This is an interview with Frank Guidon, Sr. for *In the Age of Steel: Oral Histories from Bethlehem Pennsylvania*. The interview was conducted by Kathy (Kane) Schlegel on March 13, 1975 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Kane: The following is an interview with Frank Guidon at his home, 844 Tolstoy, in Freemansburg [Pennsylvania]. The interview took place on March 13th, 1975. The interviewer is Kathy Kane. Okay, let’s start by what year did you start working for Bethlehem Steel?

Guidon: 1936.

Kane: Mm-hm. And what did you do when you started there? What was your job?

Guidon: I worked on the labor gang.

Kane: Uh-huh, in what mill?

Guidon: The 48 inch mill\(^1\).

Kane: And what did that entail? What did you have to do?

Guidon: Well, I’d sort of cleaned up scale\(^2\), and got the rolls ready for the mills, and sweeping up. Odds and ends like that.

Kane: And how long were you on the labor gang?

Guidon: Oh, for quite a while. That was a time when—things weren’t so good at that time, so—

Kane: The economy?

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\(^1\) A wide flange structural shape mill located in the Saucon Division consisting of three stands, each driven by a twin tandem reversing steam engine.

\(^2\) Iron oxides that form on the surface of Hot Rolled during or subsequent to rolling. Scale can be removed by Pickling.
Guidon: No, I mean, ’36 [1936], (microphone rustling) (inaudible). The work was off and on. You’d work a while; you’d be laid off. I was on for quite a number of years, on the labor gang.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: ‘Til I got in on the build-up gang\(^3\), what they called the build-up gang. You’d build up the mills for the—that’s in the 42 inch mills. See, the 42 and the 48 together. And then I worked there for a while, and then I got laid off. I got called back again. It was up until about 1940, I’d say, is when it really started that we were working pretty steady.

Kane: And a build-up gang? What exactly does a build-up gang do?

Guidon: The build up—they used to build up the mills for the—that’s a rolling mill.\(^4\)

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: That’s where they roll the beams\(^5\).

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And that’s what it’s called, a build-up gang. They’d build up the mills for the size beam they’d want to roll for the next time, or—

Kane: I see.

Guidon: —whatever it is. And then you’d get it ready for it.

Kane: Mm-hm, so this was a lot of physical work?

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\(^3\) Project staff were unable to identify this term.

\(^4\) Department that processed and formed the steel into the desired shape and improved its mechanical characteristics through the use of horizontal rolls.

\(^5\) Project staff were unable to identify this term.
Guidon: Yeah, mostly.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But it wasn’t steady. It was—you’d work ‘til you’d get it done, then you sort of cleaned up your area, or just waited for the next one to come around.

Kane: Did you find that boring, just to wait around?

Guidon: Oh, no, because there was always, you know, something going on.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: And you’d go down and watch them in the mills, try to see how they’d do their jobs, trying to learn the jobs, you know, so in case you ever get advancement.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: So you’d have an idea what it’s like.

Kane: Right. Did you enjoy seeing all the different processes?

Guidon: Oh, yes, yes. It was interesting, because at that time, I was just, oh, I’d say only about 21, I imagine, 21 years old, something like that. And it was something different, something new. And it was a place where they made these beams for buildings, bridges, and seeing how it was made.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: It was a place where you had to work to get an advancement, to get ahead.

Kane: Uh-huh.
Guidon: If you didn’t want to get ahead, well then you just stayed back. But if you wanted to get ahead, you poked around, looked around, how the other jobs were doing.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And, you learned.

Kane: Uh-huh. So what did you do? Did you say after 1940 it became stable?

Guidon: It come pretty good. That’s when it start really picking up. Then I start advancing. And I got on the mills, you know, rolling mills, like table operator\(^6\), guide-setter\(^7\), greaser\(^8\). You’d start from greaser; that’s the lowest.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: And then you’d work yourself up to a guide-setter, first, second guide setter. And then you’d get on—run tables. And then they had the next job was a screw-down operator\(^9\). That’s what took care of the mills, at the sides, and you know how the beams are?

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: That took care of this, what the web is, the flat part.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And the flanges\(^{10}\) are the sides of the—

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\(^6\) Operates an electric, motor driven roller line that is used to move rolled product from one point to another.

\(^7\) Responsible for the correct mounting of the cast mill guides and for locating advancement to the mill rolls which helped to ensure straight entry and delivery of the bar through the mill rolls.

\(^8\) Responsible for greasing the roll trains in a mill. It is considered unskilled work.

\(^9\) Responsible for setting the space between rolls on the rolling mill for reducing slabs, ingots, or billets to a specified dimension.
Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That took care of that. And the table operator, he ran the roller line\textsuperscript{11} to bring the bar in from—well, the bloomer\textsuperscript{12} is the first process, then the shears\textsuperscript{13}; they cut the ends off.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: The Number 1\textsuperscript{14} mill would rough it down. The Number 2\textsuperscript{15} would finish it, go out to the saw, and our to the beam yards, and out to wherever they send it.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: But up until that time, it was hard. We had to work—there’s a place, worked with the cinder hole gang, where you had to work, clean the cinders out from underneath the pits, where it’s all hot and dusty. I worked there for a while, but not too long. I was fortunate to get out of there.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And as I said, I kept on advancing. And that’s where I stayed, almost. And I believe in between there, one time, there was a little slack time, and we’d get out on loan slips\textsuperscript{16}. I worked on the labor gang, the rigger gang\textsuperscript{17}, for a few weeks. Not long;

\textsuperscript{10} An external or internal rib used to reinforce the strength of an object such as a beam.
\textsuperscript{11} Mill equipment used to move product from one production step to the next.
\textsuperscript{12} A large piece of steel produced on a blooming mill from an ingot of steel.
\textsuperscript{13} Used to trim the edges of sheet and strip parallel if they are not controlled during reduction.
\textsuperscript{14} Project staff were unable to identify this term.
\textsuperscript{15} Part of the Alloy and Tool Steel Division. The No. 2 Mills were comprised of 8", 10", 12" and 22" finishing mills.
\textsuperscript{16} Project staff were unable to locate this term.
\textsuperscript{17} Worked on the high steel with the L beams, erected E.O.T. cranes, and moved and set in place heavy machinery. This position was considered especially dangerous and was well paid.
it was just for a while. And I come back, and that’s where I stayed ‘til, up ‘til I retired. Then, now and then I’d fill in as a roller\textsuperscript{18}. That was the highest paid job there, outside of supervision.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: So I used to fill in on those jobs now and then.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And that’s where I stayed ‘til I retired.

Kane: What year did you retire?

Guidon: Last year, 1974.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: June, or July, rather.

Kane: July—what, the end of the month, probably?

Guidon: Well, I took, I had thirteen weeks vacation, and my birthday was in October, so that was officially in October.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But I went out in July already.

Kane: They allowed you to take all thirteen weeks, back to back?

\textsuperscript{18} A person who passes metal stock through rolls in order to make the metal into a desired shape.
Guidon: Yes.

Kane: Hm! (Laughs)

Guidon: Yes, I got all my thirteen weeks, and I went right into my pension age. So from July on, I didn’t work anymore.

Kane: Right. Are you doing anything now?

Guidon: Nothing outside of bowling and golfing, and stuff like that. (Laughs)

Kane: And finding it hard to get along with that stuff, huh?

Guidon: Yeah, right.

Kane: (Laughs) Yeah.

Guidon: And taking orders from the boss—this boss here! (Laughs)

Kane: She better than the bosses you had at work?

Guidon: Oh!

Kane: (Laughs)

Mrs. Guidon: I hope so! (Laughs)

Guidon: Sure, that’s for sure. But as a rule, they weren’t—in our department, I wouldn’t say they were too bad.

Kane: Mm-hm.
Guidon: Because that was a place to work, that work had to be done. And the bosses very seldom, especially the millmen\textsuperscript{19}—what we called the millmen—they very seldom bothered them. Because the job had to be done, and the men—if the mills were going, then the men were doing their job.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: There wasn’t much for, much for the boss to, you know, give you any trouble or anything. It was one department was really nice, too. I really enjoyed working there; I liked it very much.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: It was interesting and—

Kane: Some of the people I’ve talked to have talked about how men slacken off, like they’ll go off and sleep for a while, or something. Did you run into that at all?

Guidon: Oh, yes, at the beginning. There are certain jobs that you could, you know. There was time that there was nothing to do. You could either—mostly at night time, not during the day. If you did it in the daytime, you did it when you shouldn’t have been doing it, you know.

