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Paul Niday

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA  
400 Hal Greer Boulevard  
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667  
304/696-6799

OWENS GLASS PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

MORROW ACCESSION NUMBER: 64-534

ORAL HISTORY

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5/31/94

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DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

5/31/94

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**OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT**

**AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: PAUL NIDAY**

**CONDUCTED BY: CHRISTIE KASPRZAK**

**DATE OF INTERVIEW: MAY 31, 1994**

Christie: Today's date is May 31, 1994. My name is Christina Kasprzak and I'll be interviewing Paul Niday for the Owens Glass History Project. Okay, I'm just going to ask you again, when did you work at Owens, and how old were you when you started?

Paul: I started working at Owens in uh, let's see...in 1952, I was 18 years old.

Christie: Right out of high school.

Paul: Right out of high school. Mmm-hmm. And then uh, retired well, April of '93. And I was 59 and a half...when I retired.

Christie: Do you remember why you decided to go there? To begin working there?

Paul: Well, because of, well, really I'd heard so much about it, it was a good place to work, and uh, at that time, the Korean War was going on. And a lot of these places like uh, International Nickel and uh, of course it's Steel of West Virginia now, wouldn't hire you because you know, that you'd get drafted and go on to the war, you'd give it up and go on to the Korean War. And Owens-Illinois, they'd still take you. So I went ahead and went to work down there when I got out of school, mmm-hmm.

Christie: Did other things about the war affect the plant, or do you remember things happening there?

Paul: No, well, a lot of the fellows went. Yeah, a lot of 'em went. And then they made a lot of pharmaceutical bottles, you know, at that time...I can remember. Mmm-hmm. But that's about, that's about all. (that's about it) But there was a lot of the men went to the service at that time.

Christie: Did they end up having to hire more women or young people or something to fill those men's places?

Paul: They did, yeah, they had to hire more, but they, they kept those people's job for them, you know, when they left for the military. They kept their job for them, it was open for them when they came back. With...and their seniority continued right on. (is that right?)

Christie: And uh, you started as a mechanical foreman?

Paul: No, no, I started in the selecting, as a lehr attendant on night shift. And uh, and I worked in the selecting for as a lehr attendant. Then they, it's an advancement to a checker. Then I left the selecting floor in October of '56, and went to the maintenance, you know, just as a, you know, just as a laborer. (mmm-hmm) And you know, from there I just advanced in the sheet metal layout and then went right on up to, went on to the mechanical foreman.



Christie: And when was that? How long did you have that position?

Paul: Uh...I had that position...19 and 70, I was mechanical foreman. I was 36. I think 36 years old. And I held it until I retired, which was what? Twenty-three years.

Christie: So did you think that your pay and your uh, position, advancement, was rapid? Sounds like...

Paul: Well, yes in some instances, because I was probably as young as anyone that ever got that position...really. And I think it had a lot to do with I had some college. And then I, they offered an international correspondence course and I took it, and it was a four-year course. But it was a correspondence, and several of the fellows took it. And I took it and you know, graduated from it. And so I think that had a lot to do with it, too. And uh...

Christie: And Owens paid for this training?

Paul: Yes, they did, mmm-hmm.

Christie: And you said uh, they paid for some of your college.

Paul: Right. They did, in them days they really did. They paid uh, I'm pretty sure it was 80% of your tuition. Mmmm-hmm.

Christie: And then when you took the training courses, you took them specifically to get that new advanced position?

Paul: In the sheet metal layout. See, you had to, you had to get the education and the on-job training to advance in pay scale, you see what I'm saying? (mmm-hmm) In other words, the more you learn, the more experience...you know, you couldn't get...you had to have one to go with the other. You couldn't have one without the other in those days. (mm-hmm) And what was happening, too, I can remember, was uh, that older fellows were moving out. You understand what I mean? So, it wasn't by attrition where you took 20 years to learn, you had to learn quick. So these, this advanced education and these correspondence courses for trades, for different trades, was offered. And so, if you took one, then you advanced...you see what I mean? (right) Now, that's just in the maintenance now. The other departments...I can't uh, you know, you come up through experience and they worked hard in the selecting and all departments you know. They had to work hard.

Christie: Did everyone in the maintenance at least have the opportunity to take the class?

Paul: In those days? Yes, they did. You...any...everyone could take them. Now, you know, some of the older ones you know, they didn't, they were already established, you know. But the younger fellows, there were several of them took it, you know, carpentry,

you know, in those days you know you had different trades.

Christie: Were they all men in your department then? You said the other fellows. I didn't know....

Paul: Well, oh, yeah, they was all in my department. Right, mmm-hmm, every one of them, yeah, they was all right there. Uh...I can't remember, you know, it's been so long, but I can't remember how, how many was enrolled. But there were several enrolled in different courses.

Christie: And uh, how did you feel about your work? Did you enjoy the work itself, or uh, did you enjoy the environment, the plant, the friendships...?

