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### Oral History Interview: Emile Milo Molle

Emile Milo Molle

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ORAL HISTORY

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Date May 5th 1973

Emile Molle  
(Signature - Interviewee)

9001 Calif. Ave  
Address

Marmet W. Va.

Date May 16th 1973

[Signature]  
(Signature - Witness)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emile Milo Molle, the interviewee, was born in Point Marion, Pennsylvania 67 years ago. He went through the 8th grade at the Marietta, Ohio grammar school. As a young man, he came to Charleston, West Virginia where he has worked and lived ever since. Mr. Molle was employed at Libbey Owens Ford Glass Plant until he retired 3 years ago.

INTERVIEW  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

L.D.-- My name is Lance Dew and I'm interviewing my grandfather, Emile Molle. Tell me about your parents migrating here Grandpa, and how they started here in this country.

E.M.-- Well, they came from France and Belgium at an early age, say eighteen or twenty years old. I think. But, they met here in this country when they settled in South Dakota on government, ah, property, ah, homestead land. Ah, for quite some time, they lived there, until they, ah, until some of the corporations from France built a plant or two, glass plants, which they followed all the time, ah, in their line of work. Ah, they later came to Pennsylvania. Ah, that's my first recollection of, ah, starting, ah, you might say. Ah, I was at the age, I would say, seven years old, probably. Ah, we lived there, ah, nine or...

L.D.-- That was at Point Marion?

E.M.-- That was at Point Marion in Pennsylvania. Ah, we went to school there, and, ah, my dad worked in the, ah, glass plant there. Of which there was three at the time, small plants, ah ah, for, oh I suppose we were about twelve years old. Ah, then he had an offer of a better job at, ah, Marietta, Ohio. We moved there from, ah, Point Marion. Ah, by the way, that's where Marietta College is at, too. And we moved into a house just across the campus from Marietta, Ohio, from the, ah, Marietta College. We went to school there until I was about, ah, sixteen years old, then we started, ah, our trade as, ah, glasscutters.

L.D.-- Did you and all your brothers start in the same trade?

E.M.-- Well, they were all in the glass business in one trade or another, one, ah, branch or the other.

L.D.-- Like glass?

E.M.-- Like, ah, my father was a glassblower, he blowed glass. I had an uncle, ah, that was, ah, what we call in glass business, a teaser, ah, he he tended the tank which melted the glass. Then we had, ah, I had an uncle that was a flatener. My dad blowed these, ah ah, cylinders, then they were cracked and ah, flatened out on hot stones, in a, in an oven. Then that b~~w~~ became a sheet of glass, of course when it was conveyed on into, ah, where, ah, store house and cooled, then they brought that into, ah, the cutting rooms is where I started in. I was a cutter, ah, and I had a brother that was already in the cutting business. But, it was a phase of glassmaking and, ah, production. Ah,...

L.D.-- Well, did, when you were growing up, ah, did your father try to maintain any customs of his country, of, ah, France or ah, in the language or in any way?

E.M.-- Well, yes. We were brought up by, ah, my mother and dad by teaching us French as we, ah, not actually teaching, but talking, and ah, we spoke French, the whole family. The whole family spoke French. And at times, we were, ah, we felt that, ah, that wasn't so good because, ah, alot of people, ah, when you'd go to school, they they thought that you wern't an American, ah, or that you were of, ah, French descent, or any foreign descent. That you were a foreigner, and it had an effect on us, ah, feeling bad about their thoughts about foreign people.

L.D.-- Did it make you resent them or resent yourself?

E.M.-- Well, not necessarily, ah, we also knew that it was a fact and ah, we were born in this country, raised in this country, but ah, you still think, ah, of yourself as being foreign born. You know.

L.D.-- Did your father, ah, have you speak French constantly as you grew up, or...?

E.M.-- Well, yes. He, ah, wanted us to, ah, follow it, ah, their footsteps in, ah, speaking French, in ah, having it ah, speaking

it in the house or anywhere that we were. But, ah, speaking American that way, and going to school in American schools, and learning the English language, why it ah, kind of interferes, ah, with ah, well, I wouldn't say interfering, but I mean that, ah, you don't feel right talking, ah, French in front of, ah, we didn't, in front of ah, American, other American kids. You know. You felt that you were inferior to them or something that sort of.

L.D.-- When did your, ah, family move to West Virginia, to Charleston?