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: But at night time. And they realized that. They knew that if you did your work, there was nothing else to do, you’d go and take a little rest—

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: —or slack time. But that’s how that mill is operated, that way. Once everything is going smooth, then it’s just a matter of waiting.

\textsuperscript{19} Possibly refers to a millwright who inspects, repairs, replaces, installs, adjusts, and maintains all mechanical
Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: And then when that, what they’d call a section, it would be—they’d call them sections, you know, that side—beam, that would run out? And that would be finished, and we’d have to work. We’d have to change the rolls.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: We’d have to take the old rolls out, put new rolls in, clean up, and start over again.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: See, it’s—the job I had was a little monotonous. It was the same thing over and over. You’d stand there running levers\(^{20}\)—it’s a lever job—and watching these drums. There was drums\(^{21}\) with numbers on.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And that was a little monotonous. But, at times you get a break where you—maybe there was a breakdown, or something like that. And then you have a little free time.

Kane: Yeah. If the mill really broke down, like an integral part of the mill broke down, what did the men do? Just get the day off, or wait around?

Guidon: Well no, see, they—those, if it happened on a mill where you worked, and it involved your kind of work, well, you stood there and helped to fix it, and get it ready. And the others, well, they just would have to wait ‘til we get done, see.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They had nothing to do.

\(^{20}\) Project staff were unable to identify this term.

\(^{21}\) Most likely refers to a Flaking Drum.
Kane: Right.

Guidon: They weren’t reward producing. They were getting their day rate, and they had to wait ‘til we got the work done.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But, if it was a big break down, like one of the engines—

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: —and they’d know if would take maybe a day, or 48 hours, maybe 36, then they would send us home.

Kane: With pay, though?

Guidon: No, no, you didn’t get paid when you got sent home. Not on a break down.

Kane: Uh-huh. That’s pretty (inaudible).

Guidon: See, the only way you got paid, if—you were guaranteed 32 hours.

Kane: A week?

Guidon: A week.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: See, if you worked less than 32 hours, you got paid for 32 hours.

Kane: Uh-huh.
Guidon: But sometimes it—if the breakdown maybe only lasted eight hours, maybe twelve hours, well then you just lost a day, that’s all.

Kane: Yeah. That would be hard to take, because it wasn’t your fault that it broke down, you know? (Laughs)

Guidon: But there was nothing you could do about it, because see, those—there’s really nothing you could do about it. That’s a big, big operation.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Something happened, and it’s hard to take, but look at the company, what they lose!

Kane: Right.

Guidon: Everything, they—their loss is in the thousands of dollars when they have a big breakdown like that!

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And sometimes they—like the millmen, if somebody wants to stay and work, and clean up, you know, and work, you’d work for labor wages.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: If you wanted to stay.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: So some would stay, and some would go home.

Kane: Uh-huh. You were speaking about night shift and day shift. Was there less work done at night? Was it just—?
Guidon: Not, in the mills it wasn’t, not less. In day shift, they had more men working, because they had more laborers, and different maintenance men.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: They had more on the day shift. But as far as the production part, it’s the same either shift.

Kane: It is?

Guidon: Day shift, middle, nights, it’s the same. If they’d go—we worked on 24 hours, and we only had one 8 hour shift that was down for—that’s when they repaired the mills, cleaned up. But all the rest of the time was continuous.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: It was always continuous work. So, it was just as much if you worked, if you had 8 hours working the day shift, and nothing happened, you worked 8 hours.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And 3 to 11, 11 to 7, it’s the same thing. But then there’s jobs that, like a crane man. He’d get his job done; he’d have a little free time. He could either take a little nap, or a rest, or go around, look, talk, or if he think he wanted advancement, he could look around and see what the millmen—the millmen job, some of them, that they had. But they, on a mill, you could sit down and rest, but it would be hard to fall asleep, because you never know. When something happens, you have to be there to work. But then, there’s time you sit there and just watch them, just watch the bars go by.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: Making money for you.

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22 Operates a crane; The type of craneman correlates to the type of crane being used (example: Skull Cracker Craneman)
Kane: (Laughs)

Guidon: The only person that really worked was the lever men. They had to stay at their post all the time. Then, and somebody else could do your job, he’d come up and give you a little relief.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And you’d go out and stretch your legs, come back again.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But other than that, the—like I said, the lever men had to work the full time. When there was a breakdown or something, then you got a little. And when there was a roll change, well then you went out and helped. You had to help to change the rolls, get the mill in shape. But other than that, it was nice. It was good.

Kane: Yeah. You said your job was a little monotonous. Did you find like little mind games to play, or something, to take your mind off the monotony of your job?

Guidon: Oh, you couldn’t. You couldn’t take your mind off of the job.

Kane: No?

Guidon: Because if you’d missed your marks on any of that stuff, you’d give the bar a wrong measurement. You had to keep your mind there all the time.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: That’s what I mean it was—. But you get so used to it, you almost did it automatically.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: It’s the same thing, over and over. You did the same thing, day in and day out.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But you had to keep your mind on the job. It wasn’t that you—because as soon as your mind would wander, you’d right away run into trouble. Not serious trouble—

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: —but, the more so the table operator would have more serious trouble if his mind wandered than my job, because he was the one that controlled the bar going in to the mill, and he could—if I wasn’t ready, and he put the bar in, it could bend it up, or smash it up, or anything, see.

Kane: Yeah. Was this cold metal, or was this still hot?


Kane: This was hot?

Guidon: It was hot metal. See, they had what they called the soaking pits. That’s where they’d put these ingots, in the soaking pits. They’d heat them up to a certain temperature that it could be rolled. They would take them out, and they would put them in the blooming mill. That’s the first. That’s only two rolls, two big rolls. And they, this ingot goes back and forth ‘til they knock it down to a certain size, and then the ends would get big round and round ends on them.

Kane: Mm-hm.

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23 A heated pit in which ingots would be rolled by their own heat.
Guidon: They’d put them through the shears, and they’d cut the ends off. And then you have a bar, what you called a bar. And that would go to the roughing mill, which was the Number 1 mill.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They would back and forth, maybe. It all depends how thick, or what size you needed. Sometimes you’d go 3 or 4 times, sometimes as high as 20. And then, that would go down to the finishing mill, which is the Number 2 mill.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: There, it would—there the most it would do would be about 7 times, and that would go back and forth. And then the bar, that would be finished. And from a little ingot, a bar which stretched to 200—150, 220 feet, I believe, was the longest.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And then the hot saw, what they called the hot saw. The bar was still red-hot. It would cut the ends off, because the ends formed again. And he’d but the bar into the sizes, and they’d take it out to the yards, and that’s what they called the shipping yard. That’s where they’d ship it.

Kane: Uh-huh, I see. With the hot metal, and with, you know, I guess the saws and everything were very sharp and powerful. Were there many injuries in your area?

Guidon: Well, there was, but it’s—I wouldn’t say there was that many.

Kane: Uh-huh.

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24 It is the first stand in a multiple stand rolling mill complex.
25 The portion of the steelmaking complex that processes semi-finished steel (slabs or billets) into useable forms.
26 Located at the discharge end of a rolling mill used to cut steel to desired lengths while it is still hot.
Guidon: It was—if you were careful—I worked there thirty-eight years. Never had a injury—nothing. The only thing that I ever did, if I kicked my shins, you know. I’d be in a hurry, or something.

Kane: Yeah, right.

Guidon: But I never, never had no kind of injury.

Kane: Did the company look out for that? Did they, you know, was the company safety-conscious when you worked there?

Guidon: Oh, yes, yeah. Oh, yes, we had to—when I started there, the only thing we had was—I can’t remember if we had safety shoes on or not then. But I know we had to wear safety shoes.

Kane: Is that the steel-tip?

Guidon: That’s the steel tip, and goggles, and a helmet. But that all came as years went on, because when I first started there, we had no helmets, no goggles.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But as the years been by, every time they come up with these different things. Well, we had to have gloves, because we’d touch hot metal sometimes.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: Them wheels were hot. Gloves, helmets, goggles, and safety shoes. But they were—they always preached safety. They always wanted you to be careful. The only time you’d have, well I’d say, an accident, something would happen uncontrollable, like maybe a cable would break, or maybe something, you know, a nut would come loose, or something that, which you call an accident then. But I don’t believe there are too many real serious accidents.

Kane: Right.
Guidon: We had few there. I know one time there was a man got killed. That was because something happened to the crane, and that hoist, whatever it is, come down and hit him right on the head.