Paul: I enjoyed, yeah, I enjoyed working there. It's a good place to work, fine people...the largest percentage of the people were fantastic people that I met. And they was always good to me. I mean, I...I mean, they was just always good to me. (mmm-hmm) Uh, some, you know, some...things that you didn't enjoy as well as you did others, of course. But uh, as far as environment and Owens Illinois, oh, they were great. It was a great place to work. I...and then when I retired, you know, why, they uh, they took good care of me, too. Now you know when the plant shut down maybe some people can't...some people were bitter, you know. (right) Of course, I don't know how I'd been if I'd, you know, back through the years when I was raising my son, you know, sons, and they would have shut the door and they would have been you know, real young and going to school. I might have felt different too. But uh, as far as overall...now you know you have that certain percentage that you have a little problem with, you know, which you do, everybody does I guess. But overall it was a great place to work for me. Raise, you know, help raise my family. (mmm-hmm) Put the boys through school and all.

Christie: Well, that's great. Uh, did you, it's my understanding they had a lot of social events for the plant or all the employees. Did you participate in those? (did I?) Mmm-hmm.

Paul: Well, yeah, most, yeah, well...when I was younger a lot more than I did when I first went there...the first few years I was there they had tremendous, you know, they had the Onized Club and you know, where that was a function for the employees (right). And they had outside basketball teams, outside softball teams, you know, plant softball, plant basketball, and I used to take part in that. Interdepartment basketball, interdepartment softball. Then they used to have outings with other plants. You know...we'd go to other plants and play 'em in golf. (really?) Oh, yeah, yeah. And we'd go to Columbus, Libby Owens in Columbus you know. (mmm-hmm) And we...and then they'd come down here. We'd play their softball team, play golf, and then, then, well, they used to have tremendous softball teams years ago. They'd go to national, fast pitch. And

when they used to play fast pitch, they'd pitch teams. And they always was a big sponsor around here, and they had a ball field down where one of the warehouses are, is located right at this present time. They used to have a ball field. (mmm-hmm) Baseball, softball.... And uh, and then the clubhouse, I don't know if you're familiar with Owens, but they had a, across the street from Owens it's the credit union. You know where the credit union is? (mmm-hmm) Well, that used to be the clubhouse. That's where that they had functions, Onized functions. They had...had officers, president, right on down, you know...had a big bunch of, you know.... When things got tough, they cut all of that, all of that was all cut out. (yeah)

Christie: When was that? Do you remember, like what year that was happening?

Paul: The year?... when it was, when it had, you know, when that was going great. Well, I know it was going great in the '50's, in the '60's...and probably part of the '70's, but now then it gets kind of vague, you know, because they...you know, they just, I don't know, they just kept cutting, you know, which they probably had to. But I didn't, you know, know much about that. (mmm-hmm) But uh, I can't remember the dates.

Christie: Yeah, they started downsizing a lot.

Paul: Yeah, well, they...oh, yeah, yeah, I remember they really cut it down a lot 'cause I remember in 19, you know, just off the top of my head, in 1978 I think it was, uh...I think it was '78. They had about 1800-some people there, you know. Of course, it really went, they cut it way down. (mmm-hmm)

Christie: Do you know why? Do you know why at the time?

Paul: You mean that they had so many or cut...?

Christie: That they cut down so much.

Paul: Well, you mean through the years? Why, I'd say because automation. And see, they did away with two furnaces. See we used to have five furnaces at Owens. When we shut down, they just had three, they were called A, B, C, D and E furnaces. And uh, at the time they had, all five was going, see...in those days. (mmm-hmm) And of course, the glass container was a big demand in those days. Then plastics, you know how plastics crept into the picture there real strong. (yeah, yeah) And then uh, in automation, it took the place of you know, a lot of work, packages were hand, you know, like load, hand loaded into the box cars. Well, then they got the big tow motors and you know, and they just, the people they used, machinery, automation (mmm-hmm). You know (yeah), it just, just kept cutting it down and cutting it down. Then they done away with

those two furnaces. And then they had C,D, and E furnaces, and when I left there I think they had nine machines was all, that's it. Then they kept cutting those down afterwards I understand. But when I left there, there was nine machines. (mmmh) So it doesn't take near the people. (right) They downsized and made smaller plants. But the place was still real big, still had a lot of maintenance to it, you know, you know that you had to take care of, you know, that wasn't being used. You know, you got to keep up with the roofs and whatever. But I think it had a lot of, you know, where the glass container was just wasn't in demand like it was all those years.

Christie: What about uh, didn't ownership change a number of times?

Paul: Yeah, ownership...(did that change anything?)...yeah, well, yeah, they, KKR.... Now I don't know too much about that, so, you know, I never got into that real heavy. But you know, they bought Owens and they had, they bought...the buy-out, you know the famous buy-out in those days. And it was...and then it was real unstable there for a long time. You know...we didn't know if somebody else was going to buy the whole outfit, you know. (yeah) But I never got into that real heavy, you know, I just tried to do my job, and let the people knew about that take care of that because I'm not, you know, I didn't know anything.... Of course, you've got opinions but....

Christie: Were you worried about your job then?

