Q: Who got what jobs? Were, like I know that there was a lot of gender segregation because of, that sort of thing that the guys would get one type of job and the ladies would get another type of job.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Was there any jobs that were not specific like that, that anybody could do? Or that anybody did end up doing?

A: Well, we didn't really, you know, like the guys would pack and ship and stuff, you know, that's fine with me, you know, it was fine with me. No, but I mean, no, it wasn't too much, you know, because once we had a young man, he was going to Bates

College, and he was colored, right, and he became our supervisor.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah, he was smart, real smart, yeah. He still lives around here, he's married with a white girl, and I think he lives in Portland. But he was a nice guy.

Q: So there weren't any jobs that either men or women could do, it was either you did one job or another?

A: Not that much, no. I guess, you know, like the men, they were paid better, better salary than we did, you know, but we do the hard work.

Q: That's what I heard.

A: Yeah, like, you know, different things.

Q: And the men tended to be the supervisors.

A: Yeah, well, we had a couple of girl supervisors. They were fine, you know. But as soon, let's say if you have a job, let's say like in the weave room, good paying jobs, right? And then they'd ask a woman to be a supervisor. Okay, let's say she's a year working as a supervisor, then she lose all her seniority. And then, if they don't feel they need her, out she goes, she can't say anything. So before the year is done, either she, you know, she go back on her job.

Q: So was that the case every time anybody switched jobs, or just when women became supervisors?

A: Well, no, the men was the same thing, you know, I mean like in the, you

know, that's working, your supervisors, yeah. That was there, you know, thing.

Q: So whenever anybody became a supervisor, if they didn't last -

A: If they had a nice job or everything, you know. So it was a chance they were taking really. Like, it was mostly like at the end there, you know, like in the nineties, you know, when it started to go down and they hardly had any money, this and that and, you know. They were having a hard time to keep it up.

Q: And would you lose seniority if you switched from one job to another but not, not to be a supervisor? Like if you went from a weaving room to a packing room, would you lose seniority?

A: Yeah, like you couldn't go in another department. Let's say like I'd like to stitch. That's a, you know, a stitcher's job, right? Like me, I was a bundler, and because I was older in seniority, like the mill seniority they call it, I couldn't go and go get that girl's job, you know, if I wanted to stitch. No.

Q: So you couldn't, no.

A: No, because it's room seniority, so that was good. They try to do that, one girl, and this lady, the union lady, she was with the other girl. I says, that's not right, I says, that's her job. She's been working five years on that job, inspector-mender, and I says, you mean to tell me if I go and bump her off? That's not right, I says, even though I have mill seniority, I can't bump her, she's been on that job before I did.

Q: So seniority within your job is more important than seniority with the mill?

A: Yes, yeah, because the mill, okay, like I lost my job because they closed

my job at the end there. So I had signed for inspector-mender, I mean on the perch, yeah, it was a perch and we inspect the material and try to fix it, then it go and have it washed or whatever. So that's the girl there, she was there five years. And then when I signed for the job, and when I was laid off, they needed other, some other girls, so they called me because I had mill seniority, even though other people were, you know, so they took me. And so then she wanted me to bump here off. I says, no, I says, that's not right. She's been on that job, I says, all these years, five years. She used to work with me, and I says, that's not right. So we had to go to the union, and I fought for that girl. You know, I mean, hey, fair is fair, you know. I wouldn't have liked that. Well, that lady, the steward, she bumped me off. Well, nothing I could do, because you know, they had to keep the person, you know, a steward, that union.

Q: I don't know what a steward is.

A: It's union, you know, like we had AFL and CIO, okay, at the time. Now it's something else, you know, but anyway. So when she, you know, when she didn't have any work on her job, she could bump me. But anybody else, they couldn't.

Q: But who is a steward, is a steward somebody that works within the union?

A: Yeah, they work for the union, and they get paychecks at the end of the year, okay? The union, you know, like at, *voyons*, Bath Iron Work or those places, you know.

