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KENYON COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Stories of Knox County

Mark Sheasby
Interviewed by
Gabe Jimenez-Ekman and Catherine Wessel
On
March 31, 2017

Kenyon College
Oral History Project
Stories of Knox County

Interviewee: Factory Worker

Interviewer: Gabe Jimenez-Ekman and Catherine Wessel

March 31, 2017

Gabe Jimenez-Ekman: This is Gabe Jimenez-Ekman with the Stories of Knox County project interviewing Mark Sheasby on his experiences on life in Knox County. Today's date is March 31, 2017. We are speaking at Kenyon College. Thank you for your willingness to participate. Could you please state your full name and birthdate?

Mark Sheasby: Mark Sheasby, August 19, 1956.

GJE: Great. And our first question is, how long have you lived here?

MS: My whole life. Sixty years.

GJE: And have you lived in Mount Vernon the whole time?

MS: Danville, Mount Vernon, back to Danville. Yeah.

GJE: And what prompted those shifts?

MS: I moved to Mount Vernon when I was eighteen, got a job up here, and I lived here until I was, how old was I? I lived in Mount Vernon till I was thirty-three years old, then I moved back to Danville. Yeah. Got married, started a family, moved back to Danville.

GJE: Cool. And so how long has your family been in Knox County?

MS: My extended family, my grandparents and such?

GJE: Yeah.

MS: My grandmother's side... my mom's side, oh, they've been in Danville for long as I can ever remember. I think they originated from Germany. Now, my dad's side, my grandfather came from England when he was fifteen. He came over here by himself, and it was a family in Gambier that took him in. And raised him for a few years, and then he went out on his own.

GJE: And what brought him here?

MS: I think just opportunity. Just to come to the United States, and see what he could do.

Catherine Wessel: Did he know the family ahead of time, or how did he get in contact?

MS: You know, I'm real sketchy on that, I presume there was some type of correspondence made for him to have a place to stay. It was funny cause, when I lived in Mount Vernon, I was on Mansfield Road, and I got a letter in the mail one day. It was a picture of my grandpa, from his... he was eighteen or seventeen years old. It was her family that raised him. I was the only Sheasby

in the book, so they sent it to me. So I got a picture of him when he was seventeen or eighteen, so that was kind of interesting.

Clara Roman-Odio: Wow, and this family—did you know their last name?

MS: No, I'd have to do a little digging. I should've kept the letter, I was so surprised to get that in the mail, but it was a family in Gambier that raised him.

GJE: And are they still in Gambier, do you think?

MS: I would presume they are. Unless... I'm not sure how old this person was that sent me the letter, but she probably still has a family.

CRO: Wow, amazing.

MS: Yeah, that was so strange, I mean it was a really nice thing for her to do, to send me that picture of him.

CRO: Were you able to contact them, or not?

MS: No, I didn't contact them. Just a letter with a picture.

CRO: Did your parents ever know this family, or...

MS: I would venture to say my dad might've knew the history. Yeah, he might've known the history of who took him in. But he's no longer with us, so I can't. My mom might, that's a question I'll have to ask her. Yeah, yeah... so he came from England and the other side come from Germany.

GJE: And so what do you do for a living?

MS: What do you do for a living? I work at Siemens.

GJE: And what do you do there?

MS: I am an assembler. Oil and gas industry. We build units that go all over the world. Off-shore rigs, we build units for off-shore drilling for oil and gas, they're big units, they're one-ten plus, they're really big units. (Clara gasps) Yeah, they're huge. I've worked there since 1979..

GJE: Wow.

CW: You worked at Rolls-Royce before it was Siemens?

MS: Yeah, mm-hmm. It was Cooper-Bessemer, and Cooper Energy, and Cooper-Rolls, Rolls, and then Siemens.

CW: Have you been with a lot of the same people throughout that time.

MS: Yes. Yeah, most of the, Rolls-Royce made the biggest changes with personnel, and management... they made more changes probably than anybody else. 'Cause Rolls-Royce is an English company, and they brought a lot of their own people in. But the same people now we have with Siemens, a lot of them are from Rolls-Royce, they're still there from Rolls-Royce.

There are some still around from Cooper Energy days, but a lot of changes were made when Rolls-Royce took it.

GJE: Do you know what prompted these changes, or, these events that have caused a change in management?