Paul: Well, yeah, you always, in the back of your mind...yeah, I..I, it was always there. You know.... Because, especially when you get older now. When you're, when you're younger you take these people that lost their jobs this year, when you're thirty, why, man, you can get out there and really get it. But when you're fifty or fifty-five, who wants you? (yeah) And you're not ready to retire. Say I know several men there that I knew personally that had uh, young, young children, you know, later in life. And they're still trying to get 'em educated, you know, and they just could not, there was no way that they could...they could quit working. And they went everywhere, you know. Good men, too. Real good men. So...you know, that's what really bothered you. And insurance, you know, you know where you leave, do away with your insurance, you don't have any way to pay hospital bills and whatever. So, yeah, it worries you....sure does. (yeah)

Christie: Uh, you mentioned that you were there during the Korean War. Then you were there also during the Vietnam? (right) Right? Just, just the same as, same question as I was asking.... Do you know, do you remember any major changes that happened because of the war, were there any problems or....?

Paul: Uh, no, not, not any, not any big problem. Now as far as



Owens-Illinois in the, in the, backing of the patriotic end, you know, they was always super on that. You understand, always back you, oh, yeah, certainly, they sure were. I can remember that real well.

Christie: Did they change what products they made because of the war?

Paul: Yeah, I say at some times. They'd get government orders. Oh, yeah. Now what specific bottle that they you know made. But I know they had... 'cause see I was in the maintenance end of it, you know. But actually the container, they made, yeah, they did. They had a lot of government... they used to make penicillin bottles, you know. The little penicillin bottles that had, now I think they're made out of plastic you know. But they had the dosage in 'em (mmm-hmm) the little short... yeah. And uh, but now, as far as knowing what you know, what bottles and actually container they made I don't know. But they'd get government orders a lot.

Christie: And did the employees change as far as how many people worked there, or who... what kind of people were being hired for different jobs?

Paul: Well, no, I can't remember that to... I can't remember that, where they.... Of course, some went to the service, you know. Just like in the Korean War. But as far as changing or getting... a lot in or a lot... no, I don't think there was any drastic change. Not to my knowledge. Now somebody might remember that better than I do.

Christie: I don't know if you noticed like if, like again if more women or blacks or... any younger people...

Paul: Well, they, they, yeah, well, they had a lot of women worked there, yeah. And then of course women started taking like tow motor jobs and things that men used to do totally, you understand. (ohh, right) Not particularly in those, just because of the Korean War or Vietnam War. But women, I just, they always felt that they could do a good a job as the men. And I can't argue with that. You know... I, I'm not in to that. But uh, they did do good jobs. And I used to think that actually, I don't know if I should say it, but I used to think that women actually made the place. Without them... I mean, those women probably, as far in my opinion, now this is just my opinion, but in my opinion those women worked harder you know, than anybody in the plant. And that's true. Because see they were isolated right there to their, to you know, that particular lehr that they were working on, and getting the defect out of them. Plus the pressure, shipping the bad bottle to the customer (right), it was all on their shoulders. You see what I mean? And they just, you know, they just kept coming right at 'em.

You never stopped. And it was, and uh, they worked, they worked hard. And then they had a balcony where they made the box, you know, the cardboard box. My goodness, them women. No, really, they really....they worked hard. And they worked harder than, in my opinion, than you know...in my opinion they worked hard as anybody in that plant. And I always thought that without them we'd be in, we'd be hurting. Now that's just my opinion. Of course, a lot of people differ with that. But, and then the corrugated department we used to make our own bottles. And I think that, I think that you know like I say, it's just an opinion, but they shut that down, you know, for economic reasons they said. But I think that hurt us. See, we had our, we made our own cartons to put our own bottles in. (right, right) See, if we got, if we needed a few more we could make a few more. If you run out of a carton you had to balk, you just went to the corrugated department and got you some extra cartons to put your bulk ware in, you see what I mean? (mmm-hmm) 'Til the job run out. Well, then when that left us, all that had to be purchased. (right) See, you didn't have, you'd purchase it from an outside provider and you know, I just thought that was a nice asset. But somebody didn't you know. So....anyway, you know how you have opinions about things. (yeah)

Christie: So uh, did you work in shifts or did you have a regular...?

Paul: Well, when I worked in selecting I worked for five years see, I worked you know in the selecting department and that was swing shifts. Then in maintenance, no, maintenance you work straight day. Of course, sometimes you work long hours (right) but straight day.

Christie: How was the shift work? Did that cause disruption for you? Was that...

Paul: Uh, not really. A shift worker...some people wouldn't have it any other way, you know, they loved it. Some people didn't like it. But yeah, it worked on your...a lot of people's system, you know, working nights, you know, working five days, five 3-11, five midnight (mmm-hmm). And uh, most of the time I can remember that you generally did you know, your social life was with the shift you worked. (right) Because most of the other people were working or they was sleeping when you were working. You know, it was just, that was just the way it was. So you, if you, whatever you did, play golf or whatever you did, go swimming or whatever back in those days, why, you generally did it with people you worked with on your shift.

Christie: And did you do that? (oh, yeah, yeah) Yeah.