E.M.-- Ah, we moved from, ah, Marietta to, ah, Arnold, Pennsylvania, where we worked about a year in a, in another glass plant up there. Then we lived there in ah, Arnold, Pennsylvania about a year, then we heard of Charleston here, ah, Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company, ah, expanding, and ah, needing men, and ah, making it a little more attractive than the jobs that we had. So, we thought we'd come down here and try it, so we did, and ah, it turned out real good. We made quite a bit more money. We were on a production basis, and ah ah, that's when they started making glassblowing machinery. Ah, that left my dad out of work, and changed over from hand, we called hand process to machine processing glass, which was quite a bit different, and ah, bigger production, proved out to be a real good thing.

L.D.-- But, as ah, more mechinization came into the glass industry, it ended the jobs for ah, most of the men.

E.M.-- Yes, his job and also the blowing of the glass, the flatening of the glass, and a few other different jobs, that done away with that. This is what they called the flat-drawn process. Ah, later, ah, the Pittsburg Plate Company came out with ah, a glassmaking machine, ah, that drewed the glass straight up into the air and then it was cut off, you know, verticle process. While Libbey-Owens was a flat-drawn process which come out of the tank over rolls and on a layer and on out until it cooled ah, and then at the end of the layer was cut up into sheets of glass, which was transfered down to the cutting rooms which

we cut, and ah, our our ah, end of the process was still in ah, focus. I mean, ah, we cut glass, for a bit, for a long time.

L.D.-- As a cutter, you were still employed until that was starting to be mechanized, too. Recently.

E.M.-- Well, recently, ah, I'd say about eight or ten years ago then they, ah, developed, ah, into, ah, more mechanized way of cutting the glass, which didn't completely eliminate us, but possibly will in time, the hand cutting part. Ah, they cut now with machinery, which is a big advancement over the old way.

L.D.-- So, you and your family were living in West Virginia, in the Kanawha Valley, ah, working in a glass plant, so I take it that you were here during the depression?

E.M.-- Right.

L.D.-- You were.

E.M.-- Which was really bad for most working people, especially us. Ah, out of, ah, let's see, there was three of us cutters, and ah, only one of us cutters worked, ah, during that depression which was curtailed very much. He only worked one or two days a week. Ah, we were completely off, me and my brother, me and two brothers. And it made it awfully hard on the family. Ah, I was completely out of work for about two years, which almost made a communist out of me.

L.D.-- Then, the glass industry was, ah, particularly hard hit by the depression?

E.M.-- Right, real bad hit, because it was not a, ah, well, it's it's a thing that you can use if you've got the money. If you don't have, you don't use it. It's not like food or, ah, something like clothing that you have to have. Ah, if you have a, own a house, and ah, you've got a couple of windows out, well then, if you've got a couple of dollars coming in, you're not gonna put them windows in first, you're gonna eat. Then put the windows in later, if you've got the money.

L.D.-- During the depression you said that it almost made you a communist, did your knowledge of socialism or communism, ah, increase at that time, or did you have any knowledge of it at all?

E.M.-- I hadn't paid much attention to it up until that, but it made me think about the conditions of the government. I was wondering why all this had to be. Why it come about. Ah, it made us bitter to have to live in this society and most of the time have a nickel in your pocket, picking up snipes off the street, or buying, ah, tobacco in a small pouch for a nickel a pack, trying to make them last two or three days, which was hard. Ah, possibly it was a good thing, cause you don't smoke as much. But, in a way, you know that ah, they claim that during that time that ah, heart trouble was almost nil in this country, which I suppose was caused from not over-eating, ah, that part might have been all right. But, ah, in a society like ours, where you're used to doing pretty well, and ah, having, ah, pleasures of life, small pleasures of life, well, then it's suddenly taken away, why, it's tough.

L.D.-- You once told me a story about a woman, who, ah, spoke out against communism at one time when you were talking to her. Weren't you?