MS: No, I just think when new companies come in they want to bring their own people in. That's what I think...

GJE: But why has the company changed so much instead of just one company sticking around?

MS: Oh, why has it changed names so many times?

GJE: Yeah.

MS: I really don't know, I'll be honest with you. I just, I really don't know why it's changed so much.

CRO: How about your job in this many years of work, has it changed, have you done different things as the company's evolved, or...

MS: No, the work stayed pretty much the same. Just the amount of volume that was done has increased a lot more in the last twenty years.

CRO: Oh, why is that?

MS: Demand for oil and gas. When I was first hired there, we built maybe three units a year. And when I was hired on the floor, there was only twenty-four people in assembly. And that was it. There may have been one hundred union people total. Now there's hundreds, you know? Of course, gas, and all demand is so much more now, and they have expanded and they all build a lot more units, a lot more units. It's an expansion. A lot more exploring, more exploring for gas and oil calls for more units, and you know.

GJE: Do you think that has attracted a lot more people to the Knox County area, the Mount Vernon area?

MS: I would say that on the office side, it has. A lot of the off people live out of town and travel. I would say on the union side, on the assembly side, we used to have a machine shop, they shut the machine shop down ten years ago, but on the union side, a lot of local people. You know, lots of local people.

CW: Was this the job you moved into Mount Vernon for when you were eighteen?

MS: No, I worked at WinCo. I build windows. Yeah, I that was my first, well actually, my first, I made shoe soles. We melt rubber down, made shoe soles. That was my first job, I worked there a very short time. Yeah. Then WinCo, I worked there like three years. Made windows. Then I got hired on at Rolls, Siemens, Cooper, whatever you want to call it.

CRO: Did you find your job interesting, you have stayed for a long time?

MS: Yeah, it really was. You learn, well, when I hired in, you learned to do everything. You could build a compressor, you could build a turbine, you could run pipe, you could run tubing, with a small crew.

CRO: You need to know it.

MS: Mmmhm. You need to know everything and they taught you everything. And the biggest change with that's been, they specialize now. With, like, "This is your job. You learn this job." So, there's not a lot of specialization... There is specialization now instead of learning everything, they have you do one thing. And it's been that way for probably twenty years. Been a long time.

GJE: How has that changed your day-to-day operations, I mean, do you enjoy focusing on one thing?

MS: Yeah, I did electrical work, and I did that for a number, a lot of years. And I did enjoy that, but it was time for a change, so I went over to work on the compressor side for a while. And I got back into the swing of building compressors again, you know, something different. You get burned out after a certain length of time, almost anything you do.

GJE: So they're flexible on letting you switch around every once in awhile on what you're focusing on?

MS: Yeah, they're pretty good about it, if you wanna switch, you can. But same people do the same jobs, pretty much anymore. That's pretty much the way it is. Yeah.

CW: Do you think that the specialization has changed the dynamic of the employees? Or do you think it's been similar throughout the years?

MS: It's been similar. It seems like everybody likes what they do. I mean, if you've got a guy that's really good at electric, and he likes to do it, leave him there. You know, and if a guy like to build turbines, he enjoys building turbines, I think everybody accepts that and I think, I think most people down there like what they do. I think as a whole, change is good also sometimes. I know I was ready for a change. I was tired of building boxes and it was time.

CRO: So you would say the working conditions are good enough, because otherwise the workers would not be happy.

MS: Yeah.

CRO: Yeah, it's a pleasant, you know, life.

MS: Yeah, it's been interesting over the years. It's seen a lot of change. You know, our work is hands-on. Not a lot of automation at all. We have installed some automation, but of course, machine shop was men running machines, and making parts. But they've done away with that, and most our work is hands-on. There are some, they have a tubing bender now, you know, you program a bender and you stick a piece of tube in there, and it makes all the bends for you, and... but there's not a lot of automation, there's still a lot of hands-on work.

GJE: Is that a pretty unique situation for this type of work?

MS: Different, unique, no, not really. Just a lot of hands-on.

GJE: Shifting away from work, do you have any hobbies?

MS: Hobbies, I like to fish. I really enjoy fishing. I like to work with wood. I have been stocking wood up in my barn so I have something to do when I retire. So I've got all kinds of things I can make and have fun making, and...