Kane: Ooh.

Guidon: And something like that, that’s—you just can do anything about it.

Kane: Right, right. Did the maintenance crew, the maintenance engineers, or whatever—did they come around constantly to fix things, and make sure everything was in proper working order?

Guidon: Oh, yeah. Well see, that’s why we had that one they opened, that they would fix things up, see that everything’s in place.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: Clean up the scale, make it workable, presentable, and clean, you know.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They tried to keep—they always preached cleanliness and safety. That was often. And then, you know, these, like the supervisor, they’d come by, and they’d see that you didn’t have your glasses on. They’d tell you about it! When you’re working, you know how it is; they’d say, “Ah, what is he telling me about it?” But then, when you stop to think, I mean, he’s doing it for your own good!

Kane: Right.

Guidon: Because if you lose an eye, it’s too late then to put them on.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: So it’s just human nature that you get, you know, sort of worked up, because they tell you, “Where’s your glasses?” or “Where’s your helmet?” or something like that. But it was only for your own good.
Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Because every now and then, something from up the top would come down, and a guy would have a—it wasn’t much, but it was, even if it’s only a little nut, if it hits you on the head—

Kane: Right.

Guidon: It hurts! (Inaudible) helmets prevents that.

Kane: Did these safety changes come with the union, or did they just come with time?

Guidon: Well, I would say they came with both.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Both, both, you know, because they had to have safety. And then, I believe, the state, you know, they started—, they had safety programs, and stuff like that.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: But it came as the years went on. But even when we started, they always told you to watch yourself: be careful. Even with the things you might not have the protective equipment, but they always were safety-minded.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: They used to always have safety meetings. They had, oh, different things, you know, and they’d preach safety. But a lot of it depends on the men themselves. If they were careful, you had no problem. But just like I say, human nature, a lot of times you think you can do it. Like somebody would say, ‘I did that for I don’t know how many years.’ There’s always a first time.

Kane: Right, right.
Guidon: So, and that’s the way things happened down there. A lot of times you’d be doing the same thing over and over, yet you know it’s not right, but you were saying, you were getting away with it. And then when you did, “Jeez, I’ve been doing it so many years.” And it happened—well, that’s how it happens.

Kane: Yeah. Were you a union member?

Guidon: Yes.

Kane: Did you join as soon as you went to the plant?

Guidon: No, at the time I started, there was no union in the plant.

Kane: Uh-huh. And what year did it start?

Guidon: Oh, like, it’s hard to say. I really can’t remember when the union started. Do you remember? I’d say some times in the ‘40’s [1940’s], because I started in ’36 [1936]. I know I worked there a few years before the union got in there.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And well, that’s—you know how—the problems we had, when that was starting up. And that was pretty rough, you know, the unions, and there was always clashing.

Kane: Between the workers, or between the supervision and the workers?

Guidon: And the union, see. Until they come to the understanding that it, I guess, it doesn’t make sense. We might as well work things out together. Which was better that way, because you know, before they used to leave the gates open. Who wanted to go to work could go to work. Well, a person going to work, and these other would see him. Well, on the way there’d be a fire they’d (inaudible).

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: So, they figured out when the strike comes, we close up everything, and have no problems. And it seemed as though it worked out better bargaining, you know, by bargaining sessions. See, we had no trouble after that.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: They bargained. They, well, sometimes we were out quite a bit. I guess in '55 [1955], or when it was, that was a long one. Hm?

Mrs. Guidon: It was in the '40's [1940's] that the union was there.

Guidon: Yeah, but in '55 [1955], we had that long strike. It was, oh, I don’t know how many months it was. But, they kept bargaining, bargaining, until finally they worked on (inaudible).

Kane: Mm-hm. How did you feel about the union? Good, bad, or indifferent?

Guidon: Well, it had good and bad, just like everything else.

Kane: What were the good?

Guidon: Well, the good it did was it helped you in your work, you know, that they couldn’t just—say I was in line for a job, and—

Mrs. Guidon: Seniority, for one.

Guidon: Huh?

Mrs. Guidon: Seniority, for one.

Guidon: Yeah, seniority. You were in line for a job, and if they had somebody else that’s a friend or something, of them there. Well, that was the good thing the union did; they did away with that.

Kane: Uh-huh.
Guidon: And that was a good thing. And as far as the wages? Well, it was good, too. But every time we got a raise, everything else went up.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: So what did we gain by that?

Kane: Right.

Guidon: That I didn’t think was so good.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But all these other benefits what we got, like pensions and different other things, like Blue Cross-Blue Shield the company paid, and all that stuff—

Kane: Right.

Guidon: —and all that was worked out pretty good.

Mrs. Guidon: Vacations.

Guidon: Which, and vacations, that was another thing. See, like first, you got one week, then it was two weeks. And then by the time it ended up, I was getting 13 weeks.

Kane: Right. Is 13 the highest?

Guidon: That’s the highest.

Kane: Right.
Guidon: So, to that extent it was good.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And then the rest, it was up to the membership itself. It’s what you made it.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: You could make it good, or you could make it bad.

Kane: What were some of the bad aspects of the union? You said they did good and bad things.

Guidon: Well, about this money, you know, getting raises, always after these raises. I think that’s about the only thing that, if they would have stressed more on working conditions, and you know, things for, like—

Mrs. Guidon: Benefits.

Guidon: —benefits, you know, it would be better than always looking for raises.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: Because that was good, but then we got—then we had to pay it out, anyhow! So in the long run, nobody gained by that part.

Kane: Right. Some people said that the union was bad in that it made men softer. Like, they could get away with more, and therefore they tried to.

Guidon: Well, to a certain extent, yes. To a certain extent, yes, they did. But then, if you look at it, they had to do it—if they did it for one, they had to do it for the other, you know?

Kane: Right, right.
Guidon: Say, well, if he does that, and they never looked at what you did, but what they wanted to do, see? So they, so then the union was in the middle, so they had to treat them all the same. Some it softened up. But then in the end, those, when it come to real thing, then they didn’t gain anything by it anyhow, by being soft, see? Because when times went back, and they were younger, and they didn’t have the seniority, they were the first ones to be laid off. So when they went out on their own, they were lost.

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: So, that was on their own. If they thought they were getting away with something, they were only hurting themselves.

Kane: Right. You worked there during World War II, right?

Guidon: Yes.

Kane: Did you notice—well, there were a lot more women working there?

Guidon: Well, not in our department.

Kane: No?

Guidon: There was very few, because there wasn’t a place there, that much work for a woman to do.

Kane: It was too heavy?

Guidon: Heavy.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But they had some there that used to sweep up, clean up. And up in the pits, the soaking pits, at that time they had manual reverse, and you had to just throw a lever over, every so many—every 15 minutes, then throw it back, and that’s what you
had to do. There was some work there, but not many. No, they didn’t work on the mills. They couldn’t work on the mills, because the job was—you know, it was too hard to handle.

Kane: Mm-hm, I see.

Guidon: It was heavy work.

Kane: Where did they work, mainly, then?

Guidon: Like I say, cleaning up, sweeping the floors.

Kane: All over the plant?

Guidon: Over in our department, and up in the soaking pits. But they had no kind of lever jobs, or crane men jobs, or anything like that. We had very few; there wasn’t too many at all—I’d say maybe ten at the most.

Kane: Yeah. Did this cause any disruption in the work?

Guidon: No, no, because there wasn’t—well, let’s put it this way: everybody had to do their work.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: In the mills, you were working on the mills, you had to do your job, because if you didn’t, the mill would stop, and something was wrong.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And then, where these women worked, well they were away from you. They were either up the one end, or the other end, and not much to do.

Kane: Mm-hm.
Guidon: And then they had their maids, or matrons, or whatever they’re called, that used to take care of them, make sure that the women were in line.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But in some places I imagine they had more, but in our department we had very few.

Kane: Yeah. How were the relationships between the foremen and the men? Was it a good working relationship? Was there any antagonism?

Guidon: Well, I would say it was pretty good. The majority was pretty good. Because like I said before, we had a job to do, and regardless of what the foreman or who was it, he couldn’t say nothing, because we had to do the work. The work had to be done.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: There might have been some on the labor gang part, you know, or something like that. Maybe they, well, laying down on the job or something. But I wouldn’t say it was real bad. I think we had pretty good supervision down there. I would say it, to my estimation, was pretty good. I couldn’t say too much—like I say, there might have been some, but like I say, it’s human. Everybody has their ways.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: But at time, the working men, you’d have more trouble with the working men than with supervision. You know, the smaller, like a little boss, a leader, like say a leader, say.

