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Flem A. Brumfield

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

SUBJECT: _____

ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: _____

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ORAL HISTORY

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Flem A. Brumfield
 (Signature - Interviewee)

1079 Tom's cK Rd
 (Address)

Wayne WV.

272-5917
 (Phone)

DATE: 7/21/94

Jennifer L. Smith
 (Signature - Interviewer)

412 10th St. #1, HUNT. WV 25701
 (Address)

(304) 522-0143
 (Phone)

OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: FLEM A. BRUMFIELD

CONDUCTED BY: JENNIFER STOCK

DATE OF INTERVIEW: JULY 21, 1994

DRAFT

Jennifer: ..apprenticeship system in the forming department, and you're talking the floor boy. Now he would teach you and then you'd go on to the next position?

Flem: Yeah, well, he'd teach you how to be a floor boy and a floor boy is what you served your apprentice program.

Jennifer: And then he would move on when you took that slot?

Flem: Well, most of the time, if you got a permanent floor boys job he'd moved up to an operator.

Jennifer: Oh, I see.

Flem: In other words, he'd served his apprentice program. He got 4,000 hours to serve as an apprentice. When you get..when I went there you got 3.2 hours a day on..towards the 4,000, sometimes..it took me like seven years because they wasn't _____.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah.

Flem: And people..well most..probably 20 of us or better, it took us like seven years to get our apprentice program too.

Jennifer: My goodness. Must seem like it'd never end. How did they determine that amount of hours per day?

Flem: Well, it's..that's the time you're on the machine operating it. That's the only time you got any time was when you relieved a man to go eat his lunch or his break, got 30 and 20 minute break. And when I went there we had four machines to relieve. And then later on after I was through with my apprentice program, they went to three machines. And the operator he just time off three machines instead of four machines.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah.

Flem: Also, they cut back then and he got more operating time. See, when you got to operate..like an operator missed and you were next in line of seniority to..to operate then you got an eight hour on your card..you got eight hours for operating.

Jennifer: Right, right, for taking over.

Flem: And, like when you got..like you served as a floor boy a couple of years and then most generally you were the oldest floor boy. Every time somebody missed then you got to operate and you got eight towards your card.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah.

Flem: I just got there..when I started mine, I just got there at the wrong time. They started taking machines out.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Flem: When I went there they was 31 machines. When I left there they was 9 machines.

Jennifer: Wow!

Flem: And it kept pushing me back and pushing me back.

Jennifer: Right.

Flem: But I was..when I..finally they shut the plant down, I was holding a machine you know. (yeah) I was operating on a machine. I had been for a few years.

Jennifer: Was that the top position in the department was operator?

Flem: Top in the..other than the machine foreman which if you wanted it, which I didn't, you could bid on a machine foreman's job. But an operator was top other than that.

Jennifer; Was a..was they a big salary difference between..when you worked the hours for the operators did you get their wage or did you just..

Flem: Yes, yes. You got operator's wages.

Jennifer: So how did they get rid of people when you go from 31 to 9? I mean were they just retiring people?

Flem: They just..they took..no, they was just laying off people like when we had a big..when we had the big shutdown or big shutting the machines down..was in 1979 and I was laid off then for six years.

Jennifer: Wow!

Flem: And a..in 1983 the union contract was..they renegotiated, when I was laid off I had lifetime recall rites.

Jennifer: Uh-huh, which mean you would not lose your seniority?

Flem: Well, no, I'd lose seniority but I would have a lifetime, they had to call me back before they hired anyone else. Okay, during the 1983 negotiation they set a 5 year time period on that. (Ah-hah) And which I didn't hire in...I hired in with lifetime recall rights, but they changed it while I was laid off. And...but I was lucky. I mean, I, my five years run out and I was rehired anyway. I was hired back in as a new person. (oh, yeah, unh) And then I served, had to wait three years to get my seniority back. And after three years I got my seniority back. And but I was

getting less pay and everything but I got my seniority back.

Jennifer: Yeah. What do you do in a situation like that? What did you do for six years?

Flem: Nothing. Just...just a job here and a job there. (yeah) [laughing]

Jennifer: Yeah. Did you get any kind of funds from the ...

Flem: No, no, you get your unemployment that run out. And then you...you just work what you could do. There's no great demand for machine operators that make glass bottles.

Jennifer: Yeah, pretty limited market in this area. So they never took people from this plant and like sent them to other plants when there was a lay-off.

Flem: Yeah, they, they were some went. (uh-huh) But mostly it was like uh, there was three or four went and uh, broke the picket line, one that worked at another glass plant. Which I would never do. (yeah) And...but that's...that's why they went to another glass plant because they, 'cause they crossed the picket line. (I see) And I wouldn't do that.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. So, were you involved in the union? In your union?

Flem: I was just a member. (just a member) Yeah.

Jennifer: Uh...how would you...how would you characterize the union? Did it change at all or anything?

Flem: It was, yes. When I first went there we had a real good union. And when I left there it was sorry. There was practically no union. (mmm-hmm) It was, it was a disgrace to call it a union really.

Jennifer: So why do you think, first of all, tell me what kind of differences, what...was it just weak or...?