CRO: That's so cool!

MS: So yeah, I'm looking forward to retirement, and foolin' around with that stuff.

CW: When do you think you'll retire?

MS: June 2nd.

CW: Wow!

CRO: *This* June??!

MS: This June!

CRO: Oh, congratulations!

MS: I signed up today.

GJE: Wow, we caught you on a great day!

MS: Yeah! Oh yeah, this has been a great day. Yeah, so I have sixty days to change my mind, but I won't.

CRO: You, you did the inner work to know that this was the right time.

MS: Yeah, this is the right time. Oh yeah, it's time to do what I want to do for a change.

CRO: Oh, that's phenomenal.

MS: Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. I'm really looking forward to it.

GJE: Where do you go to fish usually here?

MS: I love going to Lake Eerie. (inaudible). Apple Valley some, I've got a friend has a boat, and he takes me to Apple Valley, and takes me to Lake Eerie, and yeah... I don't go a lot, maybe three or four times a year, maybe. But that's enough.

CRO: Do you cook?

MS: Oh yeah, well Pam does. (laughter)

CRO: But you bring the goods!

MS: Yeah, I bring the fish to her and she prepares it.

CRO: That's so cool.

MS: Yeah.

GJE: Are there a lot of fishing communities or organizations in Mount Vernon? Are you in any of those?

MS: No, I think there's a fishing club close to here, close to Gambier, the Gambier Fishing Club I think it's called. Never fished it. No, not really. There's no... you just have Apple Valley, if you have a permit to get on there. You can fish that.

GJE: And that's stocked, right?

MS: Yeah.

CW: Did you start fishing as a kid?

MS: Oh yeah, my grandpa taught me how to fish

CRO: From your German side or from your English side?

MS: German side, yeah, my mom's side. Yeah.

GJE: And what sorts of wood work do you do, what do you make?

MS: Well I just made Pam two gun cabinets. I made a dining room table.

CW: Wow.

MS: I just finished a TV stand for the living room.

CRO: Wow! So you build furniture!

GJE: It's nice to sit in a house of stuff that you've made.

MS: Yeah. I built two gun cabinets, one for my brother and one for myself.

CRO: What?

MS: Two gun cabinets, one for my brother and one for myself. Yeah.

CRO: Do you enjoy hunting?

MS: Yeah, I used to love to hunt. I did, but I just don't like doing it anymore.

CRO: Why not?

MS: I like to watch the animals. I don't like killing anything. Other than fish, you know, I'll kill fish and I'll eat fish, but I just enjoy, we have some deers that stay on our property, and I just love watching down there, eating and grazing and playing, I just like watching them now.

GJE: What do you think prompted that?

MS: I have no idea why I changed when I did, but it just, something just clicked in my head and

said, enough's enough. And then, I'd had enough.

GJE: Just after one specific trip, or someone offered to bring you out on a trip and you decided...

MS: No, I just quit.

GJE: Just one of those things.

MS: Yeah, I just decided I didn't wanna kill anything. I'd just rather look at it. I love my rabbits running around, and the squirrels, deer, I just like watching them.

CW: Does your brother or the rest of your family hunt?

MS: My brother lived out in Oregon for the better part of his life, and he would go up with his brother-in-laws in the mountains and elk hunt. And so, he did a little elk hunting. Not a huge hunter, but he enjoyed his trips up in the mountains. He'd camp for ten days or whatever, and hunt. He did enjoy that.

GJE: What family heirlooms or keepsakes do you have?

MS: On my grandma's side, her father had a dairy. And they had the bottles, and the pints, the half-pints, the quart, milk bottles. So I've collected some of those, there was actually, my grandma's dad started the business, the dairy. And then my grandma's brother took the business over. So there was two different bottles, there was William Meiser, which is my great-grandpa, and then my grandma's brother, who turned it into Meiser dairy. So it was William Meiser, then it went to Meiser Dairy. So that was a business for a lot of years for them. Yeah, they'd milk cows, then sell the milk, make whatever else they made from milk. So I saved those and I collected, in fact I just bought a pint bottle. They're harder to find, the pints. I found one, or rather, a guy found one for me, and I'm gonna get that in May. Had to pay seventy-five dollars for it, it's a pint bottle, but pints are hard to find. I have no pints, so I was tickled to death. Yeah, they wanted a hundred bucks for it, and I said, "Well, will you take seventy-five?" and the guy said, the guy I'm dealing with through it, said "Yeah, she'll take seventy-five." I was like, "Should've went for fifty!" (laughter).