Kane: Yeah.

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27 Women who served as a resource for female employees and who oversaw the behavior of female employees.
Guidon: You’d have more problems with him than with foremen, or a higher up.

Kane: What would the problem be there?

Guidon: Well, the leader wants to, you know, make themself look good, and try to get up higher, see?

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And he’d be nasty. He’d be digging you, and he’d be pushing you.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: See, that’s that part of the leader. You know, somebody that’s small always want to be something that they’re not.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: You know how that works?

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: So that’s the only problem that was there.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: But as far as the foremen out of the office, the supervision out of the office, there was no problem, I would say. There was—maybe you might have, you always do, as far as that goes, some. But I never had no problem with none of them. I
always, like I say, once I worked there so many years, that when I got on this job, the screw-down operator\textsuperscript{28}, I was in a, it’s a little shanty, a pulpit\textsuperscript{29}, they call it. It’s only big enough for two of us to be in there, plus a couple of lockers.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And that’s where we were for 8 hours, 2 of us.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And the only time I seen anybody, if they pass up and down through the mill, what they’d say, call, through the mill.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And I worked there for the better part of my 38 years up there. So I didn’t see much that was going on, and there was not much for anybody to bother me, because I had to do my work.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That job had to keep going. So there was nothing that interfered with me, or me with anybody else. A lot of people didn’t even know you, but you knew everybody, because you’d see them walking—

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: —down through the mills.

Kane: You know, you said you didn’t see that much, but did you know of any antagonism between foremen and maybe union members? Was there any antagonism there at the beginning of the union?

\textsuperscript{28} Responsible for setting the space between rolls on the rolling mill for reducing slabs, ingots, or billets to a specified dimension.

\textsuperscript{29} Project staff were unable to identify this term.
Guidon: Well, maybe at the beginning there might have been a little.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But still, like I say, it still wasn’t—there wasn’t room for it, because we had to do the job.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: The only time I’d say, like, at the beginning, they’d still try to work with their friends. And yet, like I say, it was the smaller.

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: It was the smaller guys. But the bigger ones, they knew that you had to do the job. And the older men, like when I come in there, and there was pretty many older fellows working, well, the older fellows later on were going out, and the younger fellows had to keep filling in. So, you just had to go right along with it.

Kane: Yeah, yeah. Let’s switch off, like, the Steel itself for a while. My thing in this is leisure—like I’m investigating what people did with their leisure time. Like, when you started there, was it a 10-hour day, or was it still the 12-hour day?

Guidon: No, when I started it was 8 hours.

Kane: Oh, it was 8 hours?

Guidon: It was 8 hours already.

Kane: Oh, I see.
Guidon: Because it just started then. And I worked still in the silk mill; I worked ten hours. But the last year I worked in the silk mill is when the NRA\textsuperscript{30} went in.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Remember when that went into effect?

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: Well, that’s when the 8 hours went into effect. And it’s still 8 hours down there.

Mrs. Guidon: Thirteen dollars a week.

Guidon: Yeah.

Kane: You brought home 13 dollars a week?

Guidon: No, that’s what, at Laris\textsuperscript{31}, when I worked there.

Kane: Oh.

Mrs. Guidon: I worked for, when the NRA came out, in the silk mill, 13 dollars a week.

Kane: And you could live on 13 dollars a week?

Mrs. Guidon: Things were much cheaper.

\textsuperscript{30} Acronym stands for the National Recovery Administration. Its goal was to set fair prices and establish fair business practices by bringing together industry, labor and government. It was declared unconstitutional in 1935.

\textsuperscript{31} Established in 1921, the R.K. Laris Silk Mill was located at the northeast corner of Broad and New Street in Bethlehem, PA. The Mill specialized in the silk for women’s hosiery.
Guidon: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. When I first got married, I worked in Laris. I first got married, I was paid 25 dollars in 2 weeks.

Kane: It’s just so hard to believe.

Guidon: I got married—it is hard to believe, but that’s true.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But then, you know, when I brought, when I got my check in the Steel, it was in the early ‘40’s [1940’s], yet, I made 90 some dollars for 2 weeks. I brought pretty near all of that home—not much taken off.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But today! I get 600 dollars, and there’d be 200 or 250 dollars taken off.

Kane: When did they start taking income, or federal withholding and everything, off of paychecks? Do you remember?

Guidon: Well, let’s see. I have—

Kane: Okay, because I was looking at some people’s old pay stubs, you know, from the ‘30’s [1930’s] and so, and there wasn’t any tax taken off. But I know today, you just get killed with it.

Mrs. Guidon: Yeah, oh, it’s terrible what they take off. I did housework. I was about 15. That was 1916, 26 [1926]—that was in about 1931, ’32 [1932]—5 dollars a week for six days.

Guidon: (Inaudible)

Kane: It’s just, well, like you know, I’m only 21, so—

Mrs. Guidon: For a week, now—5 dollars!
Kane: I can’t imagine that.

Guidon: It’s true. Now see now, this is—

Mrs. Guidon: Granddaughter was taking a survey for school, too, and she (inaudible) she asked the question.

Guidon: Yeah, this—Federal Old Age Tax\(^\text{32}\). That was in 1940.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And relief, and that’s like gloves or something. Now see, there’s what I mean. I had 92 dollars and 40 cents. My take-home pay was $89.34. And the same thing here; here’s the same thing.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: That time they took Federal Old Age Tax.

Kane: Is that comparable to Social Security now?

Guidon: That’s what it was. Now here’s my latest stub, what I had. I had 533 dollars, and my take-home was 349 dollars.

Kane: Oh, my God.

Guidon: Now, you see how much? They took 31 dollars off for the Social Security, 107 dollars income tax, state tax 9 dollars, city tax, union dues.

Kane: They take that right out of your paycheck?

Guidon: Oh, yeah, they took that out. This is for, we signed up for the Red Feather\(^\text{33}\).

\(^{32}\) Fund where tax deposits derived from Social Security payroll deductions are entrusted.
Kane: What’s that?

Guidon: Community Chest.

Kane: Oh, I see.

Guidon: And they took that off your pay, every pay it’s so much. You signed up for the year, then you didn’t have to bother.

Kane: I see.

Guidon: So I signed up for that. They used to take that much off every pay.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And then a bond they took. Well that you can save, because that was a saving.

Mrs. Guidon: It’s like a pledge.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: Yeah. So see that’s—now, there you are. See what, it’s 533 down to 349. Took off more than what I earned here, in 1940!

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Now, income tax would have been—this is 9—I’d say 1942, ’43 [1943] maybe. And that’s—you mean, when they started to take income tax off you—?

33 The Community Chest was the name given to fundraising organizations throughout the United States that collected money from businesses and employees for use in community projects.
Guidon: —pay? I think—did they, do you remember when? Did they take off when you were working already?

Mrs. Guidon: When I was working?

Guidon: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: For what?

Guidon: In the Steel. They took income tax off?

Mrs. Guidon: Oh, yes, sure!

Guidon: When did you start?

Mrs. Guidon: I started in ’51 [1951].

Guidon: Oh. Well see, I’d say between ’40 [1940] and ’50 [1950], someplace in there is when they started take it off.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But see, like you just—I know they took this here, this Social—that’s like Social Security.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And Relief—that was the insurance what they used to take off for us, you know, that we were insured. Like now, we get the Blue Cross.

Kane: Uh-huh.
Guidon: And Blue Shield. And now, we’re covered by insurance, up to 10,000 dollars, I guess.

Kane: Is this for injury?

Guidon: No, for when you die, it gives you—

Kane: Oh, for life insurance?

Guidon: —life insurance.

Kane: Oh, I see.

Guidon: In case you die. And now, when you go on—

Mrs. Guidon: Pension.

Guidon: —that comes down automatically, down half, down to 5,000, isn’t it?

Mrs. Guidon: I think it’s even less.

Guidon: Even less, something like that. But as long as you’re working, you’re insured up to that. It all depends on the job you have.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: So that was up to about 10,000, I think. And then now, when you go on, then it goes down.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: It was according to—the jobs are classified.
Guidon: Yeah, they classified your job. See, you got a job classification—

Mrs. Guidon: See, and your insurance is, I think, according to that.

Guidon: —from one up to whatever it is. And like now, up until I’m—I’m 62. Up until I’m 65, they take for Blue Cross and Blue Shield off my pay.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But in August, when this new contract comes in, I understand that the steel company is going to pay it, all of it.

Kane: Oh, good!

