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(Signature - Interviewee)

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Date 11/9/83

Robert Sawrey
(Signature - Witness)

Newcomb, William B.
11/9/83 Interview 3

AN INTERVIEW WITH: William B. Newcomb (BN)

CONDUCTED BY: Robert D. Sawrey (BS)

DATE: November 9, 1983

TRANSCRIBED BY: Sally Keaton

STONE & THOMAS COLLECTION

Interview 3 tape 4

BS: This is tape number 4 with William B. Newcomb concerning the Anderson-Newcomb Company. This is Bob Sawrey. Today's date is November 9, 1983. Interview will take place in my office in Smith Hall. You just indicated Billy that you'd like to start by going back a little bit and talking about this Cable Cash Carrier System. Perhaps you could describe when it was put in and how it functioned.

BN: I'm quite certain that it was put in when the building was built in, and open for business, in Nineteen-two. There was a projection from the mezzanine and at the rear of the first floor and a young woman would sit there and these different, ah, cable connections came in to her desk, several of them, and these carriers went to, ah, all the floors. To the basement, to the main floor, second floor and the third floor. The, ah, each carrier station, ah, was keyed some way to the little metal boxes that served it so that when the cashier put this out on the right line, it would go drop off at the proper station. And it would come down and, ah, take a little loop above the counter and the saleswoman could reach up and get the little box down and, ah, press a button and the box had a spring cover and would fly open and, ah, she could put the money and ticket in there and send it up and the cashier would send back the change. I believe also that was used for credit authorizations since the, ah,

offices at that time were on the balcony also. And...

BS: Did credit start that early?

BN: Oh yes. Ah, the store offered, ah, charge accounts in the very beginning. And, it was something of a problem. I remember my father commenting that the president of the bank wouldn't pay his bill. And he had them by the throat because they were borrowing money from the bank and, ah, ah, they, they had, he would go over and plead with him to pay his bill so that they could buy more merchandise because in the early years they were very hungry for cash. As the business grew it required more capital all the time. Ah, there was one very interesting story my father told me about, ah, a bill they owed to a wholesale house in Cleveland. I think it amounted to \$600 and they had been unable to pay it. There policy had been to pay all local bills promptly which gave people a feeling that the business had more backing than it really did. But finally a salesman for this company showed up in the morning and he said, "Unless you pay this bill, I'm going to close you down this afternoon." And, ah, so he hung around all day and they did nothing and, ah, they were open in the evening of course and finally he said, "Well, he was coming back after supper and proceed with, ah, whatever he had to do to close the business. And, my father then went to a Mr. Thackston, apparently, who had some money, at supper

time and got the \$600 and came back and when the man showed up he paid him. Then the fella wanted to open up his, ah, ah, cases and, ah, sell him more merchandise, he said, "No, you've, you ended the thing right here. We won't buy anymore from ya." But they had that problem and of course in those days the wholesale houses had, ah, sort of a chain, ah, discount rate. Ah, if you paid promptly, if you, you take a 6% discount on the bill. If you waited a month it dropped perhaps to 4% and so on. And, ah, finally, ah, the extremity, probably 6 months, you had to pay the full amount. That was to encourage, ah, prompter payment of bills. Which was a big problem, ah, for these wholesale houses, I think everywhere because they had all these little merchants who didn't have a lot of capitol and they were very lenient with them. Much more so than, ah, they are now.

BS: You've raised 2 or 3 questions here that maybe you can answer for me. Ah, do you recall, offhand, which bank that was that would not pay the bill or which individual at which bank?

BN: I, ah, it was J. L. Caldwell and I believe it was the, ah, I don't know whether it was the Huntington National Bank or the First National Bank. I can verify that.

BS: O.K. Ah, let's see here. What kinds of criteria do you suppose they used to determine who they gave credit to locally?

BN: It was, ah, largely a matter of who they knew and they, ah,

ah, . . . Course the city was smaller then and, ah, they knew most of their customers personally. And at the beginning I think it was rather informal. But as time went on they began to tighten the screws and, ah, Mr. Charles Anderson's motto was "Credit loss of one tenth of one percent totaled the business." And, ah, as I recall in the 1920's, three-fourths of the business was, ah, on charge accounts.

BS: Was that a, do you think, a pretty steady percentage then?

BN: Yes.

BS: Throughout the years though?

BN: Yes, yes, ah. I, I'd say that, ah, my experience, the majority of our customers had charge accounts.