GJE: Do you find them at just auctions around here?

MS: Yeah, yeah. You never know where you're gonna find 'em. There's a, in Johnstown it's called Swapper's Day. People bring everything and anything to sell. I mean anything, guns, milk bottles, anything in between. And there's people to sell their milk bottles to you, you've gotta look through them, and look for the one you want, and I have found several there. Yeah, so I probably have twenty... maybe not that many, maybe fifteen bottles.

CRO: What are you gonna do with them?

MS: Just pass them right on down the line. My kids will get 'em, and hopefully their kids will get 'em.

CRO: And where was this dairy farm?

MS: In Danville, yep. In Danville.

CW: How many kids do you have?

MS: I have two.

CW: Do they live around here?

MS: Rachel, my oldest daughter, lives in Newark. And Megan, my youngest daughter, lives in Cincinnati.

CW: Not too far.

MS: No, it's travelable. Cincinnati is a little bit of a drive, but yeah.

GJE: What do they do?

MS: Rachel is a schoolteacher. And Megan *was* a schoolteacher and a softball coach, and at two years of that, she decided to change professions. She just didn't like teaching and coaching anymore. So she went back to school and got her RN. And she was nursing at Cincinnati Hospital, but she just changed jobs and she's, it's called Residential Rehab, it's for people with all types of addictions. And that's what she's doing, she just loves it. Yeah, it's a lot different from what she was doing before, and she really likes it.

CRO: That's wonderful.

MS: Yeah, she just started that job, it's recent. Yeah.

CRO: Phenomenal. Good to hear that they are both...

MS: Yeah, doing well.

CW: Do you get to see them pretty often?

MS: Rachel in Newark we probably see two or three times a month, and we try to get to Cincinnati at least once a month.

CW: Oh wow!

MS: Yeah, yeah, that's about three and a half hour drive, so it's a pretty good drive, but we try to get down once a month. Yeah.

GJE: What do you all do when you're together usually? Do you have any traditional activities?

MS: Oh, we always try to get together on holidays. We try to. Like Easter, we're gonna have Easter at our house on Saturday with Rachel and her crew. And then Sunday, we'll drive to Cincinnati and have it down at Megan's.

CRO: That's nice.

CW: Do you go to church around here?

MS: We used to go to the Danville Church of Christ, we haven't been there for a while. We probably should start going again. Yeah, but we haven't been going for a while. But I was raised

in the Church of Christ.

GJE: Have you ever considered moving somewhere else?

MS: We're contemplating that right now. What to do, we wanna get... we're trying to find a happy medium between two girls.

CRO: Aww. And you have land no? You have a beautiful property I understand.

MS: Yeah. We've got forty acres. We just rent that out to the farmer. But Pam wants to find a neutral place.

CRO: Because of the grandchildren?

MS: Because of the grandchildren.

CRO: (laughter) Of course.

GJE: Did you consider moving at any other point in your life? Why did you decide to stay here?

MS: Pam has always been here, and this is where our work's at, and just made sense to, I never made any real plans to change jobs. 'Course Pam works here, and so we just stayed here. Yeah, we... just never made the move out West or anything. I like it out West, but... love it out there.

CW: Is Pam also from this area?

MS: Yeah, Pam's from Mount Vernon. Yeah. She's, from here, she worked here.

CRO: More than me, and I've been here for twenty-five years.

MS: Oh, I was gonna say twenty-five for Pam.

CRO: I think we started at the same time... This is going to be my twenty-fifth^h.

MS: Twenty-fifth, no kidding. Wow. Twenty-five years. Well Pam's right around twenty-five years, you're about the same time.

CRO: Maybe we came at the same time.

MS: I bet you did.

CRO: I think that she was training with Veronica when I started.

MS: Oh gosh yes, I forgot all about Veronica. You're right! Yeah, Veronica!

CRO: Yeah, yeah!

MS: What was her last name, you remember her last name?

CRO: No, no.

MS: It started with a "d"... Des? De...

CRO: It was like Desen... Des?

MS: Desiree, or something like that.

