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Virginia Plumley

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA
 400 Hal Greer Boulevard
 Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2867
 304/696-6799

SUBJECT: _____

 ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: _____
 MORROW ACCESSION NUMBER: 64-515

ORAL HISTORY

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I, Virginia Plumley, the undersigned, of Cabell,
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DATE: 7-5-94

Virginia Plumley
 (Signature - Interviewee)

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 (Address)

Harp., WV 25701

DATE: 7/5/94

Jennifer F. Stock
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OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: DR. VIRGINIA PLUMLEY

CONDUCTED BY: JENNIFER STOCK

DATE OF INTERVIEW: JULY 5, 1994

Jennifer: I'm interviewing Virginia Plumley at her office at Marshall on July 5th, 1994. Could you say your full name?

Virginia: My name is Virginia D, and as in Diane, Plumley, and you have permission to use anything I say in this interview.

Jennifer: Thank you very much. When were you born?

Virginia: When was I born? Now [laughs]...now wait just a minute. What has that got to do with it? [laughing] Okay. I was born on March 7th, 1935.

Jennifer: Are you married or not married?

Virginia: Well, I don't see how it has anything to do with it, but I am not married. (I know, I apologize) I am not married. Who made up these silly questions?

Jennifer: Well, they tell us that they want it, us to have it for a demographic profile.

Virginia: Yeah, well, that's fine.

Jennifer: Obviously...you've continued your education until post doctorate level....(right)...when did you begin working at Owens?

Virginia: Well, right out of high school in 1953. I thought something was going to happen to that plant before I could get a job there. They paid the women a lot of money, and I got a job there selecting bottles, working the swing shift and of course, I was trained how to select those bottles and I worked there beginning let's see, I guess it was the summer of 1953. I terminated my employment in 1965.

Jennifer: Is that everything, that handles all your exchanges of position in the plant from 1953 to 1965?

Virginia: Yes, all the changes, positions, titles and all occurred in that time span.

Jennifer: How did you hear about Owens? What made you brave enough to go down there?

Virginia: Well, I was born in Hamlin, West Virginia, it's in Lincoln County in a small town. And I had heard about it and those days in 1953, women didn't have too many opportunities. You were taught to, well, I wasn't really taught, but I was led to believe, women were to marry and coming from my financial background I assumed that...if I didn't marry, I would have to work in a menial job in a plant producing something that didn't require a great deal of skill. I suppose that was somewhat of my orientation at that

time. However, when I got on the job, and I was making decent money, I realized that's not where my heart was—that I could not continue that kind of work my entire life. As a matter of fact, when I articulated that to some of my female co-workers, they'd laugh and say, "Yeah, we all said that and look where we are today." They'd had their children and they were locked in, so to speak. There was no life for them beyond Owens-Illinois and their immediate family and I, hey, that's wasn't me. I knew that I wasn't going to do that, but I really think that I was employed there because of my athletic skills. When I inquired about it, I noticed that the woman, what was her name? personnel director Johnny Arenson, made a note, well, it wasn't really Johnny, it was her, I thought it was Johnny, but it was her secretary, Annamae Kinser, 'cause Johnny Arenson had been described to me and for some reason Annamae Kinser fit that description. So I talked with Annamae Kinser about it, who's a wonderful person, and she made a note of my interest in athletics. And of course, at that time they had a lot of female ball teams and supported them financially. So I guess they were impressed with perhaps I did have some skill there.

Jennifer: Are we talking about softball or....

Virginia: Oh, everything. I played softball, I bowled, I played golf, volleyball. And once I was hired on the assembly line and I realized that, you know, something else is going to have to happen in my life, I had considered being an airline stewardess and in fact, had right before I went to work at Owens during that time, had paid my, my mother paid the tuition I think, was \$35. I was to go to Kansas, Weaver, Kansas, how can I ever remember that. Weaver, Kansas, to do some training, but I was engaged and knew in those days again, you know, discrimination was just rampant, but I knew if I married I could not be a stewardess. (right) So I thought well, my best option then is to stay here and I did, at Owens. And then I thought well, this is not for me, either. Meantime, thank God, the fellow I was interested in was in the Navy and on the West coast, so we saw each other on occasion, but I grew up. I grew up while he was in the Navy. I became my own person, and not the person that others expected. Whatever their expectations were, you know today I couldn't care less. But in those days you know, you try to please. So then I had established myself as a good worker and I guess a decent athlete. A friend of mine started going to Wiseman's Business School, which is a private business school. (could you spell that) W-i-s-e-m-a-n, and it was a finishing school, business school. My sister had gone there, and by the way, my sister went on to get a Ph.D., and also have a borther, who went to get a Ph.D., you know. We came from this background. We weren't given money, but I guess given a lot of gray matter motivation. So my sister had gone there and I never thought that I wanted to, I never even though much about being a secretary. So when I went in to talk to, with Mrs. Wiseman, she remembered my sister, who was a good student, and she said, "Why

don't you go to school?" And I said, "Well, I can't afford it." I was getting \$19 a week unemployment and I had run up a lot of clothing bills and I just couldn't afford it. She said, and I said, "My unemployment will stop," and she said, "You can go free."