Q: But I understand the union, I just don't know what the title means within the context of the union. So how did that situation turn out, the one where you defended the other girl?

A: Oh, she, I was right, I was right.

Q: That's what ended up, she ended up keeping her job?

A: Yeah, yeah. Boy, she was surprised, you know, because I don't think they asked her to go to that meeting. So, I says, anh-anh, that's not right.

Q: Did that sort of thing ever happen to men as well?

A: Yeah, so I mean, hey. She was so surprised when I told her, you know, she started crying. I says, Sue, that's the right way, I says, hey, even though I'm older in seniority, I says, that's, that wasn't my job, I was a bundler, packing and shipping, box work and whatever, I says, that's not my job, it's yours, you been there five years. And I just started, you know, on that. It was, you know, she had the room seniority.

Q: Did that ever happen to men as well?

A: It could have, could have, yeah.

Q: Were some jobs respected more than other jobs, other than supervisor, of course?

A: Yeah, well, the office. But us -

Q: Really?

A: Oh, oh no, well we, when we had Christmas parties or whatever that, you were never invited with the office people, oh no.

Q: Really?

A: Oh, no, they were big shots, and us were workers, we were workers.

Yeah, but we had good times. You know, like Halloween, people used to dress up as witches and stuff, and we'd go in the office. They laughed. But we didn't stay long, you know, we just, we knew our, you know, like we had ten minutes break or fifteen, twenty minutes break, so we only did it when, you know, it was on our time. You know, I mean, we couldn't go outside, we had to stay in the mill, you know, if we had to go to the bathroom, whatever.

Q: And so you only had ten or fifteen minute breaks?

A: Yeah, like, well a while back, you know, we used to work, we had half an hour, let's say, for lunch, you know, like eleven to eleven thirty, we had half an hour. So we could go out, you know, or whatever, and then go back. Or an hour. Anyway, in half an hour, yeah, and we'd go back. And then they put it eight hours, you know, but they give us ten minutes at nine, and then twenty minutes at eleven, and then at around one o'clock I think we had ten more minutes, so we went to the bathroom or whatever we needed to do. Because they can't make you work eight hours straight, you know. I mean, well some of the jobs, you know, like in the weave room, they have to be there all the time, you know, they have, when all their frame or warps or whatever, they're going good, then they sit and eat, you know, and they keep watching their work and stuff. Because they don't have anybody to replace them.

Because like at one time, we used to have to take our turn. And you know when you're about ten, twelve women that works in one section, right? One would say, sit there and sit there and sit there. Well, you know, it was twelve o'clock and the last people, you know, we were just starting to eat, so they took more than they should have, you know, less for lunch, you know, when we eat. Oh, boy.

Q: Did you find that you spent a lot of time outside of the mills with people that you worked with?

A: Yeah, sometimes, yeah, we used to visit and stuff, or go dancing or whatever, yeah. We'd go in somebody's house, like this lady, she passed away not too long ago, when she bought herself a nice house there, we went, a bunch of girls that was working, you know, bundlers, you know, and so we went at her house and we bought her a gift and stuff. And Christmas time, well, we used to exchange gifts, you know, like five dollars and something like that, and then we'd bring food, you know, one would bring this, one would bring that, we'd write everything down, you know. Some would buy only chips, that's it. They wouldn't make any food, but they were right there, though. Some wouldn't, the guys, some of them they wouldn't bring anything and they were right there, the first one at the table.

Q: Were some jobs more sought after than other jobs? Like was there a general hierarchy of, like if somebody were just to walk into the mill, having worked there for a couple of years, that they sort of, you know, (*unintelligible word*) walk in again, is there a job that they would pick? Like, is there a job that everybody wanted?

A: No, some, you know, like they put the job on the board, you know, and then they'd sign, you know, I'd like to have that job, whatever. So the one that had more seniority, they got it most of the time.

Q: Were there any jobs that, or any rooms or any work stations that people, that were more sought after than others?

