

Copy of HahnSherriStullLouisa\_20190430

BRIAN ALNUTT: So now it's doing it. So I'm just going to start asking questions. You can just ramble on if you want. So what's your name again?

SHERRI HAHN: Sherri Hahn.

BA: Sherri Hahn. I'll lean this so we can all hear you. They can hear me too.

SH: Yeah, it's April 30th --

BA: April 30th of 2019, and we're doing a discussion of my Lehigh Valley Apparel Oral History Project. This is the first of many interviews, and this is the pioneer interview, and we're going to be covering some aspects of what was a major industry here, the apparel manufacturing industry, which was just dominant in the Lehigh Valley up until not that long ago. So where were you born?

SH: Excuse me?

BA: What town were you born in?

SH: I was actually born in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, which, it had some apparel. Bobby Brooks. Cobbler, shoe factory was in the area. Different ones.

BA: Pennsylvania had a lot of apparel across the state. It wasn't just here. Wilkes-Barre, [00:01:00] Scranton -- I mean, even Philly. Huge amounts of clothing manufacturer.

SH: There still is, pretty much, in Philly.

BA: In Philly still. They still do some in Philadelphia. So you grew up in Lock Haven. Of course, we're not there today. When did you move to the Lehigh Valley area?

SH: I moved here in 1971.

BA: '71, okay. What brought you here?

SH: My husband. (laughs)

BA: Okay. That's part of being married.

SH: He's from the area.

BA: How did you like the area compared to --

SH: Oh, I like the area. I mean, I like home. It's country. It's mountains. But here, there's two hours to New York, an hour to Philly --

MASIKA: Yeah, that's nice.

SH: An hour to the shore, hour and a half, you know?

BA: I'm with you on that. Right there. I like this area a lot. I'm from South Jersey, by the way. I personally grew up in Mount Laurel which is, it's a suburb of Philly now. And it's about an hour to the shore. So it's a little longer to get to the seashore, [00:02:00] but I love this area, and the people here I find to be very friendly. The term I'd use for this area is it's a common-sense area. It just seems like that. It just seems like a nice place to live and it's got everything that I like. So it's nice.

So you moved here in '71. Where'd you go to school?

What's your highest level of schooling that you had?

SH: I have a four-year degree in college.

BA: Really? Four-year college degree? Okay. What school, by the way?

SH: Lock Haven.

BA: Lock Haven. Right in town. Right in town there. I have a friend whose son just graduated from there two years ago and he liked it a lot. He liked it quite a bit. It's a little town -- a very little town.

SH: Very little.

BA: But he liked the atmosphere there.

SH: Yeah. It's a county seat, but maybe population of eight to ten thousand. I don't know.

BA: Yeah. It's small. It's little. And I know some of the students today, these days, drive over to Penn State which is a couple hours away [00:03:00] is it?

SH: No, it's a half hour.

BA: They drive to Penn State for stuff.

MASIKA: And they've got the subsidiary Penn States --

BA: Yeah, exactly right. Okay. So you graduated from Lock Haven, and I was going to ask -- this is a job related question. So what was your first job? Do you recall what age you were? Or first, like, job you had ever? Even high

school, part-time job.

SH: Oh, first job, I clerked in a store. And then when I graduated, I needed money -- when I graduated high school, I needed money for college. College back then was very affordable. You could work the summer and pay. And so I worked at a place called the Clinton Paper Company. And they made tablets and things like that. Notebook paper.

BA: Stationery, things like that, paper, stationery type company?

SH: Yeah.

BA: So they weren't actually manufacturing reels of huge paper, but they were like making stationery --

SH: No, that was the paper mill.

BA: Paper mill, yeah.

SH: Hammermill.

BA: Hammermill, that was out there? [00:04:00] I wasn't familiar with that.

SH: Yes.

BA: Because you see those in New England, at least you used to, all over the place, giant --

SH: In fact, I think it's still running.

BA: It's still going? Wow. That's nice, because New England mills have been mostly closing recently, but that's a big industry. So you worked in stationery manufacturing?

Okay. That was in high school, more or less, or college?

SH: Yeah, it was right after I graduated from high school, and I worked there a couple summers. Just summer work.

BA: That's a good summer job.

SH: Yeah, they paid well.

BA: That's a great summer job. Indoor work, you know, clerking, decent level of pay. I'll tell you, the worst summer job I ever had, I think, was loading Pepsi trucks, personally. And that was hot work and these are tractor trailers. Chunking them in. This is Carmen, another student of mine.

SH: Hi, Carmen.

BA: Carmen, how are you? Hi there. Introduce yourself again.

SH: Sherri.

CARMEN TAPIA: My name is Carmen.

BA: This is Carmen. Have a seat. We're in the middle of doing the interviews, and my student, Carmen Tapia just entered. [00:05:00] So now we have two. I was just saying that I personally had a summer job loading Pepsi tractor trailers. And that was loading case-by-case manually. In other words, bunk-bunk-bunk.

MASIKA: Yeah, that sounds awful.

BA: And that was, each tractor trailer took about two hours to do. And we -- on a bad day, we did four of them. And oh

my gosh, and the head. And yeah. That's a bad summer job. It paid well, though.

SH: Well, back then, a lot of factories didn't have air conditioning. It was hot.

BA: You work in the heat and it was something. But that's a good summer job. That, clerking in a store for high pay, is good. What did you hope to do when you grew up? What was your career plan? Because you obviously went to college.

SH: Yeah, I went for physical education.

BA: Oh, okay, good.

SH: I didn't teach in physical education. I got married, had a family. And from there, it was -- I needed a job where I could go to work [00:06:00] and the kids were okay in school, and I would get out, so we worked 7:00 to 2:30 -- school hours. And if I wanted to take the summer off, I could. They didn't have a problem with that.

MASIKA: So it was very good for someone who was married with children.

BA: Right. That's interesting. And that's a sensible choice. That's a very sensible choice. I was actually going to ask how work fit with family life.

SH: And that's why a lot of women did it. They didn't have to pay for a babysitter. They had income. The companies

around here were very easy to work with because if you had a problem with a child sick or something, just call them and tell them.

BA: Well, that is something. That's why this is so nice, because that's nice for just the workforce in general, that kind of -- many companies are nothing like that, especially today as you probably know. [00:07:00] Nothing, yeah.

SH: And there were those certain companies that were nasty and if you didn't come into work you got fired. Hey, they didn't care about your kids. But on a majority, most of them were very -- because they knew the pool they had for employment.

MASIKA: And you can get a very large pool of employment -- some pretty dedicated workers that way.

BA: So what was the first apparel company you worked for? Do you remember the name?

SH: Oh my gosh. During -- when I was going to school, I worked for Sandra Joe's in Bath. For a summer.

BA: Okay. I'm going to take a second. This might be your friend. Hello, Brian here. Okay, great. I will come out to the lobby and get you. Yes. By the way, for my historians listening to this, we have another interviewee coming in, so I'm going to stop this for a second [00:08:00] and go out and get her. I hope I don't erase

everything. I'm just going to leave this run. I don't want to screw this up. If I erase what we've done, that would be terrible. I'm going to run out and get her right now. You can just keep talking.

SH: So are you guys local?

MASIKA: I am. (inaudible) the area for a long area. You're not?

CT: No, I'm not. I'm from Dominican Republic. I have been living in this country just three years.

SH: Oh yeah? Do you like it?

CT: So far it's good.