Jennifer: That's quite an offer.

Virginia: Quite an offer. And I jumped at it. (sure, sure) So here I was drawing my unemployment, taking classes from this wonderful, delightful lady. I just loved her, you know. You never get anywhere on your own. I had a lot of people who helped me along the way, and I try to pay back now. So I went to school and I always found everything fun, so I found school fun and even before I finished my secretarial classes, there was an opening, on a part-time basis, in one of the offices down there, and Johnny called me, Johnny Arsenon, the personnel director, she said, "Hey, Plumley," she always called me Plumley, "Hey, Plumley, how about coming to work in the office down here?" It was the selecting department. Selecting and Q and S, Quality and Specification, no, it wasn't selecting, it was Q and S, Quality and Specifications. I thought, "Oh, God." And I never was good at that taking shorthand because being a typical...are you from West Virginia? (I'm from Logan County) Okay. I don't know about you, a lot of West Virginians can't hear sounds, the different sounds of the vowels, the vowel sounds, that's why we mispronounce a lot of words. And I couldn't not hear the different sounds of the vowels, which you must be able to hear in order to take shorthand. I was awful at shorthand. I could really type fast and I was good at spelling and other things, but I was awful. Could not take it. So, I had to go in and take a dictation test. So I thought, oh, shit, I'm going to flunk this one. So I sat down and thank God it was a hosrt note, just a very brief letter. I memorized it (did you really?) yeah. I just sat there, I just memorized what he said, you know, I had a good memory and....so [laughs]...I just made all these scribbles and everything and then I went out and sat down at the typewriter and typed it up from memory. [laughs] And took it in and handed it to him. He thought I was a whiz. He never gave dictation. I thought, well, I don't have nothing to lose, I will just take it and somebody had siad to me one time if you don't know how to do something, learn. You can compensate for it, so I guess I compensated and then I did a really good job for Julian Aldridge was his name. (Julian) Julian Aldridge, and I worked there for 2, I don't know maybe a month or 2, his secretary had a hysterectomy. And then a job came open down in the service department. Ernie Gallaher was the supervisor down there and he loved me dearly. And I just loved him. He was an old man, an old coger that had a risque' way about him, and I was risque', too. He loved my suggestive jokes and I loved, you know, repertoire with him. I went down there as a secretary and then there was a job in the office as a billing clerk that I'd liked to have so I said to him one day, "Why don't you give me a chance at that job as a

billing clerk?" And he said, "Oh, well, we'll talk about it." Interesting thing was whenever a man would come in as a service, we called them service men, they were men who serviced the accounts, like Seagram, Gerber Food and the number of companies that we made bottles for, you know, those guys would keep on moving up in the organization. And the women would always train them. (sure) So we could have done the job easily. (right) I worked with Tom Rase and Don Burns as they were schedulers, that meant that they scheduled all the jobs on the machines. And then to do that they had to find out if they had the blanks and the molds there and if not, you know, where it was, and they had to get them ordered in and it really took a lot of coordination there, and I loved doing that. I loved to get those orders in there and I'd go through those files. Actually, I'd even do that for them. I would find out all that stuff, then I'd sit down and chase it all down and get it all in there. Then I'd do what I was supposed to do, which is type up the schedules for all the machines. That was my ifrst job in the office. And I think I made 57 copies and they delivered them around the plant to different people so they would know when this job was coming on this machine, where the equipment was and how long it was to run and all that. I loved that job, and I would work sometime for a service man and I learned his job and I thought, "God, this stuff is all easier than what I'm doing," (yeah). So then Ernie died, Ernie Gallaher died and shortly thereafter, Julian Aldrige, the first boss I had came on to take his place, because that was a promotion for him and he called me into his office one day, and he said, "Jenny," he said, "I have this billing's clerk position open," and he said, "If you want it, k it's yours, because I know Ernie Gallaher had you in mind for that job the next time it came open." And I said, "Wonderful!" So I took the job, and I always liked recognition I, we had so many plants all over the world in the United States, and I always like it when I got the distinction of having no errors or the least ammount of errors in billing.

Jennifer: So they circulated that kind of information.

Virginia: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, they gave you recognition. Yeah. Another thing I enjoyed about it is I had, we'd make suggestionszx of how to simplify work or how to save money and I was always involved in that, 'cause I always liked to see ways in doing things cheaper or quicker.

Jennifer: So your idea is put into reality.

Virginia: Yeah, right, and you got paid for it. Oh, yeah, you got a percentage of the savings. (really) Oh, yeah.

Jennifer: Even if you were a woman.