Guidon: See, up until I’m 65. Then after that, I have to get—

Mrs. Guidon: You’ll go on Medicare.

Guidon: I’ll have to go on Medicare.

Kane: Oh! (Laughs)

Mrs. Guidon: (Inaudible)

Guidon: And then you go on Medicare, then your coverage isn’t so high. But you still can carry Blue Cross and Blue Shield, but you have to pay it yourself.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: Although it’s not so much, but it don’t cover as much, either. So the older you get, you got to watch so you don’t get sick.
Mrs. Guidon: I think it’s about eighty percent.

Guidon: So you’re better off if you die right away, and don’t get sick.

Kane: (laughs)

Guidon: See, because if you get sick—

Mrs. Guidon: I’m counting on that!

Guidon: Oh, well, if you get sick, then it’s going to cost you money. But if you die, you only pay it out once, and that’s the end of it!

Mrs. Guidon: I’ll fill you with vitamins, so you can live! (laughs) Live to be a hundred, without getting sick!

Guidon: Well, that’s what I mean. Well, I was pretty fortunate. I could say I didn’t miss much work. I didn’t miss work for sickness, until my last, say, about six years ago—five years ago? When did I get—?

Mrs. Guidon: Diabetes?

Guidon: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Oh no, it’s only about 4.

Guidon: Four. Well I’d say, the last 4 years. I got sick in work, that’s when I got struck with diabetes.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And I was off work for a couple of weeks.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: That’s the only time I lost that I can remember, for sick.

Kane: Yeah, that’s pretty good.

Guidon: I took off maybe once in a while to go to a baseball game when I was younger, or certain things, you know, I took off.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But, I mean, what I had to take off for sickness or injury, I was pretty fortunate.

Kane: Right. When you said the jobs are classified, are they classified as to dangerousness, or—?

Guidon: No, no, the money part.

Kane: Oh.

Guidon: See, if Class 1—the higher your class, the more, the higher your wages.

Kane: Oh, I see, okay.

Mrs. Guidon: (Inaudible) like from janitorial work, and the painters. There’s a different classification right there.

Kane: Oh, they must have a million classifications.

Mrs. Guidon: Right.

Guidon: No, 32, I think. There’s 32, I believe. And from 1 to 32.

Mrs. Guidon: They had their codes, you know, for each classification.

Guidon: And then that’s how they’d classify your insurance and stuff.
Kane: I see. What did you do at Bethlehem?

Mrs. Guidon: I was a charwoman.

Kane: What’s a charwoman?

Mrs. Guidon: (Laughs)

Kane: Is that the janitorial?

Guidon: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Right.

Kane: Yeah, right. How long were you there?

Mrs. Guidon: Nineteen and a half years.

Kane: You did that for 19 ½ years?

Mrs. Guidon: Well, I was a widow then. He was a widower up until—when did you get—?

Guidon: This is our second marriage.

Mrs. Guidon: This is our second marriage, in ’68 [1968].

Kane: Oh, I see!

Mrs. Guidon: In ’68 [1968]. I was a widow for 18 years before (laughs) I decided to get married again!

Kane: He got you out of the pits, huh? (Laughs)
Mrs. Guidon: Well, after my children were all college graduates, I thought, “Well, it’s Mom’s turn now.”

Kane: Yeah, right. That’s good! I see. So we were starting to talk about leisure time. What did you do in your off hours? You know, did you—were there family outings? Did you have fraternal organizations?

Guidon: Well, you mean in the company?

Kane: No.

Guidon: You mean at home?

Kane: Yeah, you know, when you weren’t working.

Guidon: Well, we went, like, we had outings—certain, like when the holidays came. And just nothing fancy or anything like that, nothing going away. Very seldom, but not too much. Well, you worked the different shifts, you didn’t have a lot of time of that type.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: You worked night shift, or 3 to 11, and you’d get off two days there, sometimes. During the war, I guess, we got very little time off then. We used to work 6, 7 days a week.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: But other than that, you had a garden. I had a little garden; I took care of that.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: In the summer time, I’d spend my time in the yard, taking care of the lawn.

Kane: Did you belong to any fraternal organizations at all, or church organizations?
Guidon: No, just (inaudible) like the Holy Names, Knights of Columbus, and the Lion’s Club, and the union.

Kane: Uh-huh, not to the Masons, or anything like that?

Guidon: No, not to none of those.

Mrs. Guidon: Knights of Columbus is almost in line with Masons. In fact, they have dinners—

Guidon: Together.

Mrs. Guidon: —together, the Masons and the Knights of Columbus, yes.

Kane: I thought the Masons were anti-Catholic, though.

Guidon: Well, at one time—

Mrs. Guidon: At one time there—

Guidon: —one time it was, I would say they were that. But they’re getting closer together.

Kane: Oh, that’s good.

Mrs. Guidon: Yes, just—when was it? How many years ago?

Guidon: Well, every year we have one.

Mrs. Guidon: One dinner it was—the last one, we were at the Hotel Bethlehem. The other was at the Masonic Temple.

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34 Project staff were unable to identify this term.
35 A Catholic organization designed to assist the sick, disabled and needy members and their families.
36 An international organization devoted to helping communities. It includes services to the elderly, the poor and the sick.
Guidon: And the next, the last one was at the Airport Inn.

Mrs. Guidon: Airport Road Inn, yeah.

Guidon: And now we’re going to go there again on April the 7thy.

Mrs. Guidon: Every year, the Masons and the Knights of Columbus get together.

Kane: That’s really strange.

Mrs. Guidon: They have a dinner. Oh, yes.

Guidon: Oh, yeah.

Kane: (Laughs) Because traditionally—

Mrs. Guidon: It’s not like, as it was at one time.

Guidon: It’s not that bad anymore.

Mrs. Guidon: They sort of clashed.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Mrs. Guidon: But not anymore.

Kane: That’s interesting.

Guidon: You know, like everybody else, they’re starting to learn to live together like people should live!

Mrs. Guidon: United, let’s put it that way.
Kane: By the 21st century, everything ought to be just Jim Dandy! (Laughs)

Guidon: It’s coming to the point where people are starting to realize we need each other.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: Nobody can go on their own.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: I know in my younger days, if a Hungarian or a Slovak married an Italian or a Hunky37 type married an Irish, oh, it was something terrible! But my parents, you know, my mother is 97; she’s still living.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Mrs. Guidon: But oh! If—I wouldn’t dare to tell my mother my boyfriend was Italian, which he was! I said he was Irish. ‘Oh, fine.’ But, then when we did get married, she says, “Oh, but he’s nice!”

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: So there you are!

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: But I wouldn’t dare to tell her! And yet, it’s the man I wanted!

Kane: Right, right.

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37 Used as a disparaging term for a person, especially a laborer, from east-central Europe.
Mrs. Guidon: How could you, you know? I thought, well in time, she’s going to learn to accept him, which she did—without any fuss or bother. She never picked, or without any trouble.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: So you had to handle that with—hoo!

Kane: Kid gloves.

Guidon: And then another thing—I was one of the youngest of 7 boys that worked for the Bethlehem Steel.

Kane: In your family? Yeah.

Guidon: My father worked there, and all my brothers. And I was the last of the clan to retire. I’m the youngest of the ones.

Kane: Uh-huh. Did any of your children work there, either of you?

Guidon: No.

Kane: No?

Mrs. Guidon: My children (inaudible).

Guidon: My daughter—well, my daughter works at the main office, that’s right.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: And my 2 daughters worked there. The one worked before, but she’s married. She married; she ain’t working. But the younger one is still working at the main office.

Kane: I see.
Guidon: And my two brothers passed away. They worked—the one passed away while he was in work.

Kane: Oh, a heart attack, or something like that?

Guidon: Yeah. He was working on a mill.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And in fact, he was going into work, and I was going out. (Skip in recording)—going to school. So we all had to go to work, from small on. And like, I remember the Depression, and nobody would believe how hard it was.

Mrs. Guidon: It was terrible.

Guidon: When the Depression was.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But somehow, our family was pretty fortunate. My father, he worked, and we all got jobs. So that’s where—we lived in the coal mines at first. That’s where I was born, outside of Hazelton[Pennsylvania].

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: In fact, we were all born down there, and then we moved up here, and we got in the Steel. And we all got in the Steel but my one brother; he worked for Laris. And then Laris went out of business, then he got in the Steel, too.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: We all worked in the Steel.

00:46:01 Kane: Right. You said you worked at Laris before you went to the Steel?
Guidon: Yes.