A: Well, not that much really. They were kind of, you know, they were pretty fair. Where I, you know, were pretty fair. Just one supervisor gave me heck once. This lady, when I had my other son that I lost, I went back to work and I was box, box work, and she, they had sent me on second shift, you know, to work a while because they didn't have, they wanted to, you know, they always tried to have two shift in our

department, which it never work out. So when I came back from having my child, this lady, and I had to go back on second shift, this lady, she was younger than me, and she was doing my work. So I says, how come, I says, you didn't call me to tell me that I could come on first shift? He says, it's too late for you to talk. I says, okay, sir, I says, you better not do that again. That was a supervisor, so, you know.

Q: Oh, so he didn't tell you that you could come in for first shift?

A: Yeah, for first shift. So I noticed that, I says how come? Florence is working on my job, and I have to work on second shift? She don't like second shift. Well, I says, that's too bad. And he says, it's too late for you to talk. I says, oh boy, I says, you won't catch me doing that any more, buddy. That was the only time. I guess they, you know they, if they see that, you know, you like to work and you do, you know, you try to help them out when they're stuck, they want this rush and this and that. I always try to be there, you know, to help them out. But some, they take advantage of you, like he did that time there.

Q: So did people prefer first shift to second?

A: Oh, definitely, most of them, yeah.

Q: So what times were those?

A: We used to start at seven til three.

Q: That's on the first shift.

A: That's first shift, and then from three to eleven. But when I work on second shift, though, we had half an hour for lunch, you know, so we had lunch around

seven to seven thirty, so we could go out, you know, they had little restaurant around, so we used to go and have a bite to eat (*unintelligible word*). Yeah, they had all kinds of nice restaurant. It wasn't expensive. You'd pay a dollar or two dollars, that's it, a dollar and a half, whatever.

Q: Oh really?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And then eat there for how long?

A: Yeah, we were there, well, and then this restaurant, it was, it's a beauty parlor now, it's right on Ash Street, there's some steps there when you go on Canal Street, there's a beauty parlor but it used to be a little restaurant. And we used to go there for lunch, you know, half an hour, and he knew who liked this and who liked that, and we'd sit in the same booth all the time, and so he'd serve us almost as soon as we got in there, all the food was on the table.

Q: Now, you say you paid like a dollar or two, and then eat, was it like for a month, for a year, for?

A: No, no, we paid that just for our lunch, you know, just one day, yeah.

Q: How did men and women relate in the actual work space? Because I know that you wouldn't have, you wouldn't be working very close to each other, but were, like if you met somebody working there, is that something the supervisors would frown on, encourage, how did that sort of thing work?

A: When I was doing box work there, let's say, I used to put, they used to

have a box, you know, it was solid, and we used to put our work on the box for the guy to pack, you know, they were balers, they call them balers. And they treated us right, you know, and everything, and some of those guys, you know, when they saw a woman was pregnant and stuff, they, you know, they'd try to push your truck for you, or they'd help you and stuff like that. They were really, really nice, you know. That's why I stayed there so long, you know, people would get along, you know, I mean that's half of our battle. Just a few times, like I tell you, that's all I had, you know. And then, that boss there, he passed away not too long ago, and he was nice after that. Mr. Bouvier, *(unintelligible word)*.

Q: And this was at the Bates Mill?

A: Yeah, he was, yeah, he was there quite a few years, too. Then he went in the yard, with the guys, you know, it was just guys there, because they used to lift bales and they used to lift all kinds of heavy stuff, you know, so, yeah, he was supervisor there.

Q: One of the things I've heard about in previous interviews is when electronics came in, and people started working over in electronics. Did you guys have any opinion of that sort of thing when it started?

A: No, or like different automatic stuff you mean?

Q: But also working, like I know that there was a mill near by that began to produce transistors and things like that, and some people went over there and started making what I heard was pretty good money. You know, looking at things under a microscope and connecting transistors and things like that. Did the people that worked in the Bates Mill at that time have any sort of opinion about people working in factories that produced electronics, when that started?