Virginia: Oh, [laughs] even if you were a woman. (it was a good idea) The only thing I could say negative about that company,

which I have since been corrected, is that they did not place that much value, well, I don't want to say, they did value us, they didn't give us the opportunity I suppose for advancement. I've just prattled on. Do you have any particular questions.

Jennifer: Well, lots. You were at the plant during the time of the Opal Mann lawsuit, were you not?

Virginia: When was her lawsuit?

Jennifer: I'm thinking it starts in the first part of the 1960's. It happened concurrently with the opening of the EOE in Washington (yeah). So I don't know exactly when that was.

Virginia: Now, I tell you, I'm only familiar with that just recently. If that was going on at the time when I was there, I'm sure I'd been right on that band wagon. Unless something's happened to my memory on that particular thing. I don't recall, I don't recall that, when it was going on.

Jennifer: I think it was probably later '60's, after you had left... Alright, let's see...did you get along with the other women at the plant? (uh-huh, yeah) Was there a lot of circulation between worker and management or friendship?

Virginia: With management?

Jennifer: Between management and workers.

Virginia: Yeah, I thought so. I can only speak for my own perspective but...they would have parties for us. I can remember I loved those parties. (at the clubhouse?) Yeah, at the clubhouse or sometimes out at the Gun and something club. [laughs] (whatever it was called) Yeah, I don't know really what you are looking for there.

Jennifer: I was just trying to get a picture of the social life of the plant. If there was any kind of division and who hung out with who. It's kind of a simple question.

Virginia: Well, no, I see what you are saying. It's a question that probably ought to be answered. I really think that Owens Illinois and the people there, I think that was a nucleus of their lives. Not only did they earn their money there but a lot of their socialization was a result of their working there. Like they played on different teams and their parties and they met people there. The job itself was so boring that you talked a lot to your neighbor when they got their 15 minute break in the morning and 30 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes break in the afternoon. There was usually a lot of conversation with them. Of course, you had some women who were, I always liked a dirty joke, you know, I was always in there with the dirty jobkes and that was really not

they always called it the whores corner. [laughter] 'Cause all the women who liked risque talk, you know, we were really loud, and oh, it's the whore's corner. [laughs] And then you'd have people just like we have here at Marshall University. I really don't find that much difference in the people at the plant down there and the people here except the, perhaps the vocabulary is better. Maybe if someone were offended or upset or discriminated against there, they were perhaps, the language that was used may have been a little more earthy, that what you have here. But when people were hurt they yelled "ouch" in their own way, 'cause I've been on the faculty/personnel committee here, was chair of that for years, so I know. I would say except for not letting people be promoted, I have seen the same sort of things here. In fact, I've seen discrimination here, too. (yeah) Absolutely. So it's the same.

Jennifer: Yeah, just a bunch of people. It's all politics.

Virginia: Yeah, it really is. It's who you know and although I will say that I think in industry, the yard stick for measuring success obviously is the dollar mark. You know, you, they'd come around and do studies, you know, time you, how long it took you to pack a box or something like that. That determined how much was charged and that sort of thing, and were looking for ways to cut costs. At Marshall you don't have that. In the real world if you have someone that is incompetent they got rid of them. I see in higher education they're so afraid to get rid of somebody that they'll keep an incompetent on forever. Our product at Owens was glass, our product here at Marshall is a student. To me that is far more important. Absolutely (irreplaceable) that's right! You could just crush a student in a classroom and just cut their drive for whatever. And you talk about elitism, I think that is what you were trying to go for earlier (yes), I see that more here.

Jennifer: We are interested in tracking the development of different management styles and relations. We've seen a lot of distance being taken in later years. It's just good to hear about those.

Virginia: Well, you're talking about the X and Y theory, you know, theories of management. You talk about the X and Y, so ideally it's in between. Well, Owens-Illinois all obviously was task oriented while you were there. You were expected to do, do, do, do, do, whatever it was. But you were rewarded in different ways. It was usually monetarily. At Marshall, you might get a reward by a pat on the back but a lot of times if you do a real good job that's not wanted because you make the boss look bad. I was going to complete a thought. I really think that in industry, at least my perceptions is that people who had the qualifications were the ones whoh were promoted, except for women. (except for women) At Marshall, at Marshall it's the one, it's the yes men. It's not the person who has the vision, who has the answers, it's a person who know how to

Jennifer: Now, why do you think there is a difference in, like you say, the skills that are being exercised, is that because of the abstraction that goes on from the difference between doing a specified task and you can run a quality or assessment on how it should be done and something like the job content of a lot of academic positions which are less clearly defined. What is the reason for that big difference?