Kane: And was that your only other job before you went to Bethlehem?

Guidon: That’s the only other job I had.

Kane: And how many years were you there?

Guidon: Well, I started when I was 16, and I worked there ‘til I was 21—about 5, 6 years. Maybe I was older when I went to the Steel; I could have been 22.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But anyway, it was about 5, 6 years I worked in Laris. And that was steady night shift, from 7 o’clock at night ‘til 7 o’clock in the morning. That was 12 hours at that time.

Kane: That was your shift?

Guidon: Yes.

Kane: I see.

Guidon: And that was until the NRA come in, then we started to work 8 hours.

Mrs. Guidon: My Dad used to work 16 hours straight some time, at the blast furnaces.

Guidon: Oh yeah, in the Steel they did that, see, at that one time. Every time they changed shifts, they would have to work 24 hours.

Kane: Yeah, I’ve heard about that one.
Mrs. Guidon: My father worked 16 hours. I remember, we had to take a lunch pail down to the main gate.

Guidon: Yeah, well, they did too, that way. But that was the time when they’d change shifts, like from day shift to night shift, or something like that.

Kane: I was wondering why they did that, and that explains it, now. Because no one else could explain it.

Guidon: There was no way—they didn’t shut down, but like I say, it’s continuous operation, so you had to work in order to switch over to the next shift.

Kane: Right. Did you work on the rotating shift? Like, if you had night shift one week, it was another shift?

Guidon: I was, I worked—that’s the only way I worked all of my life down the Steel: day shift, 3 to 11, 11 to 7.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That was the routine we had.

Kane: I can’t imagine that. Your lifestyle must be so jumbled up.

Guidon: It is.

Mrs. Guidon: It’s bad.

Guidon: It’s pretty hard. It’s pretty hard.

Mrs. Guidon: I was night shift all the time, it doesn’t matter.

Guidon: The night shift was the worst shift.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon:  It was just the shift that you couldn’t get accustomed to.  You were just—you know, you had to feel sorry for who was around you, because you’d be crabby when they did it that way.

Kane:  Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon:  If you’re on it steadily, it’s not bad.  But to change off.

Kane:  Yeah.  Well, I would just be accustomed to sleeping at night, and no matter how light they made it in the mill, I would still know that it was night outside.

Guidon:  Yeah, that’s the way it is.  And it was hard.  When I worked night shift, believe me, you had something to keep your eyes open on that job, and you had to keep them open.  There was no 2 ways about it, that a lot of times you’d doze off, you know, and (laughs) you didn’t watch it, you’d have a big—

Kane:  Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon:  Even at home, his disposition was different.

Kane:  Yeah.

Guidon:  And everything, it’s just all I got to do.  But you see, that’s—I never had a steady day shift job.  It was always this night shift.

Kane:  Yeah.

Guidon:  And most, I worked—but very seldom I worked 16 hours, because like I say, down in the mills, it was always continuous.  There was always—the only time you worked is men didn’t come out on the next shift, and they’d ask you to stay.

Kane:  Did you have the option of leaving, though?  You didn’t have to stay?
Guidon: Oh, yeah. No, you didn’t have to stay. They always asked you.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: See, they’d—like, the man wouldn’t come in 3 to 11, they’d ask you would you want to stay another 8 hours? And at first, you had to get your own lunch, but towards the end here, they would bring you a lunch, if you stayed.

Kane: If you stayed? And that would be overtime, also, wouldn’t it?

Guidon: Oh, yeah. You got extra time for that. You’d get time and a half.

Kane: Mm-hm.

Guidon: And then you got your lunch.

Kane: Was there any overtime associated with the night shift, or—?

Guidon: Oh, yeah, every shift had a different rating.

Kane: Oh, I see, yeah.

Guidon: Day shift, middle shift, night shift—they all had a different rating.

Kane: Day shift was the lowest?

Guidon: Yes.

Kane: I see.

Guidon: And the other 2, middle shift had a little more, and the night shift had more.
Kane: Yeah, but it evened out, because everyone just kept rotating, so nobody got—?

Guidon: Yeah. And then, towards the end here, we were getting time and a half for Sunday.

Kane: Uh-huh, I see.

Guidon: So when you worked Sundays, you got extra.

Kane: How did they work, like, holidays or something? Is that overtime also, or is that just a normal working day?

Guidon: That’s a paid holiday.

Kane: I see.

Guidon: But if you—it’s a paid holiday, if it came in. But in our place, we—continuous—if you happened to be off on the day, you had the day off, and you got paid for it. But if you worked it, you got paid the holiday, plus what you worked that day.

Kane: So it’s like double time?

Guidon: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Right, exactly.

Kane: Oh, that’s good!

Guidon: But see, if you were off that day, if it happened to be your day off, well, you were off, but you got paid for it.

Kane: Did your day off change every week?

Guidon: Oh, yes! I never had the same days off.
Kane: Yeah. Did you have two days back to back, or could it come—?

Guidon: Sometimes it would be back to back, and sometimes you’d have it off in the middle of the week.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Now there for a while, this last few years we were working, we’d have to work 15 Sundays to get 5 off.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Yeah, you’d have to work 15 Sundays, and I got 5 Sundays off. So on those 5 Sundays, I’d get Sunday off, and another day during the week sometime. And when I worked the Sundays, well, sometimes I’d get Friday and Saturday off, and I’d get Monday and Friday. And nobody never worked Friday day shift. That’s when they had the repair shift.

Kane: Oh, I see.

Guidon: The only who worked at that time was like the laborers, maintenance men. And if you wanted to come out for an extra day, they’d give you the option. If you wanted to come out and help clean up, you were welcome to come out for labor wages, though, not the wages you work at one the mill.

Kane: Oh, I see.

Guidon: Labor wages.

Kane: So in your mill, Friday was maintenance day? Was that the same maintenance day in the whole plant?

Guidon: No, just in our department.

Kane: No, just in, yeah.

Guidon: And that was every Friday. You were sure of a Friday day shift off.
Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: But we knew. We had a schedule we had. Towards the last few years, they had—were able to make a schedule for the whole year, and you knew how you were working the whole year. Yeah, I used to mark it down the calendar.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: I’d just do the whole year, how I was working. Because it was continuous operation, 3 shifts, and that’s the only way you could work. And before that, though, well, they’ve made—see, when it wasn’t continuous operation, maybe they’d only have two shifts: a night shift, and a middle shift. But I mean, they’d have all three shifts, but there was always one shift that wasn’t working.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: What they would call a turn, see—three turns, you’d have. There’s 21 working days in a week.

Kane: Because of the 21 turns?

Guidon: Yeah, see, but we only worked 20, because the Friday day shift was off.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: So you worked twenty days, and it was continuous. So you worked—but other times, maybe they’d only work 15, sometimes only 12. And then it would change; your days off would change. It would change the whole thing.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But up until the time when we started working 4 turns, what we called 20 shifts, in a week, then we knew for the whole year how we worked.

Kane: That would be nice, that you could plan ahead, instead of just—
Mrs. Guidon: Well we did, yes.

Guidon: That way, we did. That, we did. And—

Mrs. Guidon: He had a chart, you know, and we planned.

Guidon: And that’s the time that you, like I say, when you could only work 16 hours if the next shift man didn’t come out; they’d ask you to work it.

Kane: Yeah, right.

Mrs. Guidon: That was one of the advantages.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Yeah, but it was very seldom that you had to work that. But during the war, we worked a lot of extra days, because they were short of men all over. They didn’t have enough men. So they told you right away, anybody that wants to work could work.

Kane: Yeah. Everybody that I’ve talked to has worked at the plant during the war years. Now, were steel men exempt from being drafted?

Guidon: Some.

Kane: Some?

Guidon: Some. There was a lot that went into the service. Then there was—but it all depends where you worked, too. Now, where I worked, what held me there was my age already. I was older, and I had children.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: And married, to that put me in a different class right there.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But if it would have got worse, probably, maybe it would have come down to us. But in our department, it was a place where you had to have skilled men, or it would take longer to learn them the job.

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: Like, the shell shop—³⁸ they were exempt from going into service.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Guidon: But there was pretty many from our department that went—the younger ones.

Mrs. Guidon: Same in the factories.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: There was a lot of younger ones. But like in that department, in the rolling mills, you’d very seldom see young men working there, because you get in there, they work there until they’re all in retired.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Now they have the young ones coming in, now they’re going to take our places.

Kane: Mm-hm, I see.

Guidon: And these that are there now, they’ll be there ’til they get old.