E.M.-- Oh yes, well, I was I was, that was during the depression, and we had been awfully hard hit, the whole family, and ah, not only our family, ah, the thing that, ah, made it not so bad was that everybody else was in the same boat. Ah, it ah, made it you know, not quite so unbearable, ah, because everyone else was in the same category. And no one, ah, in the laboring class people had much to brag about, even the people that were working, ah, but this woman, ah, I was living in a garage at my brother-in-laws, ah, which I had no income at all for oh over a year. Ah then, I got into WPA, which give to you, ah a days work a week, ah which didn't amount to a whole lot, only to three or four dollars a week, you made from your wages, but still, at that time



it it bought quite a few beans and side belly, they called it. Ah, my sister-in-law run a store, a little grocery store, which didn't have too much in it. There was a woman in there talking one day, and I I was, ah, kind of fed up with the establishment the way it was run and the way to, ah, live, and I in a joke, in a joking way, we were talking the, ah, about different conditions of the country, and I said, ah, we're not as well off as the rest of the people now, or anyone that has communism is alot better off than we are. And which she answered, "No, I wouldn't want to be a communist, ah, because they take everything you've got." And ah, you know where she was living? She was living on the river bank, on government property, not paying anything for it, not taxes or anything, and had a tent pitched where her and her husband and two children lived. Now, ah, now they didn't have any way to cook, only by bricks that he had gathered up and ah, made him a little oven like thing there, ah, stove or furnace, you might say. And ah, that's what they had to cook on. When they had anything to cook!

L.D.-- She claimed they they would take everything you had.

E.M.-- Yes, she said she wouldn't want to be, ah, communistic, or live under communist rule, because ah, they would take everything you had. And I told my sister-in-law, I said, "Boy, there isn't much they can take from her, is there?" This tent even had holes in it. I don't know. It must have rained in on them, when we had bad weather.

L.D.-- Did, did you become interested in, ah, communism at an early age, or has this been just...

E.M.-- No, I wouldn't say that. I just really, ah, I hadn't paid too much attention to it. You know, when you're doing all right, you don't pay too much attention to all these things. Then I think younger people, I don't think they grasp anything like that until something causes it. Now, that, ah, depression really caused me to start thinking about it. Why, why was it that, ah. There was such an unbalance of, ah, things in the country. Oh,

you wonder about those things. Ah, I I don't know whether I was, yes, I suppose I was against the establishment, like they are now. Ah, but, I don't know, ah, politics, I didn't think too much of politics only that I was, I didn't like it , I didn't like the, ah, way the country run, and the way things had been. But, later on, after the depression, then, when we did get back to work and started making money, and could afford a car and cigarettes and steaks, why, you kind of loosened up, and you kind of forgot about it.

L.D.-- You feel...

E.M.-- But I feel that, ah, I know that. And it broadened my experience in life, and I know now that, ah, that isn't a good thing, and I would like to see it dissappear.

L.D.-- To what dissappear? The inequality?

E.M.-- The inequality, the, ah, the rich, too rich, and the poor with nothing. It just doesn't, ah, it just isn't a good thing for everybody concerned. I don't think.

L.D.-- So, you think the communist system is, is ah better.

E.M.-- I think, ah, for the masses, ah, I think it does wonderful. Ah, I've never lived in the communist state. I don't know. It, ah, sounds, ah, it sounds all right, and I, what I believe about it, it sounds like they're doing all right. I don't see anything wrong with it. I sometimes wonder if it, ah, would match our system. Possibly not, ah, in the business that I was in and making good money.. It probably wouldn't come up to that, but then I think of the, ah, poor people, as I was during that time which we still have and according to statistics and that, there's about thirty percent yet, that ah that are under, what, \$4,000 class, ah, in a four person family.

L.D.-- Do you mean the level of poverty in the country?

E.M.-- Yes, oh yes, it's that and ah, ah, I feel bad about that. Ah, I think everyone, I think the sun shines for everybody, I

think that everybody ought to have a living. Ah, I don't have all the answers to it. I think possibly by, ah ah, taking ah, making an early retirement for people, or cutting back on, ah, hours. Ah, now, right now, there's a thing that's booming. I've noticed in a lot of the trades, even our trade, before I left, ah, worked Saturdays, which was something we hadn't done in years. Ah, I don't think that that's healthy. I think that ah, that we should divide that work up more, maybe six hours a day, or four hours a day. Possibly would relieve a whole lot of that, and be better for the country. The more people you have working, I sometimes wonder why the government doesn't adopt plans more of which to that effect.

L.D.-- Grandpa, you spoke earlier of ah, the value of communism to the masses, or to the common man. Just, just what values do you see, other than the right to pursue a living?