Virginia: Well, I think you hit an, in an industry when you said the quality control. You have quality control. There are certain, just like a [inaudible]...pack was a split finish on a bottle. If this was a bottle right here, it'd be this right here, that's the finish. It would be a split 'cause it couldn't take pressure. And then sometimes a check under which would be a check like right in here would be a never pack or sometimes it was a packable thing. You knew, you knew, what you could do, what the limits were. At Marshall, it seems to me its governed a lot by personality and politics, as you mentioned earlier. If you get somebody who's secure in their job and we have a lot of people who are very secure. Like the President, I think is very secure, he's very capable and he knows exactly what he is doing. But he has been working for a lot of insecure people who really probably know or fear that he knows and other people know that they shouldn't be there where they are. (yeah) 'Cause they don't have the skills. And I think in higher education you need more people skills than you do on the job. You go in on a job it's 8 hours and you clocked out and you're out of there, and if they have some perks for you that's wonderful. But here it's a lot different and I think that a lot of times, people are promoted through politics and trying to figure out, they waste a lot of time trying to figure out what their superior wants so that they could maintain their job. I really believe in that old axiom, that those who can do and those who can't teach and those who can't teach, teach, teachers [laughs]. And those who can't teach teachers become administrators. [laughs] I do think I'm close to retirement and I can say all that. I would have said it anyway. [laughs] But I really think that people are attracted to higher education. They think you can hide. I think teachers can hide.

Jennifer: How so? Hides their lack of abilities or hide their lack of confidence?

Virginia: Lack of abilities. I think that, you know, we have what is called academic freedom and I was so used to marching to a drummer in the industry that when I came here I was just, in fact, I still have trouble adjusting to...the fact that you can do anything you want to in a classroom. Now, I don't, but you can scream academic freedom if you question anything that they do. I think that we have people who come here who maybe know the subject. I wasn't talking about Marshall, you know, I've gone to law schools as you know. I've got a Ph.D. I went to Kent State University, one of the better schools in the country. I just think sometimes

that teachers hang on too long, teach too long. I think when you have that fire in your gut and you enjoy teaching and you enjoy prepared for the class and you walk into the classroom and you're charged up, you know, you think you're really doing something good. I think when that fire is gone you ought to get the hell out. (yeah) And it leaves some people quicker than others.

Jennifer: Yeah, sure, burn out is a problem in a lot of fields (yeah, it is). Just like when you were doing the selecting department. I have a hard time understanding, comprehending these women's lives, you know, all these long years at this one monotonous job. What did you think about, what did you do to amuse yourself? [laughing]

Virginia: Oh, hey, I orchestrated some of the greatest concertos that could ever be put down. (really?) Absolutely! I was into my own head. Now if I were working on a conveyor, I'd talk to the neighbor next to me or we could, in those days we could get something to eat, like get a package of potato chips and put it on this conveyor, go around, around and around and I'd just stick it right in the middle and I'd...something to drink over here, and I'd amuse myself or you're supposed to pack so much ware and I'd get myself worked back so I could go take a break. Or I'd go talk to somebody 'cause I've always been a social person. But when I was sitting under a light and watching those bottles go by and go by and go by, it's just mesmerizing. And then you hear, the machines, you can hear machines dropping the bottles. Psh, psh, and then you could hear the clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, over here, of the bottles hitting each other and then you'd hear some other noise of the cartons coming down the chute, psh. I would just orchestrate. If I were writing music in those days, I could have had some beautiful symphonies. Just the sounds, two senses involved, the sense of sight sitting there looking for anything that goes that was a defect and the hearing. And the synthesizing of all of that, the sounds into a symphony. (yeah, sounds beautiful) I don't know what the others did; that's what I did. I guess I assumed everyone done that.

Jennifer: I've asked a lot of people that question 'cause I come to it again, and again and trying to picture their existence.

Virginia: Oh, sometimes you go asleep. If you went to sleep, you were fired. And what would happen is (no questions asked?) no questions asked. Like the boss would come up and put a piece of paper, 'cause sometimes when you're looking down you can't tell when you're standing up here if the persons eyes are closed or not, 'cause you're looking down at these glasses, bottles, so they put a piece of paper down and when it comes through, if you go "snap of fingers," if you didn't do that and it went by you you're out of there. (wow, I never heard of that) Yeah, oh, yeah, I can

understand that because you're looking for a lot of things. Usually like the Gerber baby food bottles, that jar that was something like, you'd sit one and all you did was look at the finish of it as it is, goes through, every bottle just going through, going through. And there would be someone else sittin down here in another light that was looking at the body of the bottle as it went through. (oh, wow, I didn't know you divided it into parts like that) Oh, yeah, you would that particular one because of the product. And then you would have someone down at the bottom picking it up, looking at the bottom of it and giving it a whirl and then throwing it in the box.

Jennifer: Well, to change the subject, were you involved in union activities at the plant?

Virginia: Well, when I was hired on the conveyor, I had to take the oath of the, and I didn't know what it was. I just thought this was some little something I had to go through. I didn't know anything about unions. And well, if I got to do this, I'll do it and I don't remember now how much it was they took out of my check. But I took the oath of the union, but I never had to cross, never picketed; there was never a strike or anything.