Paul: We had, I remember back in those days we had golf uh, you know, like department golf. And different shifts had, had people on those shifts that played one another, you know, two of you would

play against another two, and they was all on the same shift. Well, you know, then, well you had the championship of each shift. Then they'd have a plant championship. So you had to play with the guys you work with, you know. (yeah, yeah) Yeah, yeah, but that...and you had good friends on those particular shifts. And....

Christie: So when you weren't at work and you weren't at home, you often went out with....

Paul: Oh, yeah, yeah, you really did, in those days. I mean, when I, after I got married and I got into maintenance why I uh, I uh...we didn't have as much...you know, you didn't do that as much, you know. We still had a golf league and all. But...but uh, we, we run with the people on the day shift. You know. (mmm-hmm) Mmm-hmm. And then you still had friends on shift work that you'd see from different times, you know. (mmm-hmm) Then maintenance, we had people that, mechanics that worked the shift, on shifts. They swang...they had a swing shift, see. They stayed with their shift. Like certain ones were assigned to A shift, B shift, C shift and D shift. (mmm-hmm) And they stayed right with their shift round the clock.

Christie: Now you said your wife was a selector there. (right) So she was on shifts.

Paul: Right. She worked, she sure did. She worked uh, she double worked there from '52 to uh, '57, I believe. Five years. (and you met her there?) Mmm-hmm, right, yeah, I did. We worked B shift together, mmm-hmm.

Christie: So did she stop working there before she, you had children, or...did you already have....?

Paul: Ah, yeah, she stopped working there before...well, I'll tell you, she, the first one, he came along in...right before she quit, in '57. Mmm-hmm.

Christie: Because I was wondering how the shift work and just work in general affected trying to take care of the house and the children and all that.

Paul: Well, yeah, it's, well, but I've heard those people talk. It's pretty hard. You know...the ladies talked. But of course, when she left she didn't, she didn't go back. But uh, they you know, had the baby sitters and their members of their family helped them (yeah), you know, their mom or grandmother. Yeah, it was hard. (yeah) Those, those women you know, that were like single parents (mmm-hmm), had two or three children. And when the plant shut down they...that's ones I really felt sorry for. (yeah) 'Cause boy, that's all they had. (yeah) Well, and then there was other people, too, you know, guys that I worked with in

maintenance, you know were young men. Forty-, forty-five, had 10, 20 years to go before they retired. They had young children. (mmm-hmm) And they just come in and say, "It's over," you know.

Christie: Yeah. You said Owens is taking pretty good care of you, I think that's what you said. (oh, they've, yeah...) What kind of benefits do you have since you retired?

Paul: Well, you still have your insurance. Uh...and uh, that's mainly...and see I, you had a, when you retired you had a, on salary you have a choice. You can take a monthly income, you know, or you can take it in a lump sum. Whichever way you want. I took mine in a lump sum and then reinvested it, you know. Which, and they, which...I don't mean a large, a great big amount of money. But it was a nice amount of money. And then I invested it with an investment firm here in Huntington. And then they give me some, they give me so much a month to live on. And if I need any more (great), I...just so it doesn't run out, that's the way I did it. I took it in one lump sum. (yeah)

Christie: Uh...[pause]... Just real quick, as far as the different jobs you had, now in the selector area you said there's men and women in the selector area (uh-huh). And were there specific jobs that you did that there weren't any women or uh, were they just, whether or not, I don't mean that they weren't allowed. Whether they just, the work was difficult or...?

Paul: Well, in those days women, back when I worked in selecting, women didn't do the lehr attendant and checkers. You know...they just didn't have...they were all selectors. All of 'em were selectors. Then that changed through the years. They had ladies that were lehr, women who were lehr attendants (mmm-hmm), they drove tow motors. They uh, were quality inspectors, they were crew leaders. Back when I first went on the packing floor, they were you know, all men, most of them were all men on crew leaders. Then, then that all changed and the ladies, the ladies ...I mean, they didn't take 'em all, but, you know, they got their uh, like I told you, the men that were totally men jobs, well, women started taking them, started taking those, too.

Christie: Right. What kind of jobs were those?

Paul: Well, uh, like uh, a uh, crew leader, you know, there are assignments to so many lehrs, you know...that like 2 or 3 lehrs...I can't remember exactly how many, being not that familiar with it. But they were over those. (mmm-hmm) The assignments of the people, the defects in the bottles, make sure things were going...they were right there, you know, to see things...jam-ups on the line you know, where it had to keep going...they had to take care of that. And uh, then the lehr attendant uh, is, they had off-baring area, they called it, you know, and the off-baring, of the like the carton on to pallets, you know, so they could uh,



ship, be shipped, you see. So they took 'em off conveyors and loaded them, certain patterns, so when it went on to the other customer, you know, where he would de-case them (mmm-hmm), like it'd be beer, whiskey, whatever, why, they'd be cased, they had to be stacked a certain way, or stacked a certain way so the tow motor forks could go under it, and pick it up and stack it in the warehouse. So they did that. Men used to do that all, like lehr attendant lift...I know this is not what you're wanting, but anyway, lehr attendant lifts had platforms in the bottle, and the carton came right out on that lid. And they, you could...uh, it just went up and down in the air, you know, on a hydraulic system. (oh, I see) And you stacked it off on the you know.... Now there wasn't a lot of women did that, but they...there's several. And they had some women tow motor operators. And I don't think they had any machine operators on the .....I don't think they...no. No, they had several that tried in the batch and furnace in the area where the raw materials, you know, in the...