E.M.-- Well, ah, it seems to me that in ah, from what I read, in these other forms of government, communistic forms, that their medicine is better. Ah, more people are reached. Ah, it's not the idea of just, ah, the people that have the money, get the best deal. Ah, I mean the poor people get sick, probably more so than the people that do have a little money. Ah, our doctors here are way below the, ah, average of some of these communist countries. Ah, I sometimes wonder about that, and why, that in Russia there's, ah, two to one more doctors than we have in this country. And still we call them a backward state, and that communism isn't much good. Ah, the thing that I see is that it isn't much good for the capitalists. Ah, ah, cheaper housing, which the people, the poor, could afford, good housing, ah, different things to that nature seems to me like that ah, that are better for the masses.

L.D.-- So, the whole theory of, ah, communism, of being geared more to the masses and for the masses, has therefore has a strong appeal to you.

E.M.-- Right it does.

L.D.-- To you personally. Well, perhaps we should, ah, move on to ah, speak about ah, politics in this state. Ah, do you have any, ah, particular feelings about the ah, the way the political system works in this state?

E.M.-- Yes, I wonder, ah, in this last election, I think that the Democratic party had a real good, ah, man running for governor, ah, Ruckerfeller, ah, Jay Ruckerfeller. And I really thought he was going to get in. I thought that most of the people would vote for him. And instead, ah, Arch Moore seemed to have gotten in by a big majority of the votes, and in my opinion, ah, he's not been a bad governor, but he hasn't been a real good governor, and too, he was in trouble when he went in there, he owed the government a lot of money, ah, from income tax, ah, they claim. Ah, I wonder how he got out of that. Ah, the other, ah, the politics in most, oh, in all of the United States, I think, is so bad that I sometimes wonder how people can keep on voting, arguing and raising the dickens about different candidates, ah, when all I've ever seen through, ah, my lifetime, ah, or the time that I have spent looking at politics is, ah, is, as I look back now, ah, the whole thing smells. I've never yet seen too much that was any good. Roosevelt, ah, I thought was, ah, real good, ah, as far as the masses were concerned, a real good President. But when it come time to, ah ah, the chips were down and try to keep him in, it's, I think the poor people, ah, the lesser people, the working people, the masses that voted against him, ah, to be sort of like a dictatorship, because he wanted to attack the Supreme Court. They voted him down on that, which a lot of people claimed that he would have become a dictator, ah, a form of a dictator. Well, if a dictator done as much for a country, any other country, as Roosevelt done for this one, I don't see any thing much too wrong with a dictator, actually.

L.D.-- Ah, for the politics of the state of West Virginia, do you feel there's, ah, anything that makes it different from, say,

political developments in other states or other areas? Is there anything particular about this state that?

E.M.-- Well, the the thing that I see is that it's a poor state. It's, I suppose, more uneducated people in it than a whole lot of the states. And, too, it seems like, ah, when legislation is brought around, ah, in a better form which might have been, ah, used in New York, Chicago, or ah, a bigger city, or in states, that we are a long time grasping the good parts of it. Ah, I would think it's because so many of us aren't educated so properly.

L.D.-- West Virginia, in some ways, seems a little behind times.

E.M.-- Right. A whole lot behind. Now, they had Papke from Chicago at one time to try to set up a better, ah, tax, ah, structure that we had, than we had, but the people turned him down. They, ah, refused to accept his, ah, tax proposals. Which was a stupid thing to do. It would have helped us to, ah, to a better, er ah, tax structure, and, ah, help out the states' economic development.

L.D.-- Why did West Virginians reject this outside advice, if it would have helped the State?

E.M.-- Ignorance, I guess. You see, well, there's a shortage of education in this state, ah, too many uneducated people here. We need to improve education in the state, ah, more money to the colleges and other schools. It would help more than, ah ah, the politics, the ah, social life and peoples enjoyment would be better. It'd help us all, too.

L.D.-- Would this solve most of West Virginia's problems?

E.M.-- No. You can't solve all problems, but you can help out some. another thing to help this state into something better would be to put young people into government. Let more, ah, well let younger people government. They would bring in more radical, ah, progressive change for the better. These, old crooks have been in their long enough. We need to let others have their, well, their chance.

L.D.-- Do you think there will actually be any, ah, real change in the state, or, for that matter, this country?

E.M.-- Well, the rich people have control of everything in this country. But this country will have to ah, soon or later, go over to Communism. The, ah, people will get more educated and ah, find out what the politicians are really doing. They'll see this graft and stealing. They will see, ah, who's ah, controlling their ah, lives. Well, there has to be a better way to, ah, a better way to ah, a better system with better treatment for more people.