Jennifer: There were never a strike during your year? There was a big strike in '69.

Virginia: Well, there was a strike, not while I was in the union. There was a strike when I was in the office and in the office I wasn't in the union. (I see)

Jennifer: I've been told that they were no ugly strikes. That all the strikes were mostly done to show union solidarity with the nation union. I mean, I didn't mean to be looking for ugliness. I mean I heard there was not...

Virginia: Do you know the thing that really turned me off about the union? This one union steward, he was just a loud mouth guy and I don't remember what I was doing at negotiations, but I was in the office and God only knows what I was doing there. But I jsut sat there and watched his body language and listened to him and what he had to say and I thought it is no wonder that the unions had the reputation that they had. Usually, the person that is representing management is composed and a little sophisticated and this guy would get really red-faced and put his arms behind his head like that, and he'd nag and all these four letter words, and I thought, you know, that's not a way to resolve a conflict. I thought gee, where did they did this guy up.

Jennifer: What did you think about the separate female, male local unions? I guess you weren't sophisticated enough at that time to

(were they separate?) realized how odd that was. Yeah.

Virginia: I didn't know. Well, no, I guess I didn't realize how odd it was because we had separate jobs. (right) Now, you have males who select bottles, those days males didn't select bottles. I found this interesting as I observed after I got out of my sophomoreic whatever, bliss [laughs], and started looking around me to see what has happening. We went through a 2-week training session before we ever picked up a bottle. Then we got on the conveyor and we were still in training. A man would be brought in as a quality control person and given a day or two and he was out there judging whether or not I was packing good bottles (right, exactly). I said, "This is bullshit!" (yeah) We're the ones who work with this, we work on different conveyors, we know the defects, we know what's permissible, we know what's not. We went through the extensive training. We had on the job training and this jerk, (this jerk coming in in a day and a half telling you your work) yeah.

Jennifer: How do you deal with anger like that?

Virginia: Oh, I hated it! Oh, I hated it!. Oh, I absolutely, and then those guys would become the shift foreman. I really, got a really bad taste for, I was a little bit of an optimist. I kept thinking things will get better if I get into the office, things would be different. I saw what was happening in the selection room. And I hated it so much and the guys would hit on the women, too. They kind of thought that was fair game. And it was fair game. Some women would take them up on it and some of the women would sleep with the bosses. I guess thinking that would help them in some way. For whatever reason. Some of the guys in management would come down and hit on the women, you know. (the selecting farm) Yeah. I remember this guy and we won't mention his name (okay). He said that he always told the men who came to work for him, there's a bunch of women here and don't even try to sleep with them all, I have tried it. [laughs] Meaning that he had been successful but there just wasn't enough time in a day to sleep with all of the women there. I did not believe that. I don't believe that, but those men, I think they gave the women a bad rap. I think you know, one time I heard the expression when somebody asked me where I worked, and I said Owens-Illinois, they said, oh, that's the only whorehouse in town with a whistle on it. And I was furious about that. (yeah) I mean, we had just as many loose women and men, and men at this university, proportionately as we did at Owens-Illinois. That always just really upset me. I was so naive and so innocent that I couldn't even say the word shit. I'd get angry over being discriminated against and I'd remember when I learned to begin to say some, because that was the language I learned down there, see, that is how they expressed themselves. So that is how I expressed myself. I began to express some concern about the double standards, the double standards between the men and the women. So I thought it would be different in the offices.

So when I got a job in the office, hell, it wasn't any different there than what it was out on the line. So then when I finished my degree and I thought, gee, I graduated with honors and I got a degree in Business Management with minors both in Economics and Accounting. I know Owens had a training program for their managers. Do you know, I'll show you how dumb I was. I didn't know that women weren't in it. I didn't know.

Jennifer: The whole time you were studying and finishing this up, and making your plans.

Virginia: I didn't know. I just assumed I was going to retire from Owens-Illinois. I got an interview with Ezra Midkiff, he was personnel director then, and he was here on campus and I went on an interview with him and he said, "Well, you know, we just don't take women." He said, "You don't have the qualifications." That's what it was. I said, "Oh, come on, Ezra, I...qualifications I graduated with honors." "Well, you're a woman, Jenny. You're a woman. Now, you can have your old job back any time you want." Well, I was beyond mad. But he could get by with that. Those were the days, too, and I borrowed Bob Alexander to task on this. He was director of Placement here on campus in those days. We had a lot of companies coming in and interviewing students and I mean, God, it was more of a demand than they were a supply. They could say women need not apply. And it was always for the management jobs, I could not, nobody would interview me.

Jennifer: What time period is this?

Virginia: It is 1969. (1969) Nobody...well, the only job that we have up there that a woman is the supervisor of is over the secretaries. He said, "Now, if you want to come in as a secretary, you can work your way up to that." And he was really kind of demeaning, too.