Christie: Is that what they call the hot end?

Paul: Well, the hot end, yeah, that's where they make the bottles. That was where the machines were. (okay) Now, the batch and furnace was where the raw material, you know, all the, what makes...you know, makes the glass container.

Christie: Okay, where they mix all of it.

Paul: Raw mix, right, uh-huh. And there was women that worked out there periodically, you know, after all the women come in to the place. I don't know what years that was, but anyway. (yeah) But there wasn't any...but, they come in...I don't know...there were 3 or 4 out there.

Christie: I think the political climate in the whole country changed so much (oh, yeah) the time that you were there. (oh, it did) So....

Paul: Boy, we seen a lot. In the years I was there like Kennedy getting killed and...(yeah) and all the presidents, the different presidents...different wars and.... Boy, it was a lot. Saw 'em walking on the moon. Isn't that something, that in the 40 years that I...unbelievable, the advances. Then that fella quicker than flying faster than sound, you know, Yeager, you know, I guess there was a lot that went on ....(mmm-hmm) Marshall, I remember Marshall University had, when I went there what...about 1800 students? Now they've got about 13-...what? About 13,000, so you can see. (yeah) A lot of advancement.

Christie: Well, also, in regards to the political climate uh, the blacks started getting a lot of jobs (oh, yeah).

Paul: Yeah, the blacks started...(do you remember at Owens when

that happened?) Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. They uh...I think when that uh, something, you know, you remember the EEOC, Equal Opportunity uh...come into play, you know, (mmm-hmm), they, the black people started getting jobs at Owens, uh-huh. I think that, wasn't that in around the '70's, or something like that? (yeah) I think it was in the '70's. And yeah, they started getting, started working at Owens. And...(was that like problems at first, but...you remember?) Not, not, not too much. I don't...uh, we you know, we had uh...one in the maintenance I think. But several black people started working at Owens. I don't remember any big problems, no. Like you know...now you had, it's, but it wasn't any different than the whites. You understand what I mean? The ones you had problems wasn't because they were black, no, no. Or what I heard of. (mmm-hmm) No, I don't think of any incidences, but you know, you hear of everything, you know, and I wouldn't...I'm not up on that. On that racial issues, I'm, you know (yeah), I'm not....

Christie: You only worked with one black man.

Paul: Well, in the, in the, in the...well, I worked with several, you know. But I...we had uh, let's see...John Page. Now he was a, he was a mechanic in the auto shop. (mm-hmm) He worked there for years. Great guy. I mean, you couldn't ask for a better...his wife worked there. She's a great person. She was a black lady. She was a, when I left there, she, they had uh, gotten married you know, I think he'd been married. But she worked, she was a nice lady. I remember her real well. But there was several, several black people there that I knew real well, you know, and they were good employees, good employees. Worked as hard as.... Now you have, but like I say, I think the problems that they had, they were no different than what the white folks has had, you know. (yeah) None whatsoever...that I saw. Now I wasn't, you know, I wasn't in that area where they had the, had them in the selecting and forming, you know (mmm-hmm), in those areas more so than they did in our area.

Christie: Oh, was there a reason for that? Or....

Paul: Well, see, in the maintenance department I think uh, it's uh, like a seniority thing so much, you know, you have to have a trade, you've got to have all this skill and all. And you just can't step right off you know, be hired and go in there. (right) You can though, after you've been there quite a while. You see what I mean? (mmm-hmm) Now selecting department, you can come right in to selecting, they train you, you go right on the lehr (okay). And the forming's the same way. They take you and put you on shift with a fellow and he trains you and just to help to know what's going on there, all about the machine (mmm-hmm). But now in like the service departments, like maintenance, machine repair and mold shop, to making bottles, well, you, it takes a while, you see what I mean? (right, yeah) So that's the reason they were in those departments more than they were.

Christie: And so did they get a chance to get training and then they would get into that....?

Paul: Well, they can, yeah, they can, uh...if they wanted in those...if the job openings came and they had the same seniority, why, yeah, they could get in to those departments, mmm-hmm. Yeah.

Christie: And you did say earlier that training was open to anyone. So...is that right?

Paul: Uh, yeah, uh...that was when I was going, you know, when I was (first getting in) you know, going, when I first, when I first...in the maintenance department. And got in the department.