A: Well, there was, you had like electrician or whatever, yeah, they, like the, yeah, they had different, you know, what they call that, like, it was like electrician and the pipers and, you know, all this stuff there, they were a certain, yeah, a certain place for them. And then when we had breakdowns or, like on the automatic sealer, they had wires like this and that would heat up, you know. Then we'd have to ask the guy that was in charge of different women, you know, that used to work on those machines, they changed the wires and stuff like that, you know. If you talk decent to somebody, it's half of the battle, you know? It's half the battle. I used to get along with pretty much everybody. They were nice, you know, the people.

Q: I guess I wasn't very clear. When, there were some factories that began to produce electronic products. Did people in the Bates Mill have any opinion on that sort of thing when it started? Did they look down on it, did they envy it, that sort of thing?

A: I don't -

Q: Didn't really, even not hear about it very much? What made you contact the museum in the first place to have your story told? I mean, I've asked you sort of a list of questions that I wanted to get through, but I'm curious what it is that you want to actually tell or show, in addition to that poster that you made.

A: Yeah, well, I worked there for a long time and I took pictures and stuff like that, so I don't know who, it was Rachel, the one's in charge of that, that called me up and asked me if it would be all right to have somebody come over and talk with me about the mill and stuff, you know, so that's how come, through her. Because there's a lady I think that she'd be real nice to talk to and everything, and she work at the mill quite a few years, and she's a, she used to be the steward in our department. And she

talked on TV once, you know, when it was going down, and she said about the young people, it's too bad, you know, losing their job and stuff like that. Yeah, and then Terry, she just passed away there three weeks ago, she was nice, she could explain things better probably. But that lady there, (*aside - Gerry, what's the name of that lady there, Blais, there?*) Lucille, oh, Lucille Blais, Lucille, she was good. She was right, you know, in the union, and she knows everything that was going on. They called her back, too, when I went back at seventy, I mean sixty seven years old, she went back to work, too. She was a stitcher. She was good, really good.

Q: Well that's, like I said, pretty much my list of questions, but do you have any favorite memories, funny stories, anything that when you think back on it you remember very fondly?

A: Yeah well, like when we celebrated the 25th, you know, my 25th at the mill, this lady, she had fifty years in the mill. So she got sick a couple of weeks before that, so, and I went to pick her up at home. I call her up and I says, I'll give you a ride, I says, you can come to the banq-, you know, they had a banquet, you know, it was at, where they have that card shop now. Anyway, so I brought her over. Oh, she was so pleased. And she wanted to go back to the mill so badly, and she had a stroke, you know, and then she came better, and then she was, she must have been close to seventy I guess, and she was a nice lady. Boy, she used to be a ticket supervisor. She never, never made a mistake. And some people, they didn't dare go ask -

End of Side A

Side B

A: . . . and I had, once I had, I needed a ticket, I think she (*unintelligible phrase*). So I went to ask her. She says, okay, Bea, it's all right, she said. That was the first time, you know. She was a nice lady, yeah. She used to (*break in taping*) . . . and

anyway, she used to go there every night after work, he'd wait for her. And she had a, you know, those mugs of beer, she used to drink it with a straw. And when we had our Christmas party, we used to go there, at Stekino's. And she always, well she had fine hair, she used to make herself two little braids and it would go up like this, on her head like this. I guess she liked me because I went to see her, she was at Montello Manor, and oh, I felt so bad for her. She was a nice lady. But she just didn't want to speak, she was stubborn, you know, she, after she had that stroke there, she just didn't want to speak. Oh, it was so sad. And then she had showed me, you know, she had a tumor (*unintelligible phrase*). It was big, almost like a grapefruit, and she made me touch her belly. I says, oh no, I said. And she was years and years and years she had that. Then finally she had, she was operated on. And that's after she had her stroke, it had to come out because it was strangling, it was strangling her inside, you know. Oh, my god. She live about a couple of years after that. She was a nice lady, we had fun with her. She was funny.

Q: Well, is there anything else that you want to mention before we bring this to a close, anything that sort of came to mind over the course of our conversation or anything like that?

A: No, I think it's fine, it's fine.

End of Interview

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