CRO: Yeah.

MS: Oh gosh yeah, Veronica. How can I forget Veronica?

CRO: Pam and I have matured together! (laughter)

CW: How did you guys meet?

MS: Pam and I met?

CW: Yeah.

MS: That's very interesting. She worked at Famous Recipe Chicken, it was a fast food chicken that used to be here in town, like Kentucky Fried Chicken. It was called Famous Recipe. It was very funny how we, so I went in there to get a chicken dinner one day, and I saw her. And I knew one of the cooks in the back, his name was Al. So I saw Pam, you know, "She's kinda cute," you know. And...

CRO: She still is!

MS: Yeah. So I ran into Al, a few days, a week later or something, and I said something, and I said, and Pam and I had talked for a little bit at the chicken place, and I said something to Al about it, and she goes, "Yeah," he goes, "Yeah, I bet she would go out with you." So I said, "Alright, I'll call her." So I called her at work. And I said, "Can I speak to Pam please?" Well, Pam answered the phone. And she thought there's a girl named Tammy worked there, she thought I said Tam. So Pam put Tam, Tammy, on the phone, I'm asking Tammy out! And here I'm supposed to be asking Pam out! We got all crossed up. So I'm asking this Tammy out, and I didn't wanna ask Tammy out, I wanted to ask Pam out! So Al, thank god for Al, he got us straightened out. Yeah, so... we got together and...

GJE: Are you still in touch with Al?

MS: Yeah! Al's the one that sold my mom's house, just a few months ago. Yeah.

CRO: How long did you date?

MS: Let's see... September, January... about a year before we got married. Yeah. Dated about a year before we got married.

CRO: That's so cool.

MS: Yeah.

GJE: So how do you find yourself interacting with the community?

MS: In Danville?

GJE: Yeah.

MS: Not a whole lot anymore, I used to, when the kids were in school and involved in sports and

so I coached summer league, and I coached high school, a bit assistant coach in softball, and I stayed involved that way. We were really involved when the kids were in school. But you know, they move on, and, you know, Megan played ball in college so we followed Megan around playing, so we kind of got away from the Danville...

CRO: Crowd.

MS: Yeah. So we don't really get a lot of involvement in the community anymore.

CRO: Megan is a Kenyon alumni, so...

CW: Wow!

GJE: From your experience, I know you weren't in Mount Vernon for too long, but did you notice any differences between kind of the Danville community, and the Mount Vernon community?

MS: No, people are people. They're about the same. There really wasn't a big difference. Two different types of communities; Danville used to be a farming community—a lot of small farms, you know, people made their living on small farms, and if you lived in Mount Vernon you worked in a factory. That's just pretty much the way it was. But people are people. They're all about the same. It's just a different route to take in life. Yeah, no, people are just people. They're all about the same.

CW: What did your parents do when you were growing up?

MS: My mom, well, they, while I was in school, Mom worked at the bank in Danville, and Dad worked for Pittsburgh Plate Glass, here in Mount Vernon. And then in '74, the year I graduated, Pittsburgh Plate shut down. They moved the factory. They just closed the factory, and then my parents moved to Meadville, Pennsylvania first. There's a plant in Meadville, and Dad and Mom were there for, I don't know, three years maybe. And things just weren't working out there, he was laid off an awful lot out there. So he moved to Texas, Wichita Falls, Texas. And they were down in Texas probably, oh gosh, five or six years I suppose. And then Dad retired disability—his back. But yeah, he worked at Pittsburgh Plate Glass. It was an old factory, and they went to what they called float glass, and it's a newer type, where they made glass, and they just shut down the plant in Mount Vernon, and he had to do something. So he moved, he had to move. So '75, '74, '75, they moved to Pennsylvania for a few years, then down to Texas.

CRO: And then back?

MS: Yeah, back to Danville. Yeah, when Dad retired disability or whatever, he, they moved back to Danville.

CW: Did a lot of people that worked at the factory also move?

MS: Yeah. In fact, down in Wichita Falls, Texas, there's a little suburb called Burkburnett. And they called it "Little Mount Vernon." There were so many families that made the move from Mount Vernon to Texas, they called it Little Mount Vernon.

CRO: Amazing.

GJE: Why do you think they went to Texas, was there no other factory that was closer?