I had to bid on the job, see, it was a bid job. (mmm-hmm) Then see, that was the maintenance department, you know, they held pretty firm you know what I mean? Like the employees didn't fluctuate, you know, like you have 50 then you know.... Now they would like five, they'd lay off 5 and call 5 back and you know. (right) Now the selecting department was bigger than that, you know what I mean. (mmm-hmm) But uh, but as far as training in the maintenance, the training was still there, but it got...the last few years all the people in there were old and older. I mean the youngest man probably in the maintenance was in his '40's. You see what I mean? We did not have any young-, because everybody'd been laid off through the years and they just, and one person would retire or maybe someone had passed away or died, they didn't replace them. So they wasn't taking anybody in. That's been oh, my.... Now they had an apprentice program which they had some problems with you know, but I wasn't in to that too heavy either, but....but uh, but people uh, that were in the apprentice program were affiliated with the maintenance. Now they'd get laid off and come back and they'd, when they needed them, it was just back and forth. You see what I mean? (yeah, that's real tough) Yeah, it is. And but see, when they was in there, they got hours on their, like they had to have 8,000 hours on their, on their on-the-job training. And then they had a 144 hours a year on the uh, outside schooling. You see what I mean? (mmm-hmm) So uh, but they'd get that, they would get that on their, on their hours, you know. And I remember uh, just they were talking about it. You don't have to say.... But I uh, just got through, there was about four guys out in uh, the uh, Vo-Tech, you know, and I had a class out there of fellows that had just finished their apprenticing, got their certificate for apprentices, you know. And they asked me to look after them right after I had retired. So they... (so they were still doing the apprenticeship program) Yeah, they were still, but it..it should have been stronger. In my opinion, it should have been stronger at the time. But...

Christie: It was kind of like on-the-job training.

Paul: Yeah, well, yeah, and then, but they just, it just kind of

dwindled there, you know. But anyway, like I told you, they just wasn't putting people in there, because they just didn't need 'em, you see what I mean? (mmm-hmm) So, but who knew this was coming, you know. I didn't know. You just wondered why they just didn't keep...well, now, they don't really, you know, they knew I guess.... Maybe they knew that they wasn't going to need it down the road. (right) See. (right) But they still got their, several of them got their, their certificate that they are journeymen, see. So they can take that and go somewhere else and get a job, after Owens shut down. And it's something they can work with there, too.

Christie: Right. That's something I guess a lot of the people wouldn't have. I mean, like you say, you don't need too much training to be a selector. So that...

Paul: Well, you do on that particular thing, but on a trade you know, it's a, it's a little different. Yeah, mmm-hmm. (right) That's unskilled labor, you know.

Christie: So is that the...like you have a certificate you got when you...

Paul: Yeah, they got a certificate from the Vo-Tech, uh-huh. Yeah, the Vo-Tech school. And it was on uh, and it was the last class there was maintenance mechanic-that was the name of it. (mmm-hmm). Maintenance mechanics. And it was real interesting. Owens-Illinois provided...in other words, they paid you know, they had to pay the Vo-Tech to use their facilities of course. And they uh, they bought the books we used. The fellows enjoyed it and it was a great class. (yeah) About 2 or 3 of 'em didn't finish. But uh, they got upset because the plant shut, you know, closed down. But...but it was good overall.

Christie: You were talking about people getting laid off and brought back and back and forth, you know. (mmm-hmm) Do you, were you involved at all, or do you remember any specific things about the union...you wouldn't be involved in the union...?

Paul: No, see, I wasn't, no, well, labor problems I was, yeah. If we had a labor problem in my area, I'd be involved. But as far as you know, in the union, no. I was in the union before I went on salary. (were you?) Oh, yeah, I was in the union for about 18 years. Then when I went on salary I carried my card for several years, you know, where if you had something happen to you, they let you do that. You pay the dues you know, you carry your union card, and if something happened, and you had to go back in the union, you carried your seniority. But when I left it was five years. See you kept it for five years. They'd let you do that. Now I understand that in the last few years they wouldn't let you do that. If you left and went on salary, that was it. See, they changed it. (right, right) Back then it was five years. They'd



let you...there was kind of a period there if you didn't make it, you could come back. But I never did go back. But I carried the card. But now, since 1970 I wasn't involved in union, except when there was a labor dispute in my area. (I see) Which wasn't too many. Now we had, we had a lot of at Owens. (really?) Yeah. But I never...got into a lot of them.

Christie: Wasn't there a really big strike in late '60's, '69, maybe?

Paul: Uh, yeah. (do you remember that?) I remember, I remember some, yeah.

Christie: So you would have been in the union at that time?

Paul: Yeah, I was in the union at that time. I...we've had, we had several uh...I forget what that one.... Of course, contract deal, when they had a contract was up, you know, if they didn't get what, you know, what they asked for, why, then they'd strike. And then one time it was on an insurance package, I think, you know. But it just slips my mind exactly all (mmm-hmm) what that was.... But someone that was well versed in the union could tell you more about that than I.... (mmm-hmm) But we used to, now on salary I've been in there where we used to work. When they were on strike and keep it you know, you had furnaces that you had to maintain and keep them cool so that they wouldn't you know, keep them from freezing up and all that. And then we used to work around, we used to work shifts, I used to work a lot of night shifts. (when they went on strike?) Mmm-hmm, yeah. But as far as remembering exactly, you know, what caused it or what the specifics were....

Christie: I don't know if you had a personal memory or something specific that happened in all the years as far as strikes or anything that to me you were involved in that was important to you or anything?