Jennifer: Yeah. How did you keep from getting so discouraged?

Virginia: I tore up the application and threw it at him on my way out. So, I knew what I was going to do to him. I got him. (oh, did you?) Oh, I got him. So I went back and they were 2 guys from Inco and I've since forgotten their names. And I said, you know, I rehearsed this in my mind for a long time before I did it. I said, "Inco has a really good name in this community." I said, "You employ a lot of people. People have a very positive image of you." And I went on and on. But I said, "You got one negative in your company up there." And I told them what happened to me. Oh, they were furious because by that time I had proven myself to them (in the classroom and in the studies), right, so they fired him. [laughs] They got rid of him. And they told me they did. They told me they did. This is interesting, a bit of irony. Now, I'm in the field of communications. They were setting up a communications department at that time. And they offered that job

to me. Why, I couldn't ...even turn on a recorder, I didn't know anything about it!

Jennifer: Did you consider leaving the area?

Virginia: No, because these people were coming in from, oh, no, it was all through the United States. It wasn't just in this area 'cause these people came in a lot of places like Burlington. I'm thinking about a particular incident that happened with Inco. I was taking these business classes at night and they were dual numbered, you know, 4 or 500 double numbers and I was taking them as an undergraduate. I was in there with some of the managers from Inco and they really, you know, I was a good student. They liked me and we would talk during break and that sort of thing. So they had a guy down here interviewing for people in management positions. They didn't have on there "Women need not apply", and I thought, boy, this is interesting. So Bob Alexander set me up with an appointment. And I said, "Bob, are you sure that they want to interview women?" and he said, "Yeah." I went in there, as I walked in there he said, "What are you doing here?" The interviewer said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "I'm here for an interview." He says, "Well, this is management and you're a woman." And I said, "You didn't say," and by that time, I mean, I was fed up with discrimination. And I said, "I get 15 minutes of your time and I'm taking it, and we're going to talk." I...pretty much let him know how I felt, but I was diplomate about it. And he just said, I didn't know anything about it. And it was interesting. I said, "No, no, I don't know anything about it," and he said, "Well, you can take classes, you know." I was just so down trodden by that time that I just didn't have any confidence at all in myself. So I didn't take the job. I was offered graduate assistantship in the College of Business, well, it was the Business Department in the College of Education. So, I can't remember this guy, they didn't have a dean, they had a chair and he wanted me to teach Accounting classes, and work on my Master's and MBA. And I thought if I can't get a job in what I want to do (what am I doing here). Why get a Master's?! It's a waste of time. So I talked with the guy who offered me a graduate assistantship in the communication department and I don't know anything about this field and he said, "You don't have to, we'll just go from ground up." Well, I ended up being hired by the time I finished my Master's. And I set up this center and been developing programs and classes and that sort of thing ever since. I really believe that, even though, you know, I can really get off and get heated about what happens to women in industry, I think on a personal level, any adversity I've ever experienced I've gotten stronger from it. I am a very strong woman and you can probably tell that just by talking with me. I pretty much know who I am. I don't live through nobody else. I think that if things had been easier for me, I may never have broken out of that old mold. Although, I hate like hell, that I and my sisters have to go through this, you know, by God, men don't do it. Shit, by virtue of their testicles, you know, they

have a lot of doors opened to them. But also, I think at the other extreme, I equate what is happening in some regards to the feminist movement. As to what happened to Gomper's idea in 1935 of establishing unions. When he started establishing them, they were really needed so the people could be paid a decent pay for a decent days work. What happened to the uniond, is many cases, they've gone too far. All you have to do is witness what has happened to the steel industry. I think that is what is happening a lot of times with the black movement, and women. I don't like the idea of tokenism.

Jennifer: What's your stance on the multicultural movement that's taken academia by storm?

Virginia: Well, I would like to think that, that, would just happen, would evolve, treat people equal. What in the hell is wrong with people that you can't treat people equally. Why can't you treat them like you want to be treated? Why does it have to be legislated? Now that the [inaudible]...movement in effect, I guess I'm just kind of like a student to that-I'm waiting to see what happens there. I can't help but be a little envious when I think of my abilities and had those doors been opened for me, and had I been competing with men, and I'd strut right in and because I'm a woman, you know, I'm given the job...be pretty neat, wouldn't it?

Jennifer: Yes, it would be very different, you know, it's hard to not see a lot of separatism behind multicultural

Virginia: What do you think about it?

Jennifer: Like I said, I don't think it's something that should be part of a canon, you know. I don't like tokenism, either. You know? Even though I can, there's wonderful arguments on the other side. I think multiculturalism masks a lack of content and direction in higher education...basically.