BS: This is not a critical question but, when do you suppose the company went to a formal application for credit?

BN: I believe they may have, ah, done it reasonably early but I'm not sure. I, I just don't know. This thing was, ah, well, of course as a boy it didn't bother me at all. And, ah, I know that everything became very formal, ah, early in the 1920's when John Long arrived on the scene because then he took over the credit department as part of his responsibilities. Along, ahe also took over the management of the office, the accounting office. And, ah, at that time he began to, ah, become very systematic in that, ah, handling that. By that time we had a credit manager who, ah, sat on those charge accounts.

BS: When did you go to some kind of a plate system, do you think, for credit?

BN: Oh, that was, ah, (pause) that was quite late. Ah, ah, (pause). In fact, it was after I left the store. In 1969 because, ah, we were, I don't think we were using them then.

BS: O.K. You mentioned when you were talking about this credit cash carrier system, you said it also went to the basement, (YES) were you running like a budget store down there?

BN: Oh, no. We had housewares, and china, and glass in the basement.

BS: Oh. So you had, when you were talking about the water problem last time, all that had to be removed?

BN: Oh, yes. In 1913 all that merchandise had to be (O.K.) and, ah, ah, they, they moved the fixtures, I mean the merchandise, first of course and they, . . Well, they could still use the freight elevator and, ah, took it to another location and my father said that they, they chose the wrong spot and to move it a second time because that place was flooded also. And then whatever they could carry out of there, in the way of fixtures, they took out. And that basement at that time had a wooden floor which really went up and down (laughing) when the flood hit it. On the main floor they built, ah, scaffolds like sawhorses, ah, 'bout, ah, I think something like 5 feet high, and put all of the showcases and other fixtures up on

them. And, ah, where ever possible they just piled the merchandise on top of the counters, ah, elevated counters. And the only merchandise that fell in the water was some washable silks. Ah, silk yard goods. And I remember that my mother had a black woman who helped with the housework and her name was Vina Anderson. And Vina took those washable silks to her home and laundered and pressed them and they went back to the store in perfect condition.

BS: Let's digress here for just a moment and maybe we'll get chronologically a little bit out of order but it's going through my mind now you just mentioned china being in the basement (YES) Ah, when or how did your father or the other people in the business determine the location of goods within the store? You mentioned that your father was constantly shuffling stuff around but how did he do that? What was the basic . . .

BN: Well I believe that, ah, it was more or less, ah, ah, traditional in stores at that time to have the housewares in the basement. Ah, that was, I remember R. H. Macey in New York, that was the location for their housewares. And I believe that was true over a great deal of the country at that time. It was the use that could be made of the basement. They had a broad stairway at the front of the store so when you walked in the front door you saw, on a landing, some

display that would attract your attention that was very easy to walk down to the basement. And, ah, they had the place down there rather attractively put together. And, course, china and glass particularly can be made in to attractive displays. And, ah, it was down thereuntil, I believe, about 1925 when it was moved to the 5th floor. Also, at the rear of the basement, ah, was the packing department and, ah, ah, where merchandise was opened and made ready for distribution throughout the store. And also a paper baler to bale all of the (chuckling) surplus paper. And the furnances, ah, for, ah, heating the store. All in the rear of the, of the basement.

BS: And then on the 1st floor we had, basically, items that women would purchase. Is that correct?

BN: Well, yes it was. Ah, it was, included toilette articles, cosmetics, and, ah, hosiery. The women's knitted underwear, ah, and men's too. Ah, primarily munsingwear, ah, that was carried on the main floor along with the hosiery department, which included not only women's stockings but, ah, men's socks and children's hoisery. Ah, there was a, ah, a stationary department, glove department, the trimming department was a, ah, a large operation at that time. And there'd be things like, ah, scarves, ah, ah, then of course the yard goods took up, ah, a lot of the space at the back,

at the rear of the store and at the beginning the shoe department was at the rear of the first floor. Then later it was put over in the annex building. And, ah, the shoe department was always a problem. Ah, during my father's time in the store they never found a man who could run the shoe department and make money. In fact, that experience continued and finally we leased the shoe departments. We had a basement shoe department later and also the main floor leased. But then we found a man who could operate it and it was very successful, ah, during the last several years before Stone & Thomas bought the business.

BS: O.K. You mentioned that wholesalers had this problem of suppling credit to retailers. (Yes) Were any of these wolesalers also manufacturers?