MASIKA: I'm from Easton, and so coming here because it's close and it's a lot cheaper than going to a four-year.

SH: I worked in Easton for -- at the bathing suit factory.

MASIKA: Oh, no.

SH: ANH. Right at the bridge.

MASIKA: Okay, nice. I'm technically right on the other side of the college. [00:09:00] And, yeah, Mom works downtown. But yeah, it's nice. I'm hoping to -- when I transfer, this semester, I'm hoping to get into Lafayette because then I don't have to go anywhere.

SH: Yeah, that's very convenient.

MASIKA: It's very convenient. It's a five-minute walk from my house. It would be -- I wouldn't have to live on campus.



SH: Oh, you live up on the hill?

MASIKA: I live right on the other side of the hill. Right by the Giant. I just walk up there.

SH: Yeah. Margaret Peters lives up there too. She's one of our retirees. She lives up in College Hill.

MASIKA: That's cool.

SH: I'll tell you, when I worked downtown at the bathing suit thing, we used to go up, when the kids would leave, unbelievable, the stuff they would throw out. Microwaves. And I was a supervisor [00:10:00] where I worked, so I had a lot of girls that were from Columbia. Costa Rica. Puerto Rico. They came here with nothing. But they had that urge to work, and they always needed help. So I would go up there --

CT: What about the language?

SH: Huh?

CT: The language?

SH: Oh, the language?

CT: Yeah, for them.

SH: They went to school, and they -- no, most of them spoke English. The only problems we ever had were with the Indians. They didn't want to learn English. But the Hispanics all were very -- they went to night school, some of them. They got their citizenship -- we used to have big

parties.

MASIKA: Oh, like, hey, you're a citizen now -- that's fantastic.

SH: Yeah. When they became a citizen, [00:11:00] we'd have a big party. Red white and blue cake, and you know, "Welcome to the community." It was a big deal for them, you know? But anyway, I'd go up there and I'd be their packrat, and I would pick up chairs for them. Dishes, if they needed it, and put it back, put it in the lobby of our building, and I'd say, "Whoever wants it, take it." By the end of the night it was gone.

MASIKA: I mean, even now when they have the moving out days, you'll just have like mattresses left on the side. It's like, okay, I get that you guys have money, but that's still -- that could be so useful for someone. We even have places now where you can call and they'll come pick it up and take it to the Goodwill or something.

SH: We do a lot for House of Valor, which is our retirement group, and our local American Legion. House of Valor houses probably 11 to 13 homeless vets. [00:12:00] I think at the last count I think there were 11 men and two women. So we collected a lot of clothing and food, stuff for them. And that stuff can be used and I'm sure they could use beds and other stuff too. But these kids have money, their

parents give them everything. And it's right there. Hi, I'm glad you made it.

BA: You can sit anywhere you like, yeah. You can sit right here and I'll move myself. (crosstalk) That's good. We're recording on these little microphone devices. I'm Brian Alnutt, and these are my two students, [Masika?] and Carmen. They're helping me with this. And this is the Lehigh Valley Oral History Apparel Workers' Project, just so we can all here. And we're going to proceed with just some questions, and we began talking. I'm so glad you could come over and be part of this.

MASIKA: We were talking a little bit about the A&H factory and getting [00:13:00] stuff from College Hill.

CT: And some international workers.

BA: You can look at this. This is a form -- this is all from a college group, Lehigh Valley College, that's who this is. And this is a local project just doing oral history recordings. And it's going to be here in our library and on their website too. That's all. But basically, if you wouldn't mind, this is -- you can look this over and you should sign it if you can, and we can proceed. But we were just going in and asking some things. Like I said, I have questions, but I want it to be a free conversation too. So we don't have to stick to my list of stuff. How long have

you known each other, by the way?

LOUISA STULL: Forever.

SH: No, not quite forever, but probably --

LS: She was my floor lady.

BA: Is that right?

LS: She was my boss.

BA: Oh, okay.

SH: For like 22 years. A long time.

BA: That's interesting, okay, yeah. [00:14:00] Okay.

LS: A long time.

BA: Hey, that's a long time to be at the one place, ANH.

LS: Well, I've been there before you.

SH: Oh, yeah.

BA: Is that right? We were just saying, my wife is from Northampton. I live up in New Tripoli. She's from Northampton. That's where she grew up. And there was a real big company there called Cross Country. We were just talking about that. That was a big operation. Right at the -- well, you guys don't know Northampton too well. Beside the bridge, and it's on Main Street in town. Thank you. And that's a big place, but that's shut down, a while ago. Anyway, I was asking her, I'll ask you too. Were you born here, because she's from Lock Haven?

LS: Yes. I was born in Easton, Pennsylvania. I grew up in

Philipsburg.

BA: Right, so which team did you root for?

LS: (inaudible) I don't root for anybody now. I could care less. My husband's an Easton die-hard.

BA: That's the game of the century right there.

SH: Kate still [00:15:00] bets on Easton.

BA: Who wins keeps switching back and forth. I don't know if there's any dominant team there.

SH: I think Easton's pretty dominant.

BA: Recently? Okay. They weren't always.

SH: They're like 105 years, 110 years, something like that.

LS: Well, when Brett -- my grandson -- played football, he was there at the 100-year.

SH: So was DJ and Matt.

BA: Wow, that's a long, long game. So you're from Easton, and I was going to ask, did you go to school in Easton --

LS: No, I went to Philipsburg.

BA: P-burg High School. The rival of Easton. And then what was your first job? We're just beginning here, so your first job --

LS: I worked at [Gary Lee's?] blouse factory.

BA: Is that right? Where was that?

LS: Philipsburg and (inaudible), New Jersey.

BA: Okay. What age were you about that time?

LS: Sixteen. I lied about my age so I could get working papers.

BA: Sixteen -- was that in summers between high school, or --

LS: I didn't graduate.

BA: Didn't graduate. So you started working [00:16:00] like, before -- just left high school and went right there. What was your first impression of the work there? That kind of work is so different from school.

LS: Oh, it scared me to death because I never sewed in my life. And the boss I had was very good in teaching it. That's critical.

BA: So you learned on the job, basically.

LS: Yes.

BA: A lot of companies don't want to train anyone anymore.

LS: We suggested that at ANH and they didn't want to hear it.

SH: And cross-training. How many I wanted to cross-train and they were against it.

BA: Is that right? They didn't want to you do that.

LS: At Gary Lee's when I started, he taught me a lot. And when he knew it was going out of business, I just never knew how to tack. And he made me sit and learn that before I left.

BA: Is that right? Before you even left -- so he did that sort of career favor. That's neat. What were they making over there? Blouses, you said, mostly? Was that all they made,

or -- I was going to ask both of you. [00:17:00] When a company had a line of clothing they were putting out, was it a contract that would last for a long time or would they change with contracts, different kinds of things?

SH: Oh, the companies I worked for, they had contracts for a long time.

LS: Yeah, I was going to say that.

SH: (crosstalk)

LS: I don't even remember who we did --

SH: And like ANH, we had Lands Ends.

LS: [Jaylo?].

SH: [Jaylo?]. And they were long-term contracts.

BA: Okay, so predictable, the flow. I'll ask you, you had mentioned that work in many of these companies was family-friendly. Like, ladies could, if they had a problem at home with family, they could take time off --

LS: Oh, yes. ANH was the best for that.

SH: And marriage. Yeah. They were.

BA: Not every company was like that?

LS: (inaudible) wasn't too bad. (crosstalk)

SH: Some of them were really nasty.

