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Jesse Arnold

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ORAL HISTORY

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DATE 4-29-84

Jesse O. Arnold
(Signature - Interviewee)

2035 Charleston Ave.
(Address)
Huntington W.V.

DATE April 29, 1984

Ann M. Arnold
(Signature - Witness)

ARNOLD, Jesse O.
4/29/84
WVBH21



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WEST VIRGINIA BUSINESS HISTORY

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Mr. Jesse Arnold
Arnold Aluminum Products

DATE OF INTERVIEW: April 29, 1984

TRANSCRIBED & TYPED BY: Gina Kehali Kates

Ann: This is Ann Arnold. Today is Sunday, April 29th, 1984. I will be interviewing Mr. Jesse Arnold, owner of Arnold Aluminum Building Products, located in Huntington, West Virginia. This interview is taking place at Mr. Arnold's home in Proctorville, Ohio. Okay, my first question today is how many years have you been in business?

Jesse: Uh, approximately 35 years.

Ann: Okay uh, how long were you in the heating business and when did you switch over to the guttering business?

Jesse: About 20 years, and uh, then I started the gutter work about 15 years ago.

Ann: Uh, were there other partners involved in your starting business?

Jesse: No.

Ann: Why did you choose your business in 1948, and why did you choose your location?

Jesse: Well, that was just more or less uh, uh, might call it a fate of accident. I just happened to be here and started out here.

Ann: Why did you choose the heating business?

Jesse: That's what I was experienced in.

Ann: Do you feel that your educational or training helped you in setting up your business and in running it?

Jesse: Oh, yes.

Ann: Uh...in going to Ohio State, what was your course of study?

Jesse: Engineering.

Ann: Uh, when you first started your business, how was the public response to the heating?

Jesse: Well, slow. It was not at the time, there was not too much work going on and we just uh, did what we could.

Ann: When you started the gutter business, do you feel that your reputation in the heating business was an asset?

Jesse: Oh, yes.

Ann: Uh, what district or area do you cover in your business?

Jesse: Well, Cabell County. And uh, parts of Wayne County,

Putnam County.

Ann: Uh, in your business, who do you mainly deal with?

Jesse: Uh, usually contractors.

Ann: Do you do any work for the federal government?

Jesse: Uh, yes, we do some.

Ann: Uh, do you still serve the same type of customers in this business as you did in your heating business?

Jesse: Uh, yes, I would say so.

Ann: Uh, currently how many employees do you have in your company?

Jesse: Uh, eight.

Ann: What type of employees are they?

Jesse: We...well, what do you mean by what type?

Ann: Uh, how many secretaries or how many general laborers.

Jesse: Oh, I have one secretary and seven applicators.

Ann: Okay, in the past uh, have any of your workers tried to organize into unions?

Jesse: No, uh-huh.

Ann: What type of products do you produce or handle?

Jesse: Uh, aluminum products that you use on exterior of homes.

Ann: Would you mind being more specific?

Jesse: Well, we make uh, sidings, we also run our continuous gutters, we make our own component parts for each of them. And we also manufacture the _____ overhangs for the buildings.

Ann: Uh, currently, who are your suppliers?

Jesse: Well, I have three major: Houseco uh, Building Products and Aluminum Industries and gutter suppliers.

Ann: When you first started your business, were you only in the guttering business? Did you not start out with the gutter and the siding? Just the gutter?

Jesse: I started with gutters first.

Ann: When did you feel that you could expand into siding and other....?

Jesse: Oh, about 3, 4 years after I was in the gutter work.

Ann: Uh, did marketing conditions uh, help you decide to do this?

Jesse: No.

Ann: Why did you expand into those areas?

Jesse: Well, we just needed an additional line of work to do.

Ann: Uh, how do you determine your rates?

Jesse: Uh, usually by the economy, the conditions of the economy, local economy.

Ann: Do you uh, take the prices of the material and employees wages and all, do you have any set system at all or...?

Jesse: Well, we figure our cost, total cost of our materials, our labor, overhead and then we put a certain percentage on top of that for our net profit.

Ann: Okay, over the years uh, well, while you were in the heating business, did the equipment change? Was there that much evolution...?

Jesse: No, it was all about the same.

Ann: Uh, in your years in the aluminum business, have you seen any great changes or any changes at all in the equipment?

Jesse: No, no change.

Ann: Uh, during your years in the heating business, could you describe some of the economic trends, were there any times when there were recessions or, and how did it affect your business?

Jesse: Well, there were slow downs but we always maintained enough work to keep everybody busy. There were economic conditions that we had slow downs, we had recessions along the way, which didn't amount to too much. But yet it uh, it was uh, uh, enough that we didn't have a lot of new work coming in but we still had enough to keep everybody working.

Ann: Uh, in the past years in the work with the aluminum, have the economic trends been as severe as they were back during the '50's and early '60's?

Jesse: No, I don't...I wouldn't say that they have been.

Ann: During the slower years, economically, uh, how was the business affected?

Jesse: It uh, well, we had a slow down as far as the amount of business coming in. But we...we still maintained uh, work enough to keep everybody working.

Ann: Uh, through the years, have you ever felt a need that possibly you should re-educate yourself, as far as running the business or applying yourself? (no,no) Do you find your business now easier or more difficult to manage than when you first started?

Jesse: Well, it's a little more difficult but uh, I think that's due to taxation and uh, surrounding conditions.

Ann: Uh, do you do your own accounting?

Jesse: No.

Ann: Uh, have you ever felt the need to computerize or have you ever been approached to computerize?

Jesse: No. Mmm-hmm.

Ann: Uh, in your opinion, have you ever made any significant contributions to the community? Other than donating materials or work?

Jesse: Yes, I think I have.

Ann: Could you give some examples?

Jesse: Well uh,...we have helped a number of churches in their construction. Uh, primarily, mostly churches. We've had uh, oh, any number of...any number of them that we have contributed to and either in work and material or money, you know, both ways.

Ann: Uh, in the past few years in your work in the aluminum, have you noticed any trends as to uh, construction uh, the use of materials, such as are people turning more to brick or aluminum?

Jesse: Well, they've uh, two or three years ago they had a trend toward aluminum. But now why, it's just more or less leveled out. And about equal amount is going both ways; part to aluminum and part to brick.

Ann: Uh, the past and currently as well, are there any trends as to color as to aluminum? Are there any specifically....

Jesse: No, they're just...just according to the customers choice. (What is your...?) There's no particular color that's preferred over another.

Ann: What is your most selling color right now?

Jesse: White is our most popular color.

Ann: From what you're seen in the past, do you feel in any way that you could predict what future trends might be?

Jesse: No, you can't uh, you can't very well predict the trends. It all depends upon the building, the amount of building that's gonna be done. Uh, there's no way that you can predict what will happen as far as this particular work's concerned.

Ann: Uh, when do you plan to retire from your business?

Jesse: Oh, in the next year.

Ann: Okay, thank you, Mr. Arnold.

END OF INTERVIEW