BN: Well, ah, the Marshall Field Company had, ah, an enormous wholesale department and whether they actually owned the manufacturing plants I'm not sure but in their promotional literature they would show the, ah, pictures of these manufacturing plants. And, of course, the Field crest line of, ah, towels and so forth, ah, that's still in business, ah, was a unit of Marshall Field. And I presume that they actually owned the manufacturing facilities. And, ah, now of course in New York, Lord & Taylor which also had a department store, and R. M. Custable, which had a retail

store, they were in the, ah, wholesale business and, course Marshall Field and these other people also were big importers. A lot of merchandise before World War I had to, was imported from Europe. And that included, especially, the toys. Ah, I remember my father was always on hand at, on, a Washington's birthday in New York because the George Borden Company, ah, always had a, ah, a banquet to entertain the buyers from all over the United States. Ah, who, ah, would come for the opening of their import lines for the year. And my father was always there and it gave him an opportunity to see other merchants from, ah, everywhere. And, ah, that house was largely, almost entirely import goods. And, ah, hosiery was imported from Germany and in fact one line of hosiery that I bought later called Gordon Hosiery, ah, was named for the man, the European representative of the company who was able to find, ah, manufacturers over there who could make, ah, a fast dyes. I mean, dyed their hosiery and ah, . . . Of course, the German's were way ahead of the rest of the world on organic chemistry and therefore they were able to produce dyes. Ah, and when World War I came on and they were, when German merchandise was cut off, that was when the dye industry in the United States got underway. But for several years, ah, even into the, well into the 1920's and early '30's, we still had a lot of unsatisfactory, ah, merchandise. That is, the

fading was a big problem. Much more so than it is now.

BS: Let's pursue this just a moment further on dealing with manufacturers directly rather than wholesalers. I'm assuming that, like when one would get into bigger ticket items like furniture that that would be direct to manufacturers?

BN: Yes, ah, I think, ah, I don't think we ever bought much merchan, wholesale from, ah, I mean from wholesalers in the way of furniture. Ah, course we got into furniture business ah, I guess a long before 1920 and the, I think we practically always bought directly from the manufacturers. It was our desire, ah, as buyers to buy directly from manufacturers where ever it was possible. Some lines were not available except through, ah, wholesale distributors for various reasons. Sometimes they were a great convenience to us. But you could not assemble the kind of merchandise we wanted in a fine store unless you bought directly from manufacturers. So, of course, all of our ready-to-wear was bought directly from manufacturers. And as a children's wear buyer I bought directly from manufacturers never from wholesalers. There were people in the business, however, who were, ah, (chuckles) ah, I don't know the exact name for them, they would assemble lines of merchandise which they designed, they didn't always manufactur it, but, ah, you

take in, ah, in knit goods, ah, children's knit wear for instance. It took such a variety of, ah, manufacturing facilities to produce it that the, these people would design what they wanted then they would go and have, on a contract basis, have somebody else make it for them. And they would carefully supervise it to make sure that the quality was maintained. In the ready-to-wear business, for instance, a dress manufacturer, ah, would have a, what we called a loft, one floor in a big building and his showrooms would be in the front and his general offices. In the back would be his cutting room where he, he'd cut the yard goods carefully under his supervision because he, if he let somebody else do that for him somewhere else they would cheat on the cutting and, ah, the garments would be skimpy. But he would supervise the cutting then he would probably have some, ah, shop actually make the garments. But we called him a manufacturer because he managed all this thing. Just like converters in the yard goods business didn't own all the mills that made that, wove the cloth. But they designed the, they designed what they wanted to sell, they, if it was print goods they de, they, they had artists who created the designs for the prints and then they would, ah, buy the, ah, woven goods from one place, ship it somewhere else to be, ah, processed and finished and then perhaps to still another place to be printed.

It was (laughs) quite an enterprise. And it was using facilities that no one company could very well manage. That wasn't universally the case but it was often the case. (PAUSE)

BS: Let's go back a little bit and bring into this story now the Anderson family.