LS: I worked at (inaudible) factory too and that wasn't as friendly. They owned Majestics right now.

BA: Okay. So they now [00:18:00] ownership there. So you can

see that changing styles might come with a merge and everything else. Did you tend to have long-term managers like when you were there? Like a boss who would be there (crosstalk). So it wasn't a turnover of --

SH: Oh, no.

BA: -- a new boss every couple months or something?

SH: A lot of them were very family-oriented.

LS: That's what I was just going to say.

BA: So in other words, maybe family would actually be right there. So you'd get to know the owners, more or less.

LS: Right.

SH: Oh my gosh, they were like family at times.

LS: Even Gary Lee's -- my boss wasn't part of the family, but his son-in-law and all them, they ran the alpha plants.

SH: And then the thing of it is, back in the day, there were so many factories.

LS: Leave one, go to the other.

SH: You get ticked with your boss -- out of there, go next door, get a job in five minutes. (crosstalk)

LS: (crosstalk) I walked out of [00:19:00] Gary Lee's and went to Lisa Marie's and hated it and went right back to Gary Lee's, they never knew I left.

BA: That's like so different than any work left today.

SH: Oh my God, yeah. You can't even do that now.



BA: You sure can't, because typically, there's one big company usually that's in an area that's just dominant.

LS: Well, I'll tell you how it changed. I went out to where -- they moved to Nazareth now. And usually you could walk in, sign your name or whatever, but I waited to lunchtime. And they were working through lunch so you weren't allowed in that door, and that was never -- you could always go in, sign in or whatever. And then I saw my old boss come out. He went in for me and got what I needed. They could go in at lunchtime if they weren't working, but other than that.

MASIKA: Why were they working through lunch?

LS: Because it was Easter. Get out early.

BA: Okay, it's just because of the holiday. It wasn't like a cram job.

LS: We were let go -- you could walk in any time.

BA: [00:20:00] Oh, okay. That brings up something I was going to ask later, but just because it came to me. Was there a lot of sudden overtime? They would just suddenly have a project that you have to be overtime, or was it more --

SH: Yeah. Can you stay for an hour or two, let's get this lot out, it's due tomorrow. If we don't get it to the shippers, it's like --

BA: A lot of businesses are like that. But was there ever a time that was like drastic overtime? Like, we'll be here

until -- I mean, they have different shifts, I guess,  
right?

LS: Well, we didn't have different shifts. Not where I worked  
it.

BA: It was all just one shift.

SH: At Mary's we had, at one point, we would come in and work  
our hours were 7:00 to 3:00. We'd go home for dinner, come  
back.

LS: Well we did that at --

SH: Come back at 6:00 and work until 9:00. They had  
unbelievable -- they had work piled to the ceilings. And  
it was constant. And then they had a night shift -- kids  
come in too, and helped.

BA: [00:21:00] Oh, okay. Now kids -- these are high school  
kids?

SH: High school kids.

BA: High school kids coming in. Just after school --

LS: We had that at ANH too.

SH: I wasn't there when they did it.

LS: They brought a lot of repairers in from overseas or  
whatever, and we used to go in to repair.

SH: We used to do that during Christmas.

BA: Repairs, okay. These are things that were like  
manufactured wrong the first time?

SH: Right.

BA: So it isn't used clothing coming back, it's something that just wasn't made right the first time?

SH: Right. It was cheaper for us to fix it in-house than to ship it back and have them fix it and bring it back. We had a lot of Giant baseball caps made in China. They ask us to fix it for them because they didn't want to send it back. A whole tractor trailer load of Giant baseball caps --

LS: Not at ANH?

SH: No. At Mary Fashions. They forgot to cross the T.  
(laughter) [00:22:00] So we had a tacker spend hours just tacking a T.

LS: And they still send repairs back to ANH.

CT: Did you get extra pay for that?

SH: Yeah. There was overtime.

LS: Time and a half.

BA: I was going to ask, and this is just various questions -- were most of the places -- obviously a union was present in most of these places. Were all of them unionized, or were there a couple exceptions?

SH: No, there were some that weren't. I never worked for a non-union shop.

LS: Oh, I worked for union all the time.

SH: Yeah, me too.

BA: Mostly ILGW --

SH: Yeah, because we worked -- our workweek was 35 hours. Anything over that was overtime. Saturday was overtime regardless.

LS: And some place, like, when I worked at [Jaylo?], they switched that -- if you didn't have a full week, you worked Saturday, they got straight time. The union never stepped in on that.

SH: Well, Mary Fashions, they [00:23:00] paid overtime. You could miss all week, come in Saturday, and get paid overtime.

BA: That's pretty generous.

SH: But then they stopped that because we had girls taking off Monday and they'd work Saturday to make up their day. So they stopped it eventually because they caught on.

BA: Did you feel like the union reps -- this is a tough question because there's so many different companies, so every company has its own union steward and everything else, but they're mostly pretty responsive to issues that came up, the union reps mostly?

LS: She might say yes. I would say no.

SH: I would say it depended on the rep, because we had good ones and we had other ones that were not.

LS: That's true.

BA: That's a great question. So everyone's got different experiences.

SH: The thing of it is, years ago, mostly all the companies were under one contract. It wasn't up until maybe 10 years ago, 15 [00:24:00] years ago, we went independent, because there were so few they negotiated each contract separately. But years ago --

BA: It was a blanket contract?

SH: Right, a blanket contract through -- the companies all belonged to what they called Atlantic Apparel.

BA: Right, a big association. And they negotiated the contract with the ILGW and then it applied to all the --

SH: Yeah, and it applied to everybody.

MASIKA: And then you don't have to worry about the other company getting a better deal.

SH: No.

BA: Right, because blanket --

MASIKA: That also probably made it a lot easier for you guys to switch jobs between --

SH: Oh, yeah. You kept your -- there was no break in it.

BA: You kept your union membership and everything. Membership was there, so you could walk right in and do something else.

SH: It was great, and the fact that you got all your paid holidays plus three weeks' vacation right off the bat.

BA: Right off the bat, see that's such a different [00:25:00] work world than we have today. So many folks today -- they have no vacation. Just no vacation. Or if there is, it's a week after a full year.

SH: I think towards the end we got a -- was it a floating week -- we did at Mary's.

LS: I never got a floating week.

SH: We did.

BA: So could put it and take it whenever --

LS: (inaudible)

SH: That's how that worked. You could do that. You just tell them you're going to go on vacation that week.

LS: Oh, when I started at ANH, Walt Jr., he used to say, "Hey, it's family-oriented. Just take your vacation. We don't care about that." Now it's changed. They can't do that.

BA: That is something. I'm thinking about -- do either of you have -- maybe you had relatives or know someone or maybe friends who had people working at the steel company --

SH: My husband.

BA: Oh, he was a steel -- because [00:26:00] you can contrast. You have all these shops -- and frankly, the number of workers is about the same. You know, we think about the

steels being bigger because it was one huge place, but when you compare the number of workers in the clothing business, it's not that different. It was different with him because it's one employer, though, right? You've got scattered employers, you can go from one to the other. With him it's just one place.

SH: It's one place.

BA: Okay, yeah. How did you feel that the steel -- from what you know, he's one worker -- how was their treatment of their workers different than the workers in the apparel industry? Was it more rigid or more, you know, less flexible?

SH: It was more structured.

LS: They got 15 weeks after they (audio glitch).