MS: There was, Marshall, Minnesota; Wichita Falls, Texas; Meadville, Pennsylvania, and then there was up in Crestline, which is up by Mansfield. But they apparently weren't taking anybody at that time. It would have made sense for Dad just to go to Crestline, but there must not have been an opening or something. There must not have been an opening, and there sure was in Pennsylvania and Texas, and Minnesota, but Minnesota, it was cold. Marshall, Minnesota, in the wintertime, was, I drove out there with him my senior year, to look at the plant—snow was piled up on the side of the road, and it was blowing, and he talked to the state patrolman, there in Marshall, and he says "The first thing you do is buy a snowmobile. If you want to get to work every day you buy a snowmobile." So I said, you know, "You can move out here—I'm not!" Noo! Nothing to do with that.

CW: Do you think a lot of those workers that also left wanted to come back and retire here?

MS: I do, and I think some of them did. Dad had some friends down there in Texas, not as much in Pennsylvania, but in Texas he had some friends, and I think a few of them did move back after they retired. Yeah, there's not a lot in Texas.

GJE: Do you think more jobs have opened up outside of, kind of, factory production, here in Knox County, with, like, Coshocton Avenue and other retail places?

MS: Outside of factory?

GJE: Yeah.

MS: Yeah, there are lots of places to eat. You get a big variety of places to eat. And Coshocton Road is growing a little bit. There's a sports store out there now I believe, and a couple other stores have moved in. Yeah.

GJE: How do you think, kind of, not fully moving away from factory jobs, but the expansions of other retail and service jobs has changed Knox County?

MS: How has it changed Knox County? Well, losing the factory jobs, I think, it's become more of a retirement community has, I think. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think it has been more of that, 'cause you lost a bunch of industry. You lost both glass plants and Ludlow and large employers have gone. And there's a lot more stores, I would say, for more people, I think, than there used to be. I think it's turning into a retirement community more than it has anything. There's still some industry in Mount Vernon, but the high-paying jobs are about gone. The really good paying jobs are about gone. There's lots of jobs for ten dollars an hour, twelve dollars an hour, but it's hard to raise a family in Mount Vernon on ten or twelve dollars an hour.

GJE: Where do you think that industry and those high-paying jobs are going?

MS: Well ours is going overseas. Ours is going to Norway, Sweden, my particular job is going to Norway where we build in Trents right now. And the oil and gas, trent has the power gen. That's going to Norway. The RB2-11's for gas and oil is going to, no, Trent's going to Sweden, RB2-

11's going to Norway. Yeah, they bought a plant in New York. They're still building some gas and oil stuff in New York. And Houston, they're doing some work in Houston, Texas.

CRO: Why do you think they are going abroad?

MS: Well, Siemens is a German company. And they have an awful lot of their assets over there, across the pond. A lot of their assets are over there, lots of factories. And any time you, Siemens is a very large company. They're huge. If you go to Disney you'll see Siemens stuff. Their lighting display down there is Siemens. I mean, they're just into everything. They're just, it's a company that's been around for a... I didn't know a lot about them when they bought us. I mean, I learned a lot, but I have lots I still don't know about them.

GJE: Yeah, one of those companies that does so many different types of things...

MS: Yeah, they're so diversified. So diversified. And they wanna be a big role-player in gas and oil and power gen. There was rumor they're selling forty-one Trent units for power generation. There's a rumor they're selling forty-one of those units to New York, up in New York City. But it won't be built in Mount Vernon.

GJE: So are all the jobs at this plant being moved overseas or is it just your position?

MS: All the production.

GJE: So it's shifting to more of an office operation?

MS: Yes, exactly. You hit it on the button. The offices is going to stay around a while. They will support other places from Mount Vernon, for how long nobody knows. There's been a lot of the office people have left voluntarily. Yeah, a lot of them have just packed up and said, "See you later."

CRO: They know.

MS: They know, they know the end is coming eventually. We're going before they are. They just don't know when they are. We do know when we are.

CW: Do you think a lot of people working in production are going to stay around here and find another job, or try to follow this kind of job somewhere else?