BN: Well, ah, I believe I've put on one other, other tape the fact that, ah, Mr. Valentine had a problem with alcohol. And that my father was called down to the bank in Cincinnati because, ah, the bank was getting nervous about Mr. Valentine. And, ah, they suggested to my father that he should try to find a new partner. Somebody to take over the Valentine interest. And it just happened that about the same time my father had gone down to Portsmouth, Ohio at a meeting, ah, well, they termed it for the canalization of the Ohio River. What it was the set up of dams in the Ohio River for navigation. And they were promoting it, the idea, to get the government to build these dams. And that was when he met the Anderson brothers, who had a department store in Portsmouth, called Anderson Brothers. Ah, and I guess that that began the conversation on, ah, the Anderson's buying the Valentine interest. So that came about in Nineteen-seven. And I believe the money was gathered up from among the Anderson family, which was rather large. And Mr. Eugene Anderson came up to Huntington in Nineteen-seven and, ah, became president of

the company and my father's partner in the business. They paid, I think it was \$67,000 for the Valentine interests.

BS: Did that money all go to Valentine or did some (BN: It went to) go to the company?

BN: It went to Valentine. (O.K.) And, my father and Eugene Anderson couldn't work together. They, ah, E.G. as we, most of the Andersons went by their (chuckles) initials and we called him E.G. Ah, I only saw him one time, I had dinner with him at the (a knock at the door) at the, ah,

BS: O.K. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

BN: Ah, I only met E. G. Anderson one time. I had, ah, after, course I was 3 years old when he was at the store, but I met him in New York a good many years later and had dinner with him at the Old Waldorf Astoria Hotel. He was, ah, a venturesome person and he, after he left, ah, the Anderson-Newcomb Company, he went out to Seattle, Washington and, ah, he used some of the family capitol to set up, ah, I think they call it the Western Dry Goods Company, which was a wholesale house, and lost a lot of money for the family in that venture. (Laughs) Ah, ah, (laughing) I heard much later from one of his nephews that one brother of the family, Nelson Anderson, after that, ah, disaster always referred to him as "the late E. G." Ah, they, the Anderson's were very hard on each other and when, when one of them failed they gave them very little comfort. Ah, but he was a

colorful man and quite interesting but he and my father could not work together and that was when Mr. Charles Anderson came up in Nineteen-eight.

BS: Before we get to Charles, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off there but, could you be a little more specific about problems, specific problems between the two gentlemen?

BN: Well, they just didn't work well in harness. They, ah, ah, I think that, ah, my father's idea was to have, ah, a store that was well run, with a fine store image, and, ah, he had certain principles of operating that, ah, apparently Eugene Anderson just didn't find accedtable. And, ah, my fathers comments, ah, I remember were they just, they just couldn't work together. They just had no, there was no common ground. And, ah, ah, beyond that I, I'm a little bit at sea. In fact, ah, I may be the only person left now who (chuckles), well, not the only one, but, ah, one of the few who knew anything about him.

BS: O.K. I take it then that this Charles would be the other brother?

BN: Yes. (O.K.) And Charles Anderson and my father were about the same age. Ah, and he was born in, ah, August 15, 1870. Which made him just a couple of months older than my father. And, ah, ah, he went from, ah, high school into the Anderson Brothers Store in Portsmouth. And was there for several years before he took a job as a traveling salesman for a

wholesale shoe house. And later he established a shoe store in Portsmouth. And remained there until, ah, well this is a mis-statement in, in this memorium thing about Mr. Anderson. Ah, the one sore point my father had about the Anderson Brothers Store in Portsmouth was that immediatly after, ah, they purchased this interest up there, they printed on their stationary that they had a branch store in Huntington. And, ah, my father used to get a lot of fun out of saying, "Well, ah, ah, the tail is now wagging the dog" because the Huntington store would soon outdistance the Portsmouth store in volume and, ah, every other way. Ah, and, ah, but it was always a seperate corporation. And was never operated as a branch. When Mr. Charles Anderson came it was, ah, a seperate entity. Now, ah, my father owned a little stock in the Anderson Brothers store and visa versa, members of that company owned a small amount in the Huntington store as individuals. Ah, and my father always attened the annual meeting of the stock holders in Portsmouth and they, some of them would come up to Huntington. My father was very critical about the operation of the Portsmouth store. Ah, he was very fond of, ah, ah, William B. Anderson Sr. who was the head of that business. He and my father had a m, a great many interests in common and often roomed together when they went to New York to buy. And my father always had wonderful