Paul: You know I...well, I know back in one strike there that they, people started coming back from before it was settled, some of the hourly people started coming back. But I knew one thing about it that I didn't realize how important...see, you take things for granted, how important the maintenance area was until you try to operate without the people that work there. (mmm-hmm) You know what I'm saying? (yeah) There's no way that you can make it. In other words, you need, you had to have those people. You know, a lot of times in skilled labor people have a thing about skilled labor. They don't do nothing. You know the stigma. (mmmh) I mean, they just fool around. But that's ...you know...until you get over there in that grass, you know, on that side, you don't really (yeah).... And I remember that real well. I told one of the fellows...well, he was one of the higher ups at Owens, I said, "You got to get those people back in because we can't..." 'cause they were starting the factory back up and some were coming in

without the final agreement with the union, see. And I can't remember exactly what happened there, but we was starting to run. And I said, "Hey, you know, you got to have these people to run with." So evidently it all started coming back. I remember that real well. And then I remember the first, first strike I was ever on. My sons had some problems when they were young, and uh, that was in '56, yeah, that was in the '60's. It was in the '60's. And uh, we were really hurting, my wife and I, you know. I remember that. Boy, I hated that so much. I wouldn't take food stamps. I just wouldn't do it. I just couldn't...I just could not you know, bring myself to take food stamps. I don't know why. I just couldn't do it. But anyway, and then, and then uh, I remember the let's see...I forget which son it was, but I remember they took the fellows even on the strike...I'm pretty sure they was on strike, they took up a collection and give me. (oh, how nice) So you know what I mean. So where.... So you remember those things. See, that's what made it a close...

Christie: Sort of help each other out.

Paul: Oh, you're not kidding. Oh, they did that a lot at Owens, they did that a lot. If someone would get in trouble.... Oh, yeah. They'd help underprivileged kids.

Christie: But not just the plant itself, sort of the employees amongst each other sounds like.

Paul: Yeah, the employees amongst each other. Yeah, you...if someone retired, they'd take up a collection and buy 'em...oh, everybody, yeah. I remember when I retired they got me a set of gold clubs. (oh, yeah?) Oh, yeah. So, yeah, there's a lot of good memories, you know. Of course they had kids, I remember every year when they had Santa Claus and used to they used to give away real nice gifts, you know when the boys were growing up. (mmm-hmm) But then they had to cut, they cut that down, too. But they still have it every year, same guy, a guy by the name of Clyde White. He was an employee...he's still Santa Claus. (he played Santa?) Yeah. Every year, and he'd been there...one year he was sick and I took his place, years ago (ohh) yeah. Took his, and I tell you I had a ball. I really did. There was little kids backed out the door. I never seen so many kids. I got so tired of sitting, you know, you pick 'em up and put 'em on your knee and ask 'em what...how good you, they must have been. Oh, my, by the time that day was over, I had, I remember I took a lunch break and they gave me two hotdogs and a coke, and by the time I got that ate and you know, the time that I had those two hotdogs and a coke, I looked they was backed clear out...you know, there was just a lot...of course, a lot of employees in those days. (mmm-hmm) But that was nice. And it still is.

Christie: So you got to know some of the other people's children. (mmm-hmm)

Paul: Ohhh, yeah, oh, yeah, a lot of people's wives. I used to call people, see in maintenance we had call-outs for breakdowns at night. All hours of the night. (mmmh) And I was bothered, of course, that was part of the job. I knew that going in, you see. But anyway, I had to call mechanics out to take care of it. I got real acquainted with the wives, you know, they knew me—I didn't know their faces. I wouldn't have known them on the street, but they knew, oh, that's you again, at 2 o'clock in the morning, you know. So I can remember that. It was a lot of good memories.

Christie: Did you ever had them over? Go to their houses or anything?

Paul: Well, some, not, yeah, a lot more so than myself, but uh, oh, yeah, I've got a lot of good friends. A lot of them. (and you still are friends?) Yeah. Right now on every Thursday, I don't know whether you're interested in this, but every Thursday we go to Shoney's down at 17th Street West. And there's some....

END OF SIDE 1

Paul: ...every Thursday. And whoever wants to join, well, sometimes they'll have twelve. I know last week, I go when I can, and I think there were seven of us there. You know, that's nice. (yeah, every Thursday) Every Thursday, 10 o'clock. You'll have to come down. It's a good place...I'm serious. If you want, come on down and ask them some questions. I mean, I don't know what kind of answers you'll be given.

Christie: Are some of these people laid off or are they all retired?

Paul: They uh, in that group, no. They're mixed: some retired, some laid off, some...that they all got a lot of memor-, you know, a lot of things they can talk...oh, boy, they get cranked up there, boy, you know, about memories, but it's always funny stuff. (yeah) You know...that happened. (yeah) Yeah. So it's a good pla-, I enjoyed that. But I don't get to go every week. But every once...you don't have to go, it's not a compulsory...you just make your way when you can. (Yeah) Uh-huh.

Christie: Well, uh, is there anything that you'd like to say about your experience at all?

Paul: I've said an awful lot.

Christie: Well, sometimes uh, the interviewer doesn't ask something you want to say. So I didn't know.... Did you ever have any feelings that the management and the workers had problems, or did you feel that that went pretty well at the plant?