MS: There will be, a big percent will try to stay in the area, I think. There'll be some that'll leave. I would say, it depends on their age. You know, if you get a guy or a woman, whichever the case may be, thirty-five, forty years old, they've got a lot of years to work yet. And they're raising a family, and it takes lots to raise—you know—it takes lots to raise a family. So I'd look for them to go where the work's at, which, they may have to relocate. But if you get somebody my age, they're gonna hang around. Them, they can work for ten or twelve bucks an hour, or fourteen, whatever, and get by. 'Cause their families are raised.

CW: Do you think that's a similar attitude from when your dad was laid off when he was working at the factory?

MS: I would say so, because the other glass, Chattanooga, shut down shortly after Pittsburgh

Plate did. So, other than Ludlow and Weyerhaeuser Paper, there wasn't a whole lot of good-paying jobs at that point. Industrial Park wasn't even really thought of at that point, Industrial Park now where they have the smaller businesses, that wasn't even there then. So a lot of the, so he had to move. He didn't have any choice. He was, I'm not sure how old Dad was when we left. Early forties? I'm guessing. I was eighteen, so he couldn't have been real old, you know. Forty-three maybe, when he left Mount Vernon.

GJE: So do you think at this point, if like a factory here closes and there's a thirty or forty year old, do you think they'll find a comparable paying factory job somewhere else in the States, or does it seem like they're... they're definitely more limited.

MS: You're limited. The higher-paying jobs are gone. Ariel pays pretty well, and they have good retirement going for them. But other than Ariel, the jobs are just not high-paying.

GJE: Why do you think Ariel is able to keep up those wages?

MS: Well, I'm not sure. They're oil and gas like we are, they build smaller, smaller versions of what we build. They build compressors. Small compressors. And they're just, there's a big market for what they do. They've been slow for a year, but they're picking up now.

GJE: And how did you hear that they were doing slow?

MS: Well, we're in the business too. We've been slow, they've been slow. It, it runs that way. One thing about my job, and same with Ariel, depends on the exploration. You know, how much these companies, BP, and Texico, how much money they want to spend for exploration. And they're not, if they're not spending money for exploration, they don't need us. And that's the way it's been for a couple years now. We just haven't sold much because everybody's holding on to their old equipment and repairing their old equipment instead of buying new. They just see that as more feasible right now. Now eventually, it's a vicious circle—it'll change. Sooner or later, it's gonna open up and there's gonna be a ton of work.

GJE: Everyone will just clean ship, buy a bunch of new stuff.

MS: Yeah, they'll just go out and they'll just, exploration will pick up, and they'll start replacing pipelines, and it'll get busy again. But I was laid off a lot in the 80's. I worked six months, laid off four. Worked three months, laid off six. That's the way it was clear through the 80's. And then the 90's, a big job for Saudi Arabia, and that kept us real busy. Yeah. So, you just never know. I don't understand it. I don't. I've tried, I've been thirty-eight years now and I still don't understand it. It's just the way it is. It's just the way it is.

CW: So you think that kind of uncertainty will keep going on in the future?

MS: Oh yeah. It's up and down. When we're doing well, other businesses usually aren't. And when we're not doing well, other businesses usually flourish. As crazy as that sounds, that's the way it works.

GJE: What type of places do you shop at in the community? Are you, do you find yourself on Coshocton a lot, or are you at local businesses?

MS: I don't shop much (laughter). About the only shopping I do is Christmastime. Mansfield, or excuse me, Mount Vernon, or I'll go down to Polaris. Pam will take me down, I don't like driving a lot, she'll drive and I'll say, "Get lost so I can go buy your Christmas stuff," you know (laughter). But I don't do a lot of shopping. Get my gas local, of course, every Friday I get my gas, and what I need, but I'm not a big shopper.

GJE: But for example, like, the groceries at your house. Do you know where those are usually from?

MS: Yeah, Kroger's here. That's my job, I was designated that job a couple months ago. So every Saturday morning I get up early 'cause there's nobody in the store, and I like that, and I go to Kroger and get groceries. Then I go out to the meat place and get meat for the week, and my job's done for the week (laughs).

GJE: Can you think of one story that just kind of captures life in Knox County?

MS: Story?

GJE: Yeah, story.

MS: Captures life in Knox County... I can't think of any off the top of my head.

CW: Do you have a favorite childhood memory or a place?

MS: Childhood place... Spending time with my grandpa. Going mushroom hunting or fishing, I really enjoyed that as a kid.

GJE: Is there good mushroom hunting around here?