SH: But they stopped that before my husband got in, I think. They used to get 13 weeks' vacation. My father-in-law got it twice.

BA: Thirteen weeks of vacation. Now the price they paid for that, a lot of those guys. It's hard, [00:27:00] hot work. Now I don't want to downplay the work of -- I'm going to get to the safety issues in the clothing business, but that's hard work. Dangerous.

SH: Oh, yeah. But the thing of it is too, that's why the steel isn't anymore.

BA: Right, yeah. Too generous, yeah. I mean, just to go off a little tangent -- you guys can listen to this, historians, yeah. Steel was a more rigid place to work until the 40s when the USW came in, and from that time on, they kept adding more benefits and vacation weeks, et cetera, and then unfortunately, I think they got a little too expensive. That's what happened. But I knew people personally who worked there too, and I moved to the Lehigh Valley in the 70s to go to college here, and that's when I began meeting people and hearing about the industries here. And clothing was going (audio glitch) [00:27:46] - [00:27:56] every male seem to work for the steel company. (audio glitch) [00:27:59] - [00:28:20] Tangentially, ladies, I'll tell you that you don't know about the big skyscraper in (inaudible) called the Martin Tower. It's a big black skyscraper. That was their old headquarters. It's been empty. It's going to be demolished in a couple weeks, which is a real striking thing, because that's been a landmark for a while. But a lot of managers in there.

MASIKA: I remember I was reading a book about the steel company, and they were talking about how Martin Tower was designed to have four times the number of corner offices.

BA: Right, for all those vice presidents. A little excessive. I was going to ask, getting back on my subject, was the pay



rate typically [00:29:00] hourly or was it more by piece rate? Or did it vary with the place?

LS: Mostly piece rate where I worked. For the machine operator.

SH: Yeah. I would say 80 percent was piece rate, and the other --

LS: -- blouses and table work, my sister, she used to turn collars. That was all piece-oriented.

BA: That brings up something else. I'm going to get back to pay in a second, but do you recall people there being able to get jobs because their relatives worked there, or being invited to work because they have a sister or someone, a mom working there?

LS: You could get in that way.

SH: But it wasn't hard to get in anywhere.

LS: No, not really.

SH: It wasn't a problem getting a job.

BA: Just look up and say, "Hello, I'd like to work." So you could get -- but you didn't have to get --

SH: No, you didn't have to fill out applications either.

BA: Just walk in.

SH: I never filled out applications. They tried you out. If you didn't work, they got rid of you. But. Yeah. They'd [00:30:00] say, "What do you want to do?" Were you a table

worker, operator, whatever. They'd put you at that position for just a test. If you worked out, fine.

LS: If you didn't cut blouses right in half. (laughs) When they first started selling, they used to take the threads out and keep the knives there, and we used to trim the bottom of the blouses before they hemmed them, and I zoomed through. I cut a couple of them. (laughs)

BA: Well, you're new on the job. What do they expect? You're 16 and new on the job. That comes with the territory.

SH: A lot of girls started 16, right out of high school or during high school.

BA: I'll just add that I kind of know that because my wife had a lot of her high school friends that went to (inaudible) clothing factories right out of high school, like almost the next day. Right off the bat. And they could get a job. And it was, you know, a decent, steady job, like right away. Like right out of high school.

MASIKA: That sounds really nice.

CT: [00:31:00] You mentioned the international workers. Do you have, like, the same process with them? They just come and ask for a job and they will get accepted? You mentioned Indians.

SH: Well, now, as the years passed, it's changed, because they had to have their paperwork, and now they drug test. And,

oh, yeah, ANH drug tests. But years -- I'm talking years ago.

LS: They didn't do any of that.

BA: Just walk in.

SH: I mean, we had a lot of Italians who worked, who had the factories, the fashion, (inaudible). They had one. But anyway, as the years progressed, they had to have their paperwork. In fact, at ANH, we had an illegal immigrant working for us for three years. A male. For three years, he was a woman.

LS: I forgot about that. (laughs)

SH: [00:32:00] The feds walked into our business, came up to our boss, said, "You have a Dennis --" whatever his last name was, "working here." "No, we do not have. We only have three males." He listed them all. He said, "No, you have a Dennis working here." And he said he might go by the name Denise. Well, that rang a bell right away. We only have one Denise. He took him upstairs. And we were outside and I said to Kate, "Look at that, two guys frisking a woman." I said, "That isn't right, there's got to be a woman." And we found out the next day it was a guy.

BA: So he was masquerading the whole time?

SH: For three years he worked for us. That means he stole

identity, he stole --

MASIKA: So he was like American or he was like --

SH: No, he was from Columbia, I think.

BA: Columbia, and just came in [00:33:00] and impersonated --

SH: Well, he had the paperwork.

MASIKA: Oh, he had the paperwork.

SH: He stole somebody's identity.

BA: That is, I think --

SH: How he got through, I don't know, because they have to have their paperwork. Their green card or whatever.

BA: That is something. Oh my gosh. That brings up another question -- I'm being reminded of things I wanted to ask. So what about men in the factories? How many would you say there were? I know my figures, I know it's mostly females. But were there men right there on the working floor?

LS: There were some that did button machines and buttonholes.

BA: So some men.

SH: The percentage was probably less than five percent, but like you said, they did buttonholing. They did button sewing. They did pressing. Pressers and cutters.

LS: A lot of cutters were men.

SH: Spreaders were male.

BA: So it's specialized?

SH: Well, yeah --

BA: Mostly. They typically wouldn't [00:34:00] have them working in the same exact functions that the ladies were doing?

SH: Some of them did. Like I said, some of them were button sewers and some of them were (inaudible) workers.

LS: When I worked at Josette's they cut right there where we were sewing.

SH: A lot of your spreaders and cutters were male.

BA: And did they have -- I don't know if you know, was their pay rate the same or more different? I mean, obviously they're being paid by the piece too, I guess.

LS: She would know more than I would.

SH: Some of them were piece, right.

BA: Do you think their pay generally was on par with the female workers, or do you think there might have been a bias to more because they're men, or it wasn't that --

SH: They were piece rate. Yeah, your button sewers --

LS: Yeah, they all worked the same.

SH: We had a spreader, he still lives in Bath. I see him every once in a while. But he used to come to work barefoot, which you could never do now, and he was a spreader. And he actually -- the room was probably [00:35:00] twice as long as this, maybe three times. And he'd run, with a reel, down, and run back.

BA: Keeping himself in shape while he does --

SH: I mean, he literally ran.

MASIKA: Had to get it past as fast as you can?

SH: He would make his buck.

BA: Do you think there was -- because it's piece rate, was there a sense of pressure to get things done fast, either from them or maybe from yourself to make more money? Was there like a lot of pressure?

SH: I think it depended on the situation. I think we had a very relaxed area.

LS: I was relaxed at my job. I loved my job.

SH: We have a very relaxed groups.

LS: I used to set elastic on the suits, and that was a nice job.

SH: And we had a relaxed area.

LS: Oh, yeah, we did.

BA: So it's piece rate, but you're not feeling rushed or tense --

SH: I think Candy's section might have been a little tense.

LS: But you know, I just started working with her, and I don't think she's as bad as people made her out to be.

SH: Oh, I don't think so either. But --

LS: We had our side and their side, and it was like, [00:36:00] "Ooh, I don't want to work for her, she's too fussy." But

she wasn't.

BA: Everyone's got different managers with different styles, things they prioritize.

SH: You get more with sugar and niceness than you do with being nasty, to me.