things to say about, ah, ah, William B. Anderson. But he, ah, didn't have such high opinion of some of the other members of the family. And there was, ah, when my father would go down he was, ah, ready to criticize their merchandising methods, the, ah, old merchandise that was still on the shelves, ah, when they would come up to Huntington one of the brothers would criticize my father for being to fast on, ah, taking mark downs. My father's idea was the merchandise didn't sell, he'd get it out of there no matter what it cost in the way of mark downs. And, ah, in the Portsmouth store they were more inclines, a more conservative community down there to hang on to their goods and it showed when you wnet in the store. And, ah, I remember one time when my father was down there and he told me that he saw all this, ah, badly shop worn merchandise on the counters and he said, "I may be quick on mark downs but I don't have anything like this in Huntington." And, ah, ah, so that was the, ah, ah, differences in, in, ah, ideas about running a store. And the Huntington store always had the, when you walked in, gave the impression of a fine store and in Portsmouth it was the opposite it, it, they didn't make the improvements continually. They were not aggressive in ah, in plying money back into the business to, ah, ah, keep it going. In Huntington, for instance, before 19, sometime before 1920, ah, they actually installed, ah, Italian Walnut, ah, woodwork in the display windows.

BN: from New York City to install this fine, ah, wal, Italian Walnut, ah, woodwork background in the display windows. And, ah, it had, ah, hand carving details and, of course, (chuckles) in a way it was, ah, a waste of money because later the trend was to cover all that up with, ah, other colorful (laughing) backgrounds for merchandise. But it, its gave you the idea that they were continually seeking ways to make the store more attractive. And to give that fine store image. From er, I don't know how early it was after the store was opened up on 3rd Avenue but they had these showcases with marble bases down the center isle and, ah, ah, they served until quite late in the stores history. And were always attractive. The only, the one reason they finally had to be discarded was that they'd been there so long and had been, ah, put up on scaffolds twice for a flood that they were just becoming rickety. Ah, but they gave the store a very, ah, handsome, ah, interior. And another thing that they never would do in the Huntington store was put tables in the isles on the main floor. Which would give a store a cluttered look. They, they maintained these traffic isles. In fact, in successive redensing of the main floor we always made sure that we had wide traffic isles to make it possible for people to get through to get to the upper floors. Now that, those are little points that my father was quite aware of. From the

very beginning that, ah, if you had a fine store you, ah, had your merchandise so arranged and your fixtures, ah, in keeping with that image. And they began, when they equiped the second floor with, ah, ah, fixtures, ah, I think this, I think this may have been done after the Anderson's came that they had, used to be a company called the Grand Rapids Showcase Company. Ah, which, ah, made fixtures for stores. And, ah, we used them for a good many years. Ah, they would send a man down to look over a floor that was to be developed and he would, ah, design fixtures. But they were made to standard measurments that, ah, Grand Rapids had developed so that later on you could, ah, ah, put them together in a different arrangement. They'd all come apart. It was a very clever arrangement that they had that you could take them apart and restack them in a different order and they would always fit. And, ah, the ones, most of them were made out of finely finished quartered oak. And they were, they were, ah, when on the first big redo of the main floor, ah, a lot of those fine fixtures were put in. The same thing on the second floor on two occassions. And the fourth floor, the children's floor, when it was set up, ah, in the 1920's, ah, ah, it was all Grand Rapids fixtures. Ah, and the fifth floor also, when it was set up for, ah, the china and glass, ah, was, ah, set up with Grand Rapids fixtures and there still may be some of 'em

around in the store somewhere, I don't recall. They were, they were well built and, ah, would last forever.

BS: Let's go back to, to 1908 where we bring in Charles Anderson. (Yes.) Discuss his relationship with your father and ...

BN: He and my father were able to work together extremely well. Ah, they never had any conflicts. They recognized each others, ah, ah, abilities. And Mr. Anderson concentrated mainly on the general management of the business and the, ah, financial management. Ah, he took over the office and, ah, that is the accounting offices and credit and so on. He was pretty much a desk bound man. He also took over the second floor merchandise. The, ah, ready-to-wear and, ah, ah, the women's, ah, lingerie and so on and millinery department as his especial, particular, ah, part of the business. My father then had the, ah, all the first floor departments and the basement departments under his control. And did the buying for all those departments, ah, for quite a long while. And, ah, they made money on the main floor and generally lost it on the second floor. Ah, Mr. Anderson did not have the, ah, talents of a merchandiser that my father had. And, ah, to make a further complication, Mrs. Anderson, they were, he and Mrs., ah, get her name here, ah, he married Lou, Miss Lou Warwick immediately before he came to Huntington and, ah, from the very beginning, I think, she wanted to run the store.