MS: Yeah, yes. Not like it used to be. This changed too, I mean there's... I used to go out and pick a couple bread bags full every time I go out, but you just can't find 'em like that anymore. So I go to Michigan, hunt them up there.

CW: Oh you do!

MS: Yeah, Michigan's a really good place to hunt mushrooms. Indiana's a good place.

GJE: My dad once found some really rare mushrooms that kind of tasted like steak, and ever since then I've really wanted to get into mushroom hunting myself.

MS: Oh yeah, morel mushrooms are like gold around here. Yeah. You get, I've seen a pie plate, just on a pie plate, sixty-five dollars. Just heaped up on just a pie plate! The Amish sell them down there in Amish country, and they get sixty-five bucks for a plate of 'em. Yeah, they're, they're delicious! (laughter)

CRO: And expensive!

MS: Expensive mushrooms is just hard to beat.

CW: Did you grandfather sell them or was it just for fun?

MS: No, we used to always eat them. Yeah, we never sold them.

CRO: What would you think is the big, you have been in this area for all your life and you have seen a change. I'm wondering, what are the big challenges that you see nowadays and how do you see the future of Mount Vernon? Or Knox County in general?

MS: Future of Mount Vernon, they can't keep losing industry. I mean, you lose industry, you lose people. And you draw different types of people. Like I said, I think it's more of a retirement community now, it's getting that way, 'cause, you know, you're losing industry. And you know, you lose industry, you're losing people. And businesses struggle, and I think, if you don't make a lot of money, you're not going to eat out a lot, and you're not going to eat much, out, and things is going to change. Siemens is a big employer. Huge. Seven or eight hundred people. And it's gonna go down to not very many. And it's September, they're closing production in September, so all the union will be gone in September. And there'll be people moving, and some will stay, this is what we talked about with the ages, some will stay and some will leave. But, they're trying to get some new business in but Mount Vernon is not close to an interstate. There's no interstate close for transport or anything. I mean, when we get something out of Mount Vernon that we built, it's difficult. You got police escort, and state patrol escort, to get them out of town, and they have escorts wherever they go 'cause they're wide loads... that's one thing that worked against the Mount Vernon plan, it's the location. It's just not close to a port, you know, they go to Houston or they go to New York, put them on a boat, put them on ships, man, it's a long way to take them. When you're going twenty-five, thirty miles an hour, it's a long way to take them.

GJE: What have you noticed a lot of your coworkers are planning on doing in September?

MS: Oh boy. We have an older workforce, and there have been probably fifty... they have what they call voluntary. And a lot of the older guys are taking the voluntary. And they'll retire. Or most of them will. Some will look for a job, but most of them retire. The ones being affected now are gonna have to, they're gonna have to find work. We do have an older workforce, the average age is fifty-eight years old. Yeah, so we do have an older workforce. And I'm sure that worked against us too. You know, with, the older you are, the more health problems you have. It's expensive for the company to keep up your insurance premiums and so forth, and it costs them lots of money.

CRO: And your salary also is higher, because you've been working.

MS: Exactly. So, it, just a lot of things worked against it. Location, age of the workforce.

GJE: Have you noticed people starting to move in who work in Columbus, or have long commutes to a city?

MS: A lot of the office people live in Columbus or a ways from here, quite a ways away. They travel. Like I said, there's been a lot of the office people have left. They just read the writing on the wall and said, "It's time to make a change," and I guess they don't mind traveling as much as I do. I travel sixteen miles, and that's far enough. Some of them drive sixty miles one way and don't think a thing about it. I wouldn't like it, caught in the traffic in Columbus, and, that's terrible. Eww.

CRO: So, I think, this is a wonderful conversation, but if you have final comments or any of you have a final question, very interesting to hear your story! Any final comments?

CW: If you do move away from here to be closer to your grandchildren, what do you think you're gonna miss the most about living here?

MS: Friends. Leaving a lot of friends behind, I won't see them as often. We won't be doing anything real... my mom's still in Danville, so we won't do anything for a while yet. But it depends on Pam and how soon she wants to...

CRO: The boss! (laughter)

MS: Yeah, the boss. That's right! But friends, you miss friends.

GJE: Thank you so much!

CW: Thank you!

MS: You're very welcome. Very nice meeting and talking to y'all.