BA: I have a question about gender and males and stuff. As you get up the management level, was there a feeling that more of the senior managers were men, or was it pretty much mixed management?

SH: (crosstalk)

BA: Okay. So there was that dynamic. So the highest level were men. Then you get down to more (inaudible) and that's women, mostly. Okay. So there's that. How did most of the ladies feel about that? Was there a sense of --

SH: I think you'd go in the environment and it's accepted there.

BA: Just there in the background. So no sense of feeling revolt, like, why can't --

SH: No.

BA: -- we have women at the top? [00:37:00] No, just pretty much how it just worked out?

SH: I think if you would start this industry in this time and age, there might be a problem.

LS: It might be different.

SH: Not when you go into it for years.

BA: Well it's also a time -- the prevailing society was much more like that. It's just that, almost you absorb that with the air you breathe. That's just how things kind of are. So the men -- and these were oftentimes, depending on the place, family men, family ownership. So these were oftentimes people -- would you see them very often? I mean the senior managers? Were they -- the men who were actually the head honchos? Visible, not remote figures, but they'd be right there?

LS: They would come in off and on at different times.

SH: Sonny would -- at least once a week.

LS: Oh, Sonny was fabulous. Being there at ANH was the best.

SH: My boss, I could go into the office. He owned the place. I said, "I need somebody to run the lockstitch machine." He'd come out, he'd sit down and he'd work it an hour or so. He could run [00:38:00] every machine. Or I'd need somebody to set this up and the mechanics can't get it done. He'd come out. And he was hands-on.

BA: Very hands on. So he knew his processes.

LS: (crosstalk) the boss who knew how to sew.

MASIKA: Okay, so it wasn't a setup where, oh, we're here to -- maybe you guys make money but we have no idea how you work.

SH: Oh, no.



MASIKA: They could come in and do the work.

LS: Yes. Most of them could sew and lay it out.

BA: So that really is hands-on. That's going back almost like the older age of American business, where owners would appear. They'd be there and they often knew the operation -- ironworking or carpentry. This is, I'm going back to the old, 1800s times.

SH: They would bring their kids in too to work. I remember Dante, Al's son, worked with me on the fusing machine one day.

BA: I guess I should ask -- this makes me think of a question I didn't even have on my list but I just thought of it. In some union operations, they're very precise [00:39:00] about who can do what work. And if someone comes in to do an operation that's not union member, they might have complaints about that. But that wasn't an issue? And as you know, I don't know if you know this -- some of the construction, if someone comes in to move a piece of pipe who's not a plumber --

LS: You might have a couple people that would complain, but basically the majority is, nobody cared.

BA: I'm getting a picture of it as a very family-oriented, small size industry.

SH: Well, you spent more time with these people than you did

your actual family, sometimes.

BA: I was going to ask you about that too. I'm guessing most of the ladies -- not the high school guys who worked, but most of the ladies were married at some time. Did they feel that they had family obligations and this full-time work? In other words --

SH: When I worked at Gary Lee and summertime came, I would work from eight to twelve. Go home, [00:40:00] stay with my kids, make them dinner, then me and my daughter used to go back with a key and I would do my job till nine o'clock and make up the other time. And I did that until my kids were old enough to be on their own.

BA: Once again, that is what they call together family-friendly. That's something. That's flexibility. Because that's an issue today -- whether it's there or not is a big problem. Once again, I guess I'll ask -- there's thousands of women who worked there, but did they ever think -- and I'm just trying to get sort of a work/life kind of vibe -- that they typically are working and their husbands are working too, that the ladies had more to do at home than the men did? Because today, like in 2019, there's this issue -- many women do work full-time and they'll get home and they've got all the housework and the man does very little. I will tell you, [00:41:00] I'm

married, and I do my share. More than my share, which I think, I'm very happy to do. But there is that issue out there. Many ladies say, "I'm doing all the housework and everything and he doesn't do half."

LS: Well, when my husband was younger, I did a lot myself.

SH: Yeah, me too.

LS: He was working full-time and a part-time. (crosstalk) pump gas or whatever he could for extra money. But now, I mean, he's helped me for years.

SH: Yeah, and my husband too. Same way with childcare. When Trent was home from school, my husband worked middle shift at the steel, and I worked day shift. He would keep Trent until he went to work. Then he would take him to my niece for an hour and I would pick him up. But he kept him when he was off. He was -- yeah.

BA: I'm just asking it because it is an issue when you read the media. There's a lot of women raising [00:42:00] -- I wouldn't say complaints. More of a concern that they do a lot of the family stuff, more than the male does.

LS: Well that's their fault for letting them get away with it.

SH: It is, really.

BA: I guess you have to have a reasonable arrangement. With us, just to let you guys know, it was never in question. You know, we were going to be more or less the same, and I

think that most -- I hope most men feel that way today, but there was a time when they didn't, especially if you read about, more towards some of the cities, women would work full-time and the guy would work full-time too and he'd come back and just get a soda or a beer and just want to watch TV and not do much.

LS: Today, it's different. Most of them help, I think.

SH: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BA: One more thing I was going to -- just running down, do you recall any kind of serious strike or labor actions that occurred at some of the places you worked at?

LS: Once in all the years that I worked, and that was ANH.

BA: When was that? [00:43:00] What was the issue?

SH: That was about -- let's see. We were down Easton so it has to be at least 12 years ago.

LS: At least.

BA: That's not that long ago.

SH: Oh yeah, it's not that long ago.

LS: That was just over the contract.

SH: Yeah. In fact, we had companies close of that. Tama.

BA: I remember the Tama business. That was up by the airport

SH: Right. It started in Northampton, though. It was right on Main Street in Northampton.

BA: That was a young man -- he was in the newspaper at the time

-- (crosstalk)

SH: (crosstalk) You know what I mean? He was. He was nasty. They got him -- at that time, the union got him a government contract to make uniforms.

BA: Right. I recall that.

SH: And he blew that.

BA: It was a big operation. It was big. It was up by the airport and they employed a lot of people there when that went down. But you only recall one instance. [00:44:00] Was it a strike? How long was it? Do you recall how long that was?

LS: Maybe two week at least.

SH: Yeah, two to three weeks. We had the boss come down -- "Go talk to your union. You can't do this. My dad's upset, blah blah blah" -- well we're upset too. One time, too, I went to a union meeting. It was before the contract. It was going to run out May 30th. And the union was telling us to give them an extension. And they said no. Everybody in the building us said, no, no extension. You give them an extension, it gives them time to move out stuff, get them out of the building. No. We're going out tonight either with you or without you. They signed the next morning. But if we would have given them an extension, we would have been screwed for a long time. Yeah, that was

the only strike I was ever involved in.

LS: I think before I started Gary Lee's I think somebody said they had a strike. [00:45:00] Like, years before I started there.

SH: And strike is a devastating thing for both sides.

BA: Expensive, et cetera.

MASIKA: So was it over working conditions? Over pay?

SH: Pay. Coverage. Medical coverage.

BA: I was going to ask -- I forgot, but I was going to bring it up. What do you recall about safety issues in the places, in the factories? Because a lot of people don't think that much about clothing, but there is some. Do you recall anything?

LS: Only recently I think they started with the shoes.

SH: Oh, yeah, it's just within the last maybe 20 years.

BA: Safety equipment.

SH: Safety in the buildings.