And so when Mr. Anderson went to New York to buy ready-to-wear, she went along. And I don't think that her taste ever ^conformed with the tastes of Huntington ^women. And, ah, I, I really think that that had a, ah, an unfortunate affect on the ready-to-wear business. Because, ah, ah, the, well, my memory over the type of clothes she wore were not the type that the average Huntington woman would want to wear. And, ah, ah, she generally, ah, was, ah, ah, putting her, exerting her influence. But on the other hand, ah, my father was just the opposite in, ah, he was not a desk bound man. He was active out on the selling floor. And, ah, my memory of him back when I was a child would be that he'd have a pencil between his teeth and, ah, ah, a clipboard with a lot of papers on it. You'd see him, ah, running up the steps of the balcony every, until he was about 45 years old he never walked up steps, he always ran. And, ah, ah, he looked after the physical plant of the business too. Ah, ah, the, ah, all the housekeeping and the, ah, construction and so on. And, ah, I think Mr. Anderson, ah, just recognized that he had those abilities and they used them to the fullest extent. And then, ah, Mr. Anderson concentrated on the things where he had the greater ability. He was a very, ah, smooth person, ah, not as impulsive as my father. And, ah, ah, he certainly didn't I don't think he had the imagination my father had. But, ah,

it was a team that worked. And, ah, at his death my father was just devastated because that relationship lasted about 18 years and, ah, ah, it had been very fruitful and pleasant.

BS: How 'bout if we start tracing through what World War I meant to the business?

BN: Alright. Ah, (clears throat). I remember, ah, asking my father one time if, ah, when the war broke out in 1914 if that immediately affected the business in a favorable way. I mean, was it more profitable? He said, "No, 1914 was really a bad year, 1913, in spite of the flood of '13 had been a, a profitable year." But, ah, everything was upset by the outbreak of World War I. And merchandise immediately became very, ah, hard to get. Certain import merchandise that they depended on and for a while the American suppliers, ah, that is the manufacturers, couldn't pick up that slack. Take toys for instance, when I was a child practically all of my toys came from Germany, when I was a small child. After 19, ah, 14, ah, the American toy industry got under way. And, ah, since then, ah, the Germans are practically out of the toy business. It was also a great deal of, ah, china, ah, imported from Germany, and Austria. Just recently my sisters gave me, ah, a set of china that my mother had, well my parents had had and, ah, my older sister, who's 8 years older than I am, says that she thinks this is my mother's first

fine set of china, purchased probably around 1900 or maybe a little later, and, I gave it, I carried it to Wilmed, Illinois and gave it to my daughter. It's very fine German china and of course that was cut off. We were, I guess, using some English dinnerware. But of course that supply was at least interrupted if it wasn't entirely cut off. And, ah, there was all sorts of, ah, things that, ah, just disappeared from the market all of a sudden. And what a store goes through in a time like that is that you begin selling down your inventory and can't replace it. And in a sense you're going (laughs) you're temporarily going out of business. But then, ah, American industry was able to pick up the slack. And of course for a time, ah, the merchandise probably wasn't as good. Ah, but in time, ah, that didn't last to long. Ah, the, ah, course there was inflation and, ah, prices began to advance. And that, of course, ah, brought profits to the company almost automatically because once you have your basic, ah, expenses covered, every increase in the amount of business you do, ah, makes for more profit out of proportion to what you would be making ordinarily. Cause if you can add on a hundred thousand dollars worth of business without increasing your, ah, expenses to much, you immediately get a windfall profit, you might say. And, ah, that was going on during the whole World War period. And of course

locally employment ran high. The, ah, ah, people had money to spend and when you have a situation like that, business just grows, ah, emencly. And so they, they made, ah, great gains during that period. Now there's on thing that I, I must get in to and that is the fact that, ah, a law was passed by Congress called the Lever Act, some time during the war period, to control prices. And it seems to me, if my memory is correct, that it was after the Armistice was signed, that they began enforcing that law, under the direction of a man named A. Mitchell Palmer. And the method, ah, pursued was to go to every city in the United States and pounce on the outstanding retailers. They did it in New York and Philadelphia. They would go in and, ah, find so called violations of this Lever Act in pricing merchandise. And, ah, they brought prom, most prominent merchants of every big city into court. And much to my father and Mr. Anderson's dismay, ah, a grandjury indicted them for profiteering on five counts. They had come in, for instance, to the ready-to-wear department and they chose a housedress, or a line of housedresses and, ah, then demanded to see the invoices for the co, showing the cost of that merchandise and then, ah, that was the basis of one count of profiteering. (Laughs) The dresses probably sold for 3 or 4 dollars a piece and in the ready-to-wear business, ah, they never made money in ready-to-wear anyhow. It was rather, ah, ah, . . . And I don't know