Paul: Well, yeah, but I think it got worse through the years.

(did it?) It really did. Yeah, I'm not gonna...I think it did. It, it's I don't' know...it was a family thing. You know. And then uh, and then most of the people that were advanced as far as uh, you know, salary group came out of the hourly group in Huntington, back when I first went there, a lot of years uh.... Then other people from other areas came in and the understanding you know, there was, I just think the understanding like someone from another part of the country come here to West Virginia...you know how West Virginian's are. Then other people had their particular habits of doing things. You know, we had habits that didn't mix too well. And then they had a lot of those come in and they'd shut down plants, and lot more of those would come in. And I don't know whether...they were all good people, don't misunderstand me. They were good people. And they were always nice to me. Now I had trouble with a few of them. You know what I mean? Like everybody else, you know, you don't, everything don't go perfect. I mean, my goodness sake, you got to face that. But I think that was, I think that had a lot to do with it, too. But we just uh, and I always thought that we, just seemed like it started running so fast that we just couldn't take care of it, you know what I mean? Just like, just...just make more and more and more bottles. And I just never could understand how they could slow it down, and make a better bottle, instead of getting the ones that were bad, getting them back all the time and have to reselect them, you know. (right) I always wondered about that. But I wasn't in that area, see. But they would ship 'em, if they had a bad defect, they'd have to ship it back and reselect it. You know, that cost lots of money. (mmm-hmm) When you carry the people, you have to carry those people extra to reselect them. Then they just kept, you know, kept getting bigger, bigger and then they just canceled.... And I think people, I think the customer got a lot more particular. Now they used to say they did, because back when glass was in demand, they'd make a lot more from the bottle, you know, like a little defect of some kind, they'd accept it and go on. But then you had so much competition with plastics and all that. Well, they wouldn't accept it like they used to. So they'd just send it back to you, and you'd have to worry with it. So, I think that had a lot to do with it, too. But....

Christie: And you said before that technology, new machines...(oh, yeah)...

Paul: See, they had uh, techn-, but then I think that, I think a lot of times, too, we got ahead of ourself in tech-, you know, the machine got ahead of the people that was maintaining it, do you understand what I mean? (mmm-hmm) It was so sophisticated that we didn't have a sophisticated person to take care of it, so, evidently you know, it wasn't, it wanted to do it's job, you know, maybe. But see, I was right in that end of it. I'm talking about myself. I'm not talking about anybody else. Boy, you had to learn a lot of that. But that's just an opinion, you know. But like I said, overall, you couldn't have found a better place to work. I



couldn't have. It was a great place to work. Fantas-....with the education that I had (right). Now if I'd had a master's degree or something, but Owens-Illinois was a good place. All they wanted was an honest...they just wanted you to work. They didn't want you to kill yourself. They just wanted you to work, and take care of your job. (right) Be responsible, be accountable for what your responsibility was. That was all I ever knew that Owens-Illinois wanted. You be accountable for what your responsibility was. And you always got your pay. Always there waiting on you...never do I ever remember in my forty-one years that I had to wait on my pay. (uhh) You understand what I mean? (yeah, yeah) I don't remember ever in all those years. Never asked for one raise. I never asked for a raise in all the time I was there. Never had to, I got 'em, when they come to me I got 'em.

Christie: How often did they...like evaluate people?

Paul: Oh, yeah, when you're on, see, when you're on salary, yeah. It got so that you could, you had what they called different phases you know, anyway. Just different classifications within a certain, certain uh, I can't remember the name what they used to call it. But you could go clear to the top of it, you know what I mean. Just keep advancing. And then when you got there, you could take another step, you know what I mean? (mmm-hmm) So uh, yeah, and then as long as you advanced and your progress was good, why, yeah, you most of the time you got your.... Now they got a little tough there at last. I think they put it back where you had to, they'd give percentage raises on salary. And you'd go, and it got so it was fifteen months. And then it got a little rough there at last because they was just cutting you know, just cutting back so much. (yeah)

Christie: So did you see any of that before you left? Could you see it coming, that they were gonna close?

Paul: No, I...I, I never...

Christie: They never even announced it 'til real late, right?

Paul: I knew it was getting, I knew they was having a hard time keeping machines going and you know, keeping them filled with customer demand. But I didn't, I didn't, it was no different to me, because I just thought they just, most of the time when they had a problem they would do something to counteract it and just go right on, and it'd pick up and get better (mmm-hmm). Then it'd run a while longer and just keep getting better and then it'd go down the other way and they'd pick back up. You know, that's the way it'd been through the years. (right) Whatever it took, you know. Uh, they'd make a change of some kind. But this time they didn't make no change. So, but I didn't, I still didn't really...of course, I wasn't there though, either. But I didn't dream they'd shut down. I just, I don't know why, I just never did think that

they'd ever shut the doors. But...but I was wrong. [chuckles]

Christie: Well, it was great talking to you.

Paul: Well, okay, I hope I helped you.

Christie: There's nothing else you want to add?

Paul: Not that I know of.

Christie: Okay. Well, that's fine.

**END OF INTERVIEW**