BA: Were there lots of injuries? I'm going to bring up a quote that I heard, that some lady that was working in, I think it was a Carolina clothing factory, said, "You haven't really worked here until you've sewed your own fingers."

LS: (crosstalk) a buttonhole -- [00:46:00] a button machine. My first job, (inaudible). And when I looked, the needle was there, and I went to the back -- I didn't tell my boss

right away. I went in the bathroom and I pulled it out. But let me tell you, it was like a week or more with the throbbing.

SH: A lot of girls sewed their finger --

CT: You said you were 16.

LS: You know what my mother said? "You're experienced now. You sewed your finger." That's what my mom said.

SH: You're not experienced until you've sewed your finger.

BA: I've heard that before. It must be across the country. That was from a Carolina clothing worker and I guess it's everywhere. That's the thing I'm thinking about. What about something more long-term? I'm just thinking every angle. Like having to be a certain posture or bend over? Because you see many workers, like, doing cash registers, they end up with --

LS: Carpal tunnel.

SH: Oh yeah. You have a lot of carpal tunnel and then --

LS: Trigger finger, I had.

SH: We started an exercise program that we did every day, just working with the hands. [00:47:00] Stretching -- getting up, just getting some oxygen in your system and stuff to move around. Because I'll tell you, you've got to hand it to operators. They sit down at that machine and they bust for seven, eight hours. I mean, no movement. They get up

for a break and that's it. Go up to go to the bathroom or something like that. But basically they're sitting at that machine and busting for seven hours.

LS: You don't know how to sit, sometimes. Your back's killing you and you try it this way and that way.

SH: We tried ergonomic chairs. We got those in for people. In fact, at Mary Fashions, we actually got some tables -- sewing machine tables -- that were elevated. They would stand us up instead of sitting -- sitting is very hard on you, physically.

LS: I don't know if I could have stood and sewed.

SH: They did it. Not a lot, it was their choice. But we had two or three who (audio glitch) [00:47:59] - [00:48:14] These girls worked on an automated system where they didn't have to do anything but pull it off the hanger, sew it, and --

LS: -- they started a Gerber system.

SH: We started at Mary's -- I started there at Mary's (inaudible). It was a conveyor system.

LS: That was nice.

SH: Yeah. And it was easy on the girls. They didn't have to lift bundles and stuff, because some of those bundles weighed 20, 30 pounds.

BA: Okay. I was going to ask about lifting. That was part of



it too. Sometimes lifting 30-pound bundles, multiple times.

SH: And that was a safety issue.

LS: When I worked at Josette's after Jaylo closed, they gave you the whole big thing of a whole blouse. You had maybe a job this big but you had [00:49:00] all this bundle of all the other jobs (crosstalk).

SH: You might have had 20 blouses in that, in pieces. Twenty each one was in pieces but you had 20 sets there. And that was a problem with Cross Country, too. With men's suits. A jacket -- men's suit jacket. Probably weighs a couple pounds. And they had bundles.

BA: Bundles of them you had to bring over and pull down. That's going to be --

SH: Because once that bundle was assembled -- we did it at Mary's too, we'd assemble the whole bundle and then hand it out.

LS: Well, we didn't sew the whole bundle. We only did --

SH: Yeah, just a certain part of it, but you had to open it up and take your part out and then close it back out and send it to the next person. That was nice about --

LS: A lot of that I never had to do that at Josette's.

SH: Oh, no, we did it at Mary's. (audio glitch) [00:49:56] - [00:50:03] He was in the family, but like a cousin or

something. He was pants pressing. He was next to me. And he went to reach in and flatten out the fabric, and slammed it on him. Well, he had his foot on the thing. They were so into making money, these young kids. They work fast, and he just reached in and at the same time he touched a pedal and it came down. He jerked his arm out. His skin hung off his arm.

BA: That's what I was thinking of. There are safety issues in manufacturing -- especially when you're doing high volume and repetitive motions.

SH: We had a fire one time. We were in the basement of the old building. When you come in, 248 and Bath, that Mary Fashions building, we were in the old building. And there were radiators that went up the wall for heat. And the whole wall was covered with a radiator [00:51:00] for heat. Well, you know what kind of dust you have in the industry. Well that whole radiator thing, it wasn't being used. It was covered with dust. And the pressers were in there. And they had the old irons with the fabric (audio glitch) And I'm looking over -- the wall's on fire (audio glitch) [00:51:26] - [00:51:30] Yeah, we got out safely. It went like that because it was just dust.

BA: Did the building go down --

SH: Oh, no -- it was just dust.

BA: Because you worry about that. Our class has discussed some very famous clothing factory fires that occurred years ago -- many, many years ago. But nothing disastrous like that?

SH: Oh, no. They had exits and, you know -- we used to have fire drills.

BA: [00:52:00] So not a big issue with that. I was going to ask, did most ladies in the places you worked come nearby? Like typically the town the place was in? Not too many long-distance commuters to get there, mostly locally from the town?

LS: There was a job I worked at, they mostly lived in the whole area where they could walk.

SH: The furthest I've traveled was Easton.

BA: All right, so it's local. Pretty much -- I'm going to just add, some of them probably went to school together, the workers.

SH: Oh, yeah. They know their families.

BA: I was going to ask also was, what kind of different nationalities were there, or ethnic groups, in the plants, typically? Could you notice different ethnic groups? Because the Lehigh Valley has a lot of different kinds of people here.

LS: I think the most we had was at ANH. I mean, when I worked there, it was Italian.

SH: In Nazareth, or Mary Fashions in Bath was basically your  
Italians and your Dutch.

LS: But mostly your bosses were all [00:53:00] Italian.

BA: Pennsylvania Germans, yeah, Pennsylvania Dutch. Some  
Italians -- immigrants or just locally-born?

SH: If you lived in Bath, you worked for Mary Fashions at one  
point in your life.

BA: A local place. Just so you know, Bath has a lot of  
Italians. They came for the cement industry and also  
clothing.

SH: Yeah, Martins Creek. But ANH, we had Korean. We had  
Russian. Indians. Dominican. Puerto Rico.

CT: You mentioned Costa Rica?

SH: Costa Rica. (inaudible) was from Costa Rica.

LS: And some from Guatemala.

SH: Guatemala. Columbia.

BA: Okay. So you have a mixed group there. Did it change over  
time? Just thinking back, was it more Italians or  
Pennsylvania Dutch early and it became more immigrants  
later on, or was it just pretty much --

SH: I don't know about before, but there were always immigrants  
when I was there.

LS: Oh, you mean from ANH?

SH: [00:54:00] ANH. (audio glitch) [00:54:04] - [00:54:09] And

our boss actually sponsored them to come over. They didn't last long. They didn't last long at all.

BA: So she worked a time and then out to something else. I see.

SH: They were not the nicest people to work with at that point.

BA: I was going to ask about that. If you had people of different ethnic groups, did they all pretty much get along or did you just see little enclaves --

SH: Yeah. They taught me their language. They would ask me English or how to write something.

LS: There were a few that were great.

SH: We would have parties, like I said before. Somebody would become a citizen. And they'd bring their own ethnic dishes and stuff. It was great.

BA: That's interesting. So you have this whole enrichment thing. Everyone's bringing their own heritage in.

[00:55:00] Because there were so many Italians, would they sometimes bring great Italian food in to have, and such, to share?

SH: Yeah. It was bring a dish, bring something.

LS: Everybody brought something.

SH: If you come to our meeting and continue this conversation, you're more than welcome.

LS: And we'll feed you.

BA: I was fed.