Virginia: I agree, I agree. I think it's just something that was just kind of looked like it had to be done, and put a bandaid on it. It wasn't really, well thought through. I think a lot of things has happened, like the O.J. Simpson case. I'm kind of following that great great interest because so many women had been abused physically and emotionally and they felt for whatsoever reason that they deserved it. And now they're coming forward and it took something as awful as that to happen. That was happening all the time. But it happened to an icon and he is a model. My God, let's get serious. He just happened to be blessed with a big body and fast feet.

Jennifer: Yes, absolutely! It's polarized a lot of people. I've heard, it's like they need a tull case or any kind of big national case like that.

Virginia: I was in a restaurant the other day and I heard this guy say have they found any evidence to link O.J. to that murder. And I said, "My God, man, how much do you want?" [laughing] Yes, and he just looked.

Jennifer: It's a dangerous place, you know. It's this...that and the other and you know, you don't want to try. I mean, find a guy guilty before he's been tried in a court. Yeah, I've heard a lot of ugliness going on. Well, she probably deserved it and this, that and the other. Anyway, that's a long way from Owens. [laughs]

Virginia: What kinds of things have other people been telling you who worked down there? I'd be kind of curious about what they have been saying.

Jennifer: You mean the other women? (uh-huh, other women) I've talked to about 5 other women. Mostly it's kind of self-selecting process where the women who had agreed to talk to me are women who are, you know, iconoclastic, and loud-spoken. [laughs] I don't know, every selector I talk to tells a different story. I spoke to Opal Mann on Friday and that was real fascinating, listening to her. I guess you didn't know her at all.

Virginia: I know her by name, I cannot put a face on her.

Jennifer: She's like 85. She's just an incredible woman that decided to take advantage of the ruling, took the case to court and got so much grief at work. She told me, she said she hated working at Owens. She hated every single day, she hated having to work, she didn't enjoy it at all. She enjoyed the people but no she never enjoyed her job. [laughs]

Virginia: What was her case for? Lack of promotion?

Jennifer: It was for women to be able to bid on a bunch of things. It was like the first in a sexual discrimination case ever heard.

Virginia: Did you find the women down there kind of passionate then, about their discussion of the plant?

Jennifer: I hear a lot of love in their voices about the plant. And they just want to tell me that Owens was good to them, and that it was a good life for them. I've talked to mostly retired people. These women have been you know, happy about Owens and about their life. When I asked them about, you know, well, if you could have any job, if you could've went on and whatever, they seemed numb to it; they said they've been happy where they were.

Virginia: They didn't see any life beyond that.

Jennifer: I imagine that is what you found. How did that affect

you holding yourself different from everyone else? You know, your whole time there, I imagine you, so you were thinking, okay, I'm doing this now, but this is not for me and whatever. Did that affect the friends that you made, did that affect how you interacted?

Virginia: That is the story of my life. I always felt different. I think that I have developed some really very good friends while I was down there and I loved them, the friendships that I made. I remember when I said I was going to get an education, get out of there and one woman said, "Oh, that is just a pie ass dream." I never heard that expression before, and I thought what does that mean? a pipe ass dream. I felt really proud when I got the Bachelors, I think probably part of the motivation for going on to school came from the fact that they didn't think I could do it. (sure) And I wanted to say, "Yeah, I can, not only did it but did it with honors." (And I did it almost free) Yeah. (and you can do it, too) Yeah, well, now my free schooling was the Wiseman's Business School. I had to pay here at Marshall University, but I got grants, scholarships, and I paid my way. Owens-Illinois paid 80%, see, I took classes and I helped my brother through school and a friend, paying their tuition and helped them with the understanding, once they had graduated they would help me. Well, they graduated in 1965. My brother went to teaching in Cleveland, that's when I asked for a years leave of absence, 'cause I didn't know, don't know, can I make it or not in school. So that's when I went to Kent State. I took a years leave and went to Kent State as an undergraduate. I thought, "Shoot, this is no big deal, going to school full-time. I can handle this." I didn't like, I lived in Cleveland, I didn't like Cleveland, so I moved back here and finished my bachelor's work here. That's when I, in fact, I probably have copies of those letters, telling them that I appreciate them giving me a years leave and that I was happy in what I was doing and felt that what I was doing was right for me.

Jennifer: Where did you get your Ph.D.?

Virginia: I went back to Kent State.

Jennifer: What was your association with Kent State? Why did you choose...?

Virginia: I believe in fate, really. I think things happen for a reason. I really was accepted in Western Reserve and then realized how much it cost to go to school there. So I did all the entrance things and was accepted there as an undergraduate only to find that, my God, I didn't even have enough money saved to pay maybe one semester. So Kent State was in driving distance of Cleveland. I was living with my brother, the one I had helped through school. That's why I ended up at Kent, one quarter, and I decided that wasn't it and I came back and lived with my mother. I had, oh, this might be interesting, I got scholarships here at Marshall.

Johnny Anderson would call me and she'd say, "When you have some time off, let me know when you have time off, 'cause we always have women going on vacation in the offices." And so, whenever I had any time, I'd just call and say, "Johnny, do you have any jobs," and she'd always put me to work.