what the percentage of mark-up was but, ah, it must have been more than they thought was correct. Another count was on a corset. In this case, ah, the, ah, corsets were in stock and, ah, arranged as sizes. And the prices advanced, so when the new stock came in they marked up the old stock so that you wouldn't have corsets at 2 or 3 different prices in the same style. Which, what could you do. (Laughing) You, you can't have, if you, ah, put out one and say this is \$3 and the next size is 5, ah, how can you handle it? So, ah, they, ah, that was, I don't remember the other three items, but it was always a similar pattern. Finally the law was declared unconstitutional. But this (chuckles) made a, ah, caused a ruckus that lasted for several years. Our, ah, advertising manager approached both newspapers, then we had the Herald Dispatch, ah, published by Sam Gideon, and the Advertiser, published by J. H. Long. They approached both of them, they said we think this is an un, unjust thing and, ah, we just hope you won't play the, ah, story in a big way. Well, course that was this thing of an ad, advertiser, ah, trying to influence the editorial policy of a newspaper. Sam Gideon didn't run the story at all, which I think was poor journalism. Colonel Long ran it on an inside page, but he made, ah, a double column thing out of it. Stated just the bare facts. Well, it was too much for, ah, ah, the company, ah, my, Mr. Anderson and my father were Republicans,

they felt that the Democrats had, (laughing) pounced on them unjustly. They were doing nothing that they felt was wrong. They were running there business like they had always run it. And the Anderson-Newcomb ad came out of the Advertiser the next day and was not back in for several years. Meanwhile, ah, in retaliation, ah, the Advertiser would not use names, ah, ah, my father or Mr. Anderson, in any news story. My sisters could be, at a, in attendance at some social event in which all the other people were listed and their names would be deleted. The, ah, solicitors for advertising in the Herald Dispatch would go around to the merchants and say, "Why advertise in the Advertiser, concentrate in the Herald Dispatch. The biggest store in town is growing leaps and bounds and, ah, doesn't advertise in the afternoon paper at all." Then, unfortunately for Sam Gideon, I mean Dave Gideon, he got into (laughs) a problem. He built a building which is still standing down next to the old library building, ah, and set up, he moved his newspaper plant from over on 3rd Avenue, which had been a very rickety set up, over to this brand new building. But he, ah, overstepped himself financially and couldn't swing it. In an effort to save himself he brought out an, an evening paper called The Evening Journal. And it failed too. And, so about that time the pressure ha, had been growing. I

think my father was asked to head up the Community Chest Campaign and he just told the people frankly he said, "I can't do this because the Advertiser won't print a story with my name in it." Well, I guess, ah, the community leaders began to work on Colonel Long and, ah, the result was that we went back in the Advertiser. And, we got some concessions. One was that we had exclusive use of the back page of the front section. No other ad could appear on that page, ah, daily. Ah, then it was only a short time that, ah, Dave Gideon folded up and, and had to join in Huntington Publishing Company and the papers were brought under one, ah, general, well they were all in the same plant. And, ah, the two entities operated more or less independantly, with Dave Gideon as publisher of the Herald Dispatch and Colonel Long as publisher of the Advertiser. And, ah, then the arrangement was extended to both papers. We had the back page and we also had our own type fonts that we owned. So that our ads are always set in type we selected and no other advertiser could use. And, ah, we had a lot of advantages, which over the years gradually were eroded until, ah, we could no longer use our own type and so on. But it was, ah, (chuckles) an interesting episode that came out of World War I.

BS: The cases were dismissed? (Yes) O.K. (Pause) Could you

talk a little bit about the role that your father or the business might have had in bond drives, ah, anything related to the war?