SH: We do the same thing there. We bring all kinds of food and stuff and there's more than enough for everybody.

BA: I left well-fed.

SH: You never know what you're going to get in a night, but there's always something to eat. But we would do at all the factories, too.

BA: Were there sometimes company perks they would have? I bet some of the bigger companies had outings that they would do for the workers.

LS: (inaudible) like a picnic for you in the summer.

SH: Yeah. In the summer they would have --

LS: Set it up outside and bring a grill.

SH: You'd get burgers and they'd have potato salad or something. [00:56:00] Somebody retires, they would get them a cake, flowers, and a watch.

LS: (inaudible)

SH: I didn't either but that's okay. After 25 years, they would get -- what was it, 250 --

LS: Yes, I got that.

SH: I didn't get that. There was things. At Mary's, we would have a big picnic every year because the owner, his wife's family owned a tie factory in Bethlehem. So their factor and our factory would meet in the summer, have a picnic, a

baseball, and they had a trophy. They would have a  
baseball game and we'd play baseball. (audio glitch)  
[00:56:42] - [00:56:50] But I've been fortunate to work  
for two companies that were --

LS: I worked for Gary Lee's Josette's, Beverly Blouse.

[00:57:00] And ANH. And Lisa Marie's.

SH: But my boss at Mary Fashions, one of the perks -- a lot of  
times, you had to stay with in the contract or whatever you  
were under, but even though I was a supervisor, I had the  
benefit of both sides. And when my mother was sick and in  
the hospital, I went home to stay with her. Stayed in the  
hospital for 11 days. And when I came home he handed me an  
envelope. He paid full pay.

MASIKA: So it's a lot more, you're people who work for them.  
You're not just like machines that are there.

SH: Let me tell you, our people -- and I think they could  
probably do it at ANH too if it was handled right -- but  
they could go to our boss and borrow money.

LS: I think some did, when Sonny was living [00:58:00] and Walt  
Senior was there.

SH: Yes. Walt Senior was a saint.

LS: He was a saint.

BA: I'll bring in some other mentions. I worked for some small  
companies occasionally before I got involved in college

teaching, and it was possible there -- they weren't clothing companies, but some people needed money to buy a house or down payment, and sometimes the owner, if they knew you well, would front them.

SH: And if they knew you were a good worker and they respected you as you respected them --

LS: And I didn't get fired from all those jobs. They just closed up.

CT: They close and you go to another one.

SH: Or you just decided -- I'm out of her. I think I only quit -- only Josette's I quit because they were losing and they weren't giving them paychecks and stuff like that. So I got out (crosstalk).

BA: Before the ship sank. I was going to ask, did you sense that the -- or when did you sense that the industry was kind of --

SH: NAFTA.

BA: [00:59:00] NAFTA, which is roughly '93 or '94 --

SH: And it hit hard and it hit right away.

MASIKA: Because now it's cheaper to bring it in --

BA: From Mexico or wherever, some other countries, Caribbean oftentimes. So you could tell right away that something was changing.

LS: Oh, they told us they were doing it -- say October, when



they were already doing a year prior before that --

SH: And actually it got to the point where -- how mindset is, it was cheaper to buy something made overseas than it was made in the United States. We actually made a product at Mary Fashions --

MASIKA: Sent it over --

SH: No.

MASIKA: No?

SH: Sewed tags in it, "Made in Dominican Republic," because it paid more.

BA: Interesting, interesting.

SH: That only happened one time because I went to the union.

BA: Wouldn't like to see that, no.

SH: [01:00:00] We actually sewed the tags in, "Made in the Dominican," because they knew it would sell better. And it wasn't cheaper. It was just because people thought, it's cheaper. This is made overseas.

BA: That's an interesting psychological trick there. That's a little --

SH: It actually happened.

BA: When the thing started to get a little sour, did certain companies start to hit the rocks before the other ones did or was it the small one --

SH: Yes, the small --

BA: -- hit the troubles first, then the bigger ones -- so the little, more family-owned places began to --

SH: I think in the mid-80s, Mary's, who was established since the 50s, was going to close. The father and mother started it, now the sons took it over, but they were going to close. And he brought in Gerber.

BA: Which is a system?

SH: [01:01:00] Yeah. Production system.

BA: That made it more efficient or whatever.

SH: It made it more efficient, and he did lay off probably -- he kept his best workers, they said, but anyway. They laid off probably close to a third. But eventually they hired many of them back because it worked out so well he put a second system in, so he had two Gerber systems.

LS: You did the one --

SH: I did one.

LS: You did one.

BA: There was an attempt -- and I have a document that talks about -- it's a mid-90s document, trying to right the ship. The companies trying to work together to find a way to keep going because they saw that trouble was on the way. They didn't see why but this was -- and I know ILGW did a campaign about, early on before Mexico even -- things started coming in from Japan and Korea, I think. Not China

yet, but Japan and Korea. And that was [01:02:00]  
something that the union noticed. And then it just really  
hits hard. Because the small companies were going on, did  
you start to see ladies then having a tougher time lining  
up for jobs at the remaining companies?

SH: Oh, yeah. You can only take in so many. And actually at  
Mary's, he at one point, it was called the wedding blouse  
he took a contract. He made not a penny on it. What it  
was made for, he sold it for. But it paid the girls' wages  
and kept them working. And he did that for -- I only ever  
saw that wedding blouse on one person and we made millions  
of them.

BA: And it was just a break-even product, just to keep -- who  
is this gentleman? What's his name that did this?

SH: Al Fantozza. He lives in (inaudible) right now.

BA: And he [01:03:00] did that just to keep people employed.

MASIKA: Keep people employed.

BA: Keep people employed. That is --

MASIKA: That's very nice. That's loyalty.

BA: Pretty outstanding for somebody to do something like that.

SH: But too, he wanted to keep his factory going. If you lose  
those workers, and you do get a contract, you can't get  
them back at that point.

BA: So it's so sensible to keep the place open --

SH: So it was good for him and it was good for the people.

MASIKA: You don't see that good --

SH: They didn't make as much money as they would maybe on a  
[Kenneth Two?] blouse or a Kenneth Two jacket, but at least  
they were making their --

MASIKA: (inaudible)

SH: And they were working every day.

BA: I was going to ask, it's ironic -- it's not really a  
question, but a statement, that the clothing industry began  
to have trouble not too much long distance from when the  
steel company began having trouble too. They're almost --  
a little earlier for steel and trouble, but it's  
interesting that they both began hitting the rocks about  
the same time. [01:04:00] Do you know if that created  
problems for a lot of families? Because the men might have  
been working at the steel and the lady working garments,  
and then they're both having --

LS: Definitely. And then you get a job that don't pay as much,  
especially for the men.

BA: Something I was going to ask, this is not really -- a  
sensitive question, but were there times that ladies made  
more than their husbands did? Was that ever an issue?  
She's working full-time, he's -- in this country, you've  
always had this expectation that a guy's going to make at

least somewhat -- did that ever happen where it was reversed? Was that ever an issue?

LS: Not that I know of.

SH: Not that I know of. I don't think it was -- in my family it wasn't a big deal. Our money was pooled together. It wasn't, you know --

BA: That's interesting. So no one really noticed --

SH: We knew we both had to work to sustain it.

BA: To keep things going. So that sense of equal respect.