Jennifer: This is why you are going to school?

Virginia: Well, this is, maybe during a week off, three weeks off for Christmas, you know. I'd call her and I'd go down there and work for 3 weeks. Or it would be in the summer when school wasn't in session and I'd call her and I almost always ...she'd found a job for me to do.

Jennifer: That's wonderful. Tell me about her. Her name has come up.

Virginia: She is a fantastic woman. (was she? she's dead now, right?) Oh, yeah. She died about a year or so ago. Let's see, wht can I saya bout Johnni. First time I ever saw her, I thought, I never saw a woman like that before, or behaved like that before. She was a woman that had the biggest ranking job as women's personnel director at Owens. She was also over the athletic program. She was a very stern woman, but yet she had a heart. She did a lot for the women.

Jennifer: How did she get her job?

Virginia: I don't know. I think she told me one time, I asker her and she said they groomed her for it. She got a degree, was it at Alderson/Broaddus? I don't remember. She got a degree and they were grooming her for it and she had to work on the conveyor and she had to do the different jobs as the women did, so that she would have an understanding of what those women had to go through. And I was impressed with that. (yeah, that is impressive). I was impressed. But because she was a woman, she would never go any higher than that. But I thought that was a degree, I think she was a proud woman, and totally, totally devoted to her job.

Jennifer: Could you tell the difference between people that were totally devoted to people who did leave it and the factory? I have talked to people and I've said, "Did you socialize, did you meet?" "No, I went home and whatever and retired early." And there's other people that are in the Retirees Association, have all the bottles on their
[laughter]

Virginia: Yeah, yeah, they're proud, you know, I kind of alluded to it earlier. I think they are women that their whole life just evolved around the plant and their job, the friendships that they made and others just used it as a tool to something else. It was just a means to another end. They was just in there for 8 hours

and couldn't care less about anything else.

Jennifer: Speaking of which, I also heard that they treated women who were in there working, women who didn't have to work, women who had a husband who had a good job or whatever, or they was working just for spending money. These women were treated better than women who were, which may do with the fact that women who needed the money were probably divorced or looked upon as having some sort of shady history, because they were having to support their family. But did you see any of that?

Virginia: I'm not aware of that. (I was told that I wouldn't figure that out) No, I can't either. I think in general, a woman who just works for spending money, there's a whole different demeanor about her than a person that has to be there. So it may be that because they are light and they can talk to the bosses and they're not intimidated by anybody, and that makes the difference whereas, I think, people who feel they have to work, they're afraid to speak out. (yeah) And probably if they did speak out they'd get along a lot better.

Jennifer: Yeah, and not feel so fragile. Is there any other stories that you'd like to tell, anything that I haven't touched on?

Virginia: No, I just, I just, I really enjoyed working down there, especially in the office. I did not enjoy working on the, in the selection room. No, God, that was boring. [laughs] Could you imagine standing in one place doing the same thing over and over and over 'til you think you're actually going to lose your mind?

Jennifer: And standing, too, in the heat and in the cold.

Virginia: Yeah. (yea, I know) What I was thinking I remember taking a, my first personnel management class at Marshall and I had some creep in there that his only name to, any kind of management job, he was a manager of some used car lot. He got in, and I was always in class with all men, seems like I've had to fight men all my life. But we got in a discussion about women could do repetitive work and men can't because we're different, women are different, and went through all this stuff. And so I said, "No, women can do competitive work 'cause we have to; men don't have to." When we're little girls, we have to do things 'cause Mother tells us to do; little boys don't have to. Women will do repetitive work because by golly, that's the only job they can get that pays half way decently. Men can get jobs that pay a lot better that's not as, the work is not as repetitive. And do you know those men just laughed at me, and of course, research bears that out now. (sure) And I can remember in our classes in investments, it talked about, you know, how much money you should invest in stocks, how much in bonds, how much in life insurance and that's the thing I'm getting in on now, this life insurance. And

they said, "Well, a man should have," and I've forgotten the figures now, how's that life insurance because he was leaving behind a wife and he's leaving behind kids and all that, and I said, "Well, what about the wife?" you know, they never mentioned the wife any insurance, they just laughed. Why would women need any more insurance than enough to put them away? I said, "Well, you've got to hire a chauffeur, you got to hire a cook, you got to hire somebody to take care of the kids, you got to hire, you know..." I named off all that. But it was that sort of thing all the time. (right in your face) Right in my face, I was right in their face, too. But all of that, I think, has made me very strong. In fact, probably I'm a little bit rather than being assertive, probably at times I'm aggressive because I'm impatient with the mentality.

Jennifer: What else can you be? How can you be tolerant of that? (I know) Winners, power situations....

[KNOCK ON OFFICE DOOR]

TAPE SHUTS OFF ABRUPTLY

END OF INTERVIEW