³⁸ A facility in the Manufacturing Division for the production of gun shells.
Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: So, that’s how it works down there.

Kane: Yeah, there were certain factories that the men didn’t have to go?

Mrs. Guidon: Clothing? factories, yes. My first husband, he worked in the pants factory, and there they made uniforms for the servicemen.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: So he was exempt.

Kane: So basically anything that had to do with the war effort?

Mrs. Guidon: Right, right. That’s when you’re exempt.

Kane: Yeah, okay.

Guidon: Yeah, it’s a funny thing. When you talk now, and tell these ones you used to—sometimes you’d have free time; you’d tell these young fellows down there how it used to be. They couldn’t believe it, how we used to live!

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Guidon: How we didn’t have anything. When we first lived down the coal mines, we had no electricity. We had no running water. We had no bathrooms, no inside toilets.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Everything’s—you know. And they couldn’t believe that. Well, how did—? We used to read by the lamp. Well, in fact we said we didn’t get no paper. There was no papers, them days.
Kane: Right.

Guidon: You know, we didn’t know what was going on in the world! Because we had no radios.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: We had no newspaper, nothing!

Mrs. Guidon: The only newspaper I remember getting when I was a young girl, you belonged to a lodge, like a society, health insurance. And they published a paper every week. It was ethnic, you know, Slovak.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: And that, I remember reading. I believe that was the only newspaper I remember.

Guidon: The first paper we had here was the Times, Bethlehem Times. That was the first paper we had here. And then there was another paper started up, the Globe, so we had the Times and the Globe. And they merged, and that’s how it’s the Globe-Times.

Kane: Right, right.

Guidon: But that’s—that, I don’t remember when we first moved here, I don’t know if we even got a paper here, because people didn’t buy.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: So even when we moved here, to Freemansburg\textsuperscript{39}, from the coal regions, we still had no water, no electricity in the houses. They used to get those lamps. They used to be like electric. They’d have like a web, webbing inside. And they worked by coal.

Kane: Oh, I see.

Guidon: And then finally we got—then we got water and gas, and little by little. We have the streets here—no streets, no nothing! Oh, we used to go to school, and come home, and we’d be looking for a muddy day so we could push the cars out of the mud, and earn a couple of nickels for that.

Kane: Yeah, right, right.

Guidon: But see, today you can’t even get them to shovel your sidewalk. They don’t want to do that, or nothing no more, see?

Kane: Yeah. Where were your parents from?

Guidon: From the other side.

Mrs. Guidon: Austria-Hungary.

Guidon: No, not that.

Mrs. Guidon: My parents were from there.

Guidon: Czechoslovakia.

Kane: Uh-huh.

Mrs. Guidon: Yeah, but it was part of—

\textsuperscript{39} A borough located in Northampton County, PA. It is located approximately 2.5 miles from the former site of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation Headquarters.
Guidon: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: That part, at that time was under Hungarian ruling, at that time.

Guidon: Yeah, Byzantium\textsuperscript{40}, it was called. See, we were from the Byzantine\textsuperscript{?}, right. It’s a country called Byzantium\textsuperscript{?}, or something like that. And there’s little villages what they come in. Both of them come.

Mrs. Guidon: Your parents came from the same village as mine did, Shaddish\textsuperscript{41} (sp?).

Guidon: Yeah.

Kane: (Laughs) What a coincidence.

Guidon: Yeah.

Kane: But you were both born in the United States?

Guidon: Yeah, we were.

Mrs. Guidon: Oh, yes. I was born in Bethlehem.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Yeah so, I say, you know, when you look back, I remember, as I say, about the Depression. Like today, I just—this ain’t no depression! Because people have money yet. A lot of people have money.

Kane: Yeah, right.

\textsuperscript{40} An ancient Greek city that was renamed Istanbul in 1930.

\textsuperscript{41} Project staff were unable to identify this place.
Mrs. Guidon: Until it runs out.

Guidon: But that time, there was nothing. When your father, or your brother didn’t work, there was nothing coming in—

Mrs. Guidon: That was it.

Guidon: —no money, that was it.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: You had to go out, and at that time they had a railroad track. You’d go down and pick coal, or go in the woods and pick wood. We had—the only kind of stove we had was a coal stove. We had no kind of furnaces or anything like that—nothing!

Kane: How did you get your food and everything? I mean, if there wasn’t any money, how could you get food?

Mrs. Guidon: Well, you got flour for free.

Guidon: Well, at that time, you got some things for, like flour. At that time, most of the housewives baked. They baked bread. And what we’d eat, you know, we’d get a hunk of bread and put lard on it, and eat that, with coffee, black coffee.

Mrs. Guidon: And didn’t they give you, like, dried beans and stuff like that?

Guidon: Not at that time. This came later. At that time, there was nothing. You got, from the store, you know. You got from the store on credit, because they knew you were going to go back to work sometime, then get paid back.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: That’s right. That’s how we (inaudible).
Guidon: Not everybody was out of work. Some people were working. But those who weren’t working had no money, had nothing! And those that had, you couldn’t do nothing with it. The trolley fare was 5 cents, and our parents wouldn’t give us 5 cents to ride the trolley car. We had to walk, see.

Kane: Right, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: That’s right. When I went to work—

Guidon: There was nothing.

Mrs. Guidon: —in the silk mill, I used to walk home from work, just to save—at that time it was 8 cents. I walked home from work just to save 8 cents, because that was pocket money then.

Kane: Yeah, right, right.

Guidon: When I went out, I was—when I started working at Laris, I was 16 years old. I was, like, would you say, one of the fortunate guys; I had 2 dollars in my pocket. I was a rich kid!

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: You’d go, with 2 dollars—you’d go to the movies, you’d go to the doggie shop, the ice cream shop, ride home on the bus, and you still had change in your pocket when you’d come home, see.

Kane: Right, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: And when I was working in the silk mill, you know what I would get for my pay? We usually handed the whole pay to my mother—

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: —and I was happy when I got over 50 cents in change in my pay envelope.
Kane: Yeah, because you got to keep the change?

Mrs. Guidon: Right, I got to keep the change. If it was 20 cents, well, I was sad, but my mother would always give me a little over 50 cents.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: But if it was 99 cents, oh, boy! That was it! But see, that was hard times.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: You know, in them days, too, we didn’t have coal bins in the cellar, because we didn’t have much coal. We burned mostly wood and stuff. We had potato bins, cabbage bins. We used to get potatoes from the farmers. They used to sell it real cheap, a whole bin. And then for the winter, you were eating potatoes, and sauerkraut, and sauerkraut and potatoes—

Kane: (Laughs)

Guidon: —and cabbage. And then, a lot of those housewives all baked.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They used to bake; from potatoes they’d make different kind of meals, from the cabbage, sauerkraut. All that kind of stuff we used to eat. There was no such a thing like meat and stuff! Soup meat, we’d get soup meat, 10 cents a pound.

Mrs. Guidon: Oh, we kept chickens. We kept chickens, geese, and ducks.

Guidon: We didn’t have any. But we’d buy 10 cents a pound soup meat, and get a big hunk of soup meat.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: They’d make noodles. There you had: soup, and a big hunk of soup meat to eat.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: My mother—

Guidon: And the soup meat, because you had to—it was like leather is like, today.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: You know, where Edgar Brown’s 42 is, out this way? My mother—I guess (inaudible) Bethlehem Steel, who owned those, you were allowed to plant. It didn’t cost you anything, as long as you used (inaudible).

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Yeah, that’s (inaudible).

Mrs. Guidon: My mother would get about 20 bushels of potatoes every year from there, all her vegetables. She kept geese, chickens, and ducks. And for the winter, she’d get a couple of bushels of apples for us.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: She’d make her own sauerkraut. My brothers would stomp it with their—did you ever hear that?

Kane: No, no.

Mrs. Guidon: (Laughs) Yeah.

Kane: I just bought it in a can! (Laughs)

42 Project staff were unable to identify this person.
Mrs. Guidon: No, well they don’t do it anymore.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That was years back.

Mrs. Guidon: But that was our living.

Guidon: That’s how they’d give it. See, we didn’t have luxuries, that time. All we were interested in that we had something to eat.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: Right.

Guidon: Because we had no car, no automobiles.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: There was no movie houses there. So we had no luxuries. It was just that we ate. So whatever we ate, that’s what we got by. Our parents would buy us a big box of cookies, the cheapest kind they could get.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Maybe about a dollar, a dollar and a half, and we’d have cookies for a whole month.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: And we were great for that, see?