That's an important point because you do see issues today where we know, from the status, that a lot of women make a lot more than men. (audio glitch) [01:04:58] - [01:05:10] Some men are bothered by that and it leads to resentment or jealousy, whatever. (audio glitch) [01:05:17] - [01:05:25]

MASIKA: If he's really not going to care about you for that, find a different man.

BA: Find a man that's okay with that.

SH: (inaudible) have issues.

BA: I know that's there and it's just a fact of life in the country today that -- that's job life, you know? But I guess it wasn't an issue and it's interesting to see, because you think it would have been more of (inaudible). Did you guys feel like a sense of, like, of pride in the quality of the clothes you were putting out? Because you

mentioned the goods from overseas were not always made that way.

SH: Oh, yeah.

BA: A sense of [01:06:00] pride and quality --

SH: We spent a lot of Christmas vacations or summer vacations repairing their work. Because they knew, once it was shipped -- well, they worked in pods.

BA: What's a pod?

SH: A pod is -- okay, you have a contract. And you get \$4,000 to make that. That's divided up. And you have a pod of people like us. And it just -- they make that whole lot. Those five people. So whatever money they're allotted is divided up between them. There is no piece rate. It's a pod rate.

LS: I never heard of that.

SH: Oh, no?

LS: No.

SH: They tried -- they were going to try it at ANH but they didn't. But anyway.

LS: I probably would have made more money for --

SH: Yes, yeah. But anyway.

BA: You're a fast one.

SH: So they didn't care. Some of those people didn't know how to set sleeves. They'd put it together and we'd get it

back.

BA: [01:07:00] So you guys were happy that your work was high. When you put out good product, there was a sense of, like, pride.

LS: We had inspectors. We had a girl go around, check our work, everything.

SH: And the thing of it is, with our system that we worked on, I would set it up. It would go down the line and come back. If this girl got it to, say, close the bags or whatever, the next girl, if it was a problem, she'd see it right away. So it was immediate.

LS: And her number always came up --

SH: Yeah. We could check whose number it was.

LS: Who did the boo-boos.

BA: We all bought clothing and it's a little slip in the pocket saying, inspected by 13, 22 or whatever. So we've all seen that before. So good quality product. Was there any -- I know that what you were making was often being shipped out of the area, but was there a chance for you to get discounted clothing ever?

LS: When?

SH: What?

LS: When did we get a discount?

SH: You could make a suit.

LS: Oh, that way. They would [01:08:00] leave us make any kind of suit.

SH: As long as the order was filled, you could take the fabric, cut out a suit and make a suit.

CT: And you said that you give like free stuff (inaudible) for the stuff and people took it?

SH: Oh, yeah, I'd go dumpster diving. I always did. I would go dumpster diving, bring it in, set it there, and who wants it.

CT: Who wants it, yeah.

BA: I was going to say, when did you retire? What led you to retired?

LS: I just retired, it's been three years. Three years ago in November, it'll be.

BA: The company was still open, though.

LS: (inaudible) They shooed me out the door.

SH: They closed the sewing facility.

BA: So that part --

LS: And they were making the samples, like, putting a whole suit together, which I could never comprehend. The patterns, the spec sheets.

SH: Spec sheets. (inaudible) was good at that.

LS: Yeah. She is. So they got rid of the [01:09:00] ones that couldn't do that, and then later on they got rid of other



ones, too.

SH: They got rid of [104?]. They kept probably 20, if that.

And they moved into the --

LS: Yeah, that's where I was.

SH: But -- yeah. But the basic sewing, it was the last one in their company. (audio glitch) [01:09:18] - [01:09:19] They didn't offer me that. They gave me a five dollar cut to travel up to Forks.

BA: They did?

LS: They sent Marie up there to Forks and they didn't cut her price.

SH: But this is when they first closed. They called me and they said, you know. You'd have to start at (crosstalk) no way. I'm out of here. I can collect for 26 weeks.

BA: Was the union helpful in terms of when places would shut down or shrink? Were they able to be helpful?

SH: Oh, yeah. As far as fighting for our [01:10:00] -- for warning.

BA: For the factory closing.

SH: Factory closing. They didn't give us any.

LS: No. They gave us nothing. We were called in on a meeting at one o'clock, 1:30. So they put the 1:30s in a room, and the one o'clocks were out. The ones outside were told they didn't have a job anymore and the ones that, we were in

this room, they were all mad at us because they thought we had a job. And they didn't really pick all of those girls that were --

SH: No, they only picked some of them.

LS: I mean, they went out.

SH: They did that wrong.

LS: That was terrible.

BA: Abrupt.

LS: Some people that you were so close to, like Dottie, she wouldn't talk to any of us. She was -- you know? It was sad. I cried. I couldn't stand it.

SH: It was a bad day.

BA: That's just tough. That's hard. We have a law now that factories of a certain size [01:11:00] have to issue a closing warning, a certain period of time. But at least tried to get that for you. And when you were out, if a place closed down, would they try to help with things like placement or any kind of --

LS: Well, they offered some of them to go up to another building.

SH: And Nancy told other people when Jesse was hiring, this one was hiring. Something like that.

BA: But they were not able to do too much. Do you think -- this is a broader question I was going to ask you because

it was mostly a female industry. Do you think -- and this is informal -- the role of women in the workforce that you see around here has changed over time? It's like -- what I mean by that is, are there a lot -- do you see an equal number of jobs for women in the area, like high school grad women, I don't know if you can sense that or not. Because we've lost this major industry which was a big employer of high school women. Do you think women [01:12:00] --

LS: I think everybody's going more for an education.

MASIKA: Because you need it now for a job.

LS: My granddaughter just became a pharmacist. She had to go six years for that.

BA: That's a good occupation, by the way.

LS: What she went for is the highest money paying job. You know, I said, you're just lucky you have the smarts for that. She likes it, and she's up St. Luke's now.

SH: Oh, she's at the hospital?

LS: Yeah. My daughter works up there too.

BA: Because it used to be -- I mean just my informal comment here is that with steel and also the cement mills here, the clothing industry, many people coming out of high school could just get a job quickly, like almost the next week. And that's very -- it's not really true anymore, although we have warehouses now, but that's --

MASIKA: Even now, you're more like to get people from outside than high school.

CT: Maybe more experience like some --

SH: Oh, yeah, a lot of them.

MASIKA: Entry level job, five years' experience.

SH: My neighbor is 67, maybe even older. She went to up to Walmart's warehouse. They were paying her \$17 an hour to (audio glitch) [01:13:17] - [01:13:17].

BA: Was there anything you wanted to talk about that we didn't get to today? (crosstalk) I think that that's a nice picture of what was a very important industry. I mean, I really have to stress, this is a critically important industry here.

LS: You know what I miss? The people. You know?

SH: We were like family.

CT: Yeah, like a family.

SH: We'd have parties. We'd have Christmas dinners. But it was good.

BA: And the husbands would all come along for these?

SH: No. (laughter)

LS: It was just us.

MASIKA: It was the work family.

SH: [01:14:00] Yeah, and that's exactly what it was. A work family. Like I said, we spent more time together than

usually with our own families.

BA: Yeah. That camaraderie. That's something. There's a lot to be said for that. Thank you, ladies, for coming in. This is extraordinarily important, I think. You know, I began this project -- it was my idea because I thought this industry had not been looked at carefully, and I'm going to continue and do more of this.

LS: How did you know to come to Nancy? Did somebody --

BA: Yes. I did get -- (inaudible). Let me see if I'll do it one more time. (inaudible) forms here. Let me set this off. But yeah --

END OF AUDIO FILE