BN: Well, Mr. Anderson, ah, was chosen to head up a state effort on, ah, I think, on conservation of food. And production of food. You know people had war gardens. Some people even dug up their front yards to raise vegetables. And then of course there were, ah, ah, special events, for instance, ah, on one occasion all of the sales people and all saleswomen were costumed in, ah, red cross uniforms, nurses uniforms and, ah, on a particular day they advertise a certain percentage, I think it was 5% of that days business would be given to the red cross. (Laughing) It turned out that it was such a poor day that they were ashamed to admitt how little they sold that day and they doubled the amount that they would've given. But that was one effort. And then, ah, they, ah, my father was what they called a four minute man. Along with a great many other civic leaders who would appear at, ah, movie theatres and, ah, give a four minute talk concerning the war effort and what we, people should be doing. Ah, of course the store was closed one day a week for time to conserve fuel. Ah, that was probably not to necessary in our case because the store was heated with gas. But, ah, it was a nationwide thing. And, ah, there was, ah, also a shortage of electric power in Huntington which affected us

some. Ah, what is now this, what do they call it, West Virginia Steel over here, ah, was then the West Virginia Rail Mill and they were engaged in war time work of some kind and when they turned on certain machinery up there, the lights in the whole town would be dimmed. And, ah, so we had these things that we had to work around. Ah, I can't remember, I do remember all these posters and things coming in to the store and being sent out all over the state concerning the conservation of food or the production of food. And, ah, ah, then there were these four minute men of course, ah, promoted sale of war bonds and the like.

BS: Do you have any idea what your father or the company would have subscribed to the bond drive?

BN: No. I don't. I, ah, I can't, I have no, no memory on that point at all. I don't think my father was a heavy investor in them at all because he didn't have the money. Ah, its interesting that all through that period prior to 1920, the salaries of both these men were really very modest because they were plying the money back in the business continually.

BS: That, that reminds me of something I want to ask you a little bit earlier. When you said that, ah, Mr. Valentine got 67 thousand dollars for his share of the business, (Yes) I think you showed me a stock certificate the other day to indicate that the company was capitalized at a 100 thousand. (Yes) Surely you father's share was worth more than a third?

BN: No, he, he had, he had a 20% interest.

BS: Your father, that's 20%?

BN: Yeah. That's all he ever had.

BS: O.K. So that when the Anderson's came in, they were maj, not majority, they were still more powerful in that sense than your father?

BN: That's right. They, they, my father was always outvoted. He never had any, anything approaching a controlling interest.

BS: And you didn't mention too that, well you said that Eugene became the president. Is it safe to assume that Charles became the next president? (Yes, yes) Did your father have a title at all?

BN: He was, ah, a secretary and treasurer.

BS: O.K. ... O.K. So the company probably still was technically capitalized at 100 thousand dollars? (Yes) Throughout this period?

BN: Yes, that's right.

BS: O.K. This question's a little bit off the subject but, when you taled about conserving food it, it occured to me that I don't really know when and how people ate that worked for your company. Did, did you have like a little lounge and did they all what we call brown bag?

BN: No, not, ah, well yes, ah, ah, a great many people brought their lunch to the store and, I think, ah, quite early there

was someplace where the, particularly the young women, could, 'er women could, ah, thake their lunch. And as time went on we set up a place where there was a kitchen stove and other facilities so they could heat things. And of course that grew in time to, ah, ah, practically a dining room that, ah, ah, is still in use over there in the annex building. And, ah, I think, ah, probably a great many of the, ah, salespeople who, ah, weren't living close enough to go home for lunch, ah, ate at the store. Rather than a restaurant. Ah, my father, of course we only lived a short distance from the store, he, he usually walked home for lunch.

BS: I'm not sure you ever told me where you lived.

BN: Well, we lived at 1213 - 6th Avenue. And, ah, ah, he, I think he liked the idea of getting a walk at lunch time and so he'd come home for lunch most of the time.

BS: So that lunch was considered like an hour?

BN: Yes.

BS: O.K. Are there any other important points that we need to cover concerning the first World War period?

BN: (Long pause) I can't, (pause) think of any particular (pause)...

BS: It seems to me, Billy, you told me previously about the false celebration, or some such thing.

BN: Oh, yes, well (laughs).

BS: And your father was a little concerned about holding a second one.

BN: That's right. They had this enormous celebration on November the 7th, 1918 when the, this false report of the, ah, Armistice came through. And then, ah, they had the, ah, second one November 11th, this time it was for sure. And, ah, there was some idea among some of the employees that they should get a second Holiday. Well, ah, it's awfully hard for a store to give up two business days in a month, and almost withing the same week. And, ah, so my father resisted that idea very emphatically. Ah, there was another thing that came out of that wartime experience. Ah, we had the flu epidemic. And, ah, this town was really hit hard. We even lost our mayor to flu. And, ah, it was necessary, we had, this was one time when everybody, ah, was affected because it cut right across all economic and social, ah, lines. And we . . .

-end side two-

-end of interview three-