Kane: Right.
Guidon: And that’s all we used to do, live on what we have. And you go in the—and I mean, no matter whose cellar you went in, they all had a lot of shelves with canned goods on them.

Mrs. Guidon: That’s right.

Guidon: All kind of canned stuff. You don’t see that today.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They’re starting to come back to it, a little bit.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: But that’s what we used to have, everything, and the beans, and corn, and pickles, and everything that you could can was in the jars. So that’s what we used to eat.

Kane: Right, yeah.

Guidon: So, and we had no problems, and we had no thing like now, you know, there’s movies, there’s dances, everything.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: You have a youngster, and you can’t send them out with a 10 dollar bill anymore.

Mrs. Guidon: You know what? My brothers went in to see a movie with potatoes.

Kane: They got—potatoes was the fare?

Guidon: That was it.
Mrs. Guidon: Right! Yeah, and as a girl, I remember owning about four dresses. One for church processions, a white one, one Sunday dress, and two for school, and that was it.

Kane: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: I had two pair of shoes: a Sunday pair, and week day pair.

Guidon: Then, things too—

Mrs. Guidon: Summers we walked barefoot. Every toe was stubbed.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That’s another thing, too. That time, the butcher, the hotel man, the baker, they all had horse and wagon. They’d come up and down the street.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And sell you the stuff right then. You didn’t have to go for it, but in fact you couldn’t go, because you had no way of going.

Kane: Right, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: The fish truck used to come to us.

Guidon: So, they were just too glad to come to your house, so they could sell you something.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: I remember, I think it was Rowe’s. The name was Rowe, R-O-W-E.
Guidon: The fish man.

Mrs. Guidon: A fish man.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: They’d come past your house. The butcher would come past your house.

Guidon: Just too glad to make a sale.

Mrs. Guidon: A baker. Milkman

Guidon: Milkman. Remember when milk was 6 cents a quart? You got a loaf of bread for a nickel.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: All that stuff.

Mrs. Guidon: My mother baked most of her bread.

Guidon: When I was a kid, Tastykakes\textsuperscript{43} were 6 cents. And you know, if we got a Tastykake once a month, we were great! It would be a big deal. Six cents for a cake, and your parents wouldn’t even give you that!

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: That’s right.

Guidon: So you see how it was, stuff. And those people, they went out, and they all saved enough to raise their children, and they all got something out of it. They still had enough money that they—

\textsuperscript{43} Baked goods product from a Philadelphia based company originating in 1914.
Mrs. Guidon: My mother made most of our clothes.

Guidon: —could save a couple of dollars.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: My mother made most of our clothes.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Everybody made their own. (Laughs) When we were born, you didn’t know, when you went in the house, you didn’t know if it was girls or boys in that house—

Mrs. Guidon: That’s right.

Guidon: —because everybody had a dress on!

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Whether it was a boy or a girl, we all had gowns!

Kane: Didn’t know how to make pants! (Laughs)

Guidon: Yeah, it was all just gowns on.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Everybody! And we went to school down there; we went barefoot to school. We had all overalls. That’s how we went to school down there.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: And another thing, when we went down there, the man who owned the mines, every Christmas he’d load up a truck, a real big truck of Christmas presents, and come to the school. And every kid got a Christmas present.

Kane: Oh, that’s nice.

Guidon: And the first graders got a dollar, and a box of candy. So imagine, somebody had two, three kids going to school—that’s 3 dollars.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They’d have to give that to the mother.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: So, they got a dollar, a box of candy, and the rest got toys—sleds, or whatever they—that was going on all the time. When I come to Freemansburg, I looked for that.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: They didn’t have that here. I thought they did that all over the world!

Kane: (Laughs)

Guidon: But that’s the only place they did it. That’s how we got our toys. I didn’t have toys when I was a boy! I had sardine cans I used to hook together with string, and that was my—

Kane: Train, yeah.

Guidon: —toy, I’d pull the train.

Mrs. Guidon: I never owned a doll!
Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: That’s why I say, you know, when you go back—

Mrs. Guidon: We used to—my mother used to make a rag doll for me, you know?

Kane: Uh-huh, yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: And that was my doll. But never a bought doll!

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: So you know, we never—we had hard times, and I remember them good. Today, it’s rough now, too, but it’s not like it was then. That was really a hard time.

Kane: Well, it’s rough on people who haven’t known anything else.

Guidon: No.

Kane: You know.

Mrs. Guidon: But see, it’s easier for us to accept hardship.

Kane: Right.

Mrs. Guidon: Much easier, because we went through hard times. We know.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Living like this, it’s luxury for us.
Kane: Right, right.

Mrs. Guidon: So it doesn’t bother us one bit.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: Well, the first—when I was, the first time I got married, I worked in the Steel, and I worked for a while, then we got laid off again. At that time, you didn’t get nothing, when I first started. There was no Social Security, or anything like that.

Mrs. Guidon: Nothing.

Guidon: So I was off I don’t know how long. And I worked—I lived on 8th Street [Bethlehem, PA], on the heights up there.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And I paid 7 dollars a month rent for the house.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Apartment.

Guidon: It was an apartment. And I couldn’t pay that. So I went to the bank, and asked them if I could fix the house up to pay off my rent.

Kane: Yeah.

Guidon: So that’s where I learned to paper and paint, because that’s (inaudible). And at 7 dollars a month, and I couldn’t pay that.

Kane: Yeah.
Guidon: And then the bank sold it, and fortunately the man that bought it, that just came from Europe by himself, so my wife used to wash his clothes, clean his house, to pay the rent.

Kane: Right.

Guidon: And finally, we got called back to work again. And the next time I got laid off, by that time they had already this Social Security. It wasn’t Social Security then, it was something else. Used to get 7 dollars a week, I guess, something like that. It was, at that time, 7 dollars a week was a lot of money!

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: Didn’t they call that something like Compensation?

Guidon: Something like that.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: I believe that’s what it was.

Guidon: Relief, something like that. It was something like that, Unemployment Compensation, or something like that.

Mrs. Guidon: Yeah, that’s what it was: Unemployment Compensation. That’s what it was. I couldn’t think of it.

Guidon: And me, for 7 dollars a week, you know, you could buy a lot!

Kane: Yeah, right.

Mrs. Guidon: My father was 63 when he died, and he had asthma. So he had to go on disability.

Kane: Right.
Mrs. Guidon: And that was, my father died in 1936, and about a year or two before that, he was on this disability. Do you know what he was getting a month? Eleven dollars.

Kane: Eleven dollars a month?

Mrs. Guidon: A month!

Kane: Wow. (noise on microphone)

Mrs. Guidon: That’s disability.

Kane: Yeah. Did he work at Bethlehem Steel?

Mrs. Guidon: Yes, at the blast furnaces.

Kane: And how long was he there?

Mrs. Guidon: Oh, I really couldn’t—I have no idea. He worked at the coke works\(^{44}\), so he worked in the mines. So, he was sort of—

Kane: That would be interesting.

Mrs. Guidon: Yeah. I probably could find out through maybe my older brother; he would know more. Because I was quite a young girl to be able to remember that.

Kane: Yeah, right. Okay, well, I think we’re just about out of tape.

Guidon: Well, is there anything else you would—?

Kane: I don’t think so, unless there’s anything else you’d like to say?

\(^{44}\)Produced metallurgical coke for use in the blast furnaces and recovered useable and saleable by-products.
Guidon: I guess we covered it pretty good.

Kane: Yeah, I think so.

Guidon: Covered from small boyhood up ‘til now.

Kane: Yeah.

Mrs. Guidon: She had the (inaudible) questions, too.

Kane: (Laughs) No, I’ve been doing this for a while.

Mrs. Guidon: Is this part of your—?

(end of recording)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00:04</td>
<td>Job descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:06:22</td>
<td>Work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:08:32</td>
<td>Down time / shift work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:13:34</td>
<td>Operations detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:15:42</td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:20:38</td>
<td>Union activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:22:31</td>
<td>Positive and negative aspects of the union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:25:39</td>
<td>Women in the plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:27:33</td>
<td>Relationship with management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:31:12</td>
<td>Hours, wages, and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:39:56</td>
<td>Wife’s position at the plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:40:31</td>
<td>Social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:43:08</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:46:01</td>
<td>Work prior to Bethlehem Steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:46:43</td>
<td>Shift work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:54:13</td>
<td>WWII in the plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:56:19</td>
<td>Early living conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:58:41</td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:59:23</td>
<td>Great Depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>