Flem: Well, the union president, Fred Bledsoe, he ain't worth a damn for nothing. (okay) And he wouldn't stand up for your rights. He was a suck. He uh, he would uh, strictly company all the way. (I see) And uh, that's one thing that tore it down. And you had people instead of being good union people, they was more concerned with what they was gonna get out of it, and what the, representing the men. (yes) They didn't want to make no waves, 'cause they was trying for bosses jobs (yes, yes). 'Cause when I was there probably seven people was in the union was, would end up making boss. And uh, so it's just...a bunch of sucks that ruined the union is what happened.

Jennifer: Mmmh. How did that, how did it get weak like that? Was that just bad judgment on the part of the membership or leadership?

Flem: It was the men, the men didn't stick together. They uh, they wouldn't go to the meetings. And uh, they got bad union presidents in there that wouldn't stand up for 'em. And if you asked one are you going to the union meeting tonight, why, no, I'm not going to the union meeting, why? Well, he's in bed with the bosses wife (what can we do? Yeah), yeah. And it just...(just deteriorates)...yeah, union just went to pot is what happened.

Jennifer: Yeah, unh. How did you, did you see any differences when uh, when the male and the female both joined? They joined I think in, I guess right before you went to work there.

Flem: No...what do you mean?

Jennifer: 'Cause there was a separate local for the women.

Flem: Well, they had their own president, but they did when I left there, too. (did they?) Oh, I'm pretty sure.

Jennifer: Oh, I could have been a little confused about that point.

Flem: They uh, well, I always got along real good. My crew leaders, I had crew leaders that worked, bring me my ware back and tell me what was wrong with it, that they'd found out front it wasn't packable. (mmmh) I never had no problems. Got along with 'em real well. A lot of good friends. (yeah) I haven't got no complaint, you know, nothing about out front, you know. I think women, they done a good job. They worked hard. And actually, between their job, my job was dirtier and hotter and more dangerous. But their job was hard. (it was tedious) You stand there in one place, put bottles in a box it'll drive you up the wall.

Jennifer: I know. I asked a lot of them, "What did you think about when you did that?" Six to eight hours, what did you think about?

Flem: It was rough, I'll tell you. They, they was some good workers there. There was good...real good workers.

Jennifer: Did you see any trouble with uh, when more women got in to the uh, more non-traditional jobs in the...

Flem: Yeah, you seen jealousy. I mean, just like when they took over the crew leader job, uh, you seen a lot of jealousy on the part of the men. Because they had worked there and that was the only chance for advancement they had from a lehr attendant position. And then when you got the women, they could bid on the

jobs, they were, they had a lot of seniority a lot of 'em and the men didn't (right), and you had a lot of jealousy there. Personally I think they could do the job.

Jennifer: Mmm-hmm, yeah. That seemed affected class regulation...are you familiar with that phrase?

Flem: Yeah, that's where they re-classed the women (yeah) well, not where I worked but out front they did, in the selecting department they did. And the women...that's why women could go in to as a crew leader. Before they couldn't even bid on the job.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. Uh, what kind of, what kind of different styles of management did you see?

Flem: I seen the bad and worse. (yeah) [laughter] Uh, when I first went there it was, it was decent management. The management and the men tried to get along. Matter of fact, we did get along. We were, I hunted and fished with some of the management. And anybody knows me down there'll tell you I wasn't no suck. (yeah) I could really care less. I done my job. And uh, and then it got, it got bad. I mean, especially the last five years I worked there. (mmm-hmm) They brought a lot of people in from Brockway that didn't know beans about nothing. (yeah) And I could understand why Brockway was going broke...the idiots they brought in there. [laughter] It...I don't know.... They thought they was so much better than we were. But yet we could make the bottles and they didn't have enough sense to. All they could do was tear up stuff.

Jennifer: Where did they come from as a group? Are these southern men or....were they...?

Flem: They come from everywhere, Texas, everywhere. (mmm-hmm) As a matter of fact one of our KO production managers had to go out in Echo, Texas, or Waco, Texas, not Echo, Waco, Texas (un-huh) and uh, replace Keyser as production manager out there because the plant was about to close up. And he got the plant, they sent Keyser to our plant (great) and our plant folded up and Waco, Texas is going strong.

Jennifer: What sense is that? What's the sense in that? I don't pretend to understand management's technics. [laughing]

Flem: Well, any time a plant goes down it's management. And anyway, (you think so?) why, I know it. Anybody, you talk to any... or anything, he'll tell you any time a plant goes down it's management.

Jennifer: A lot of people said that the plant closed due to you know, economic reasons. (no, no, no) Do you think it was uh, poor management?

Flem: It was poor management, poor management. It wasn't nothing like that. But where we're located, here we're next to distilleries in Kentucky and next to the distilleries in Tennessee, shipping costs less. We was one of the most modern glass plants in the world. We had one, one of only two machines in the world (really). And they tell me that that's...that's just plain old poor management, is what that is.

Jennifer: I don't understand why...I've been told that the union and workers made a good faith effort to try and, and say, "Hey, okay, we're gonna take cuts and we're gonna you know, let us help you."

Flem: Well, that's, we did. We tried to take concessions and everything. And even me, like uh, I hurt my back April 26th, and I knew the plant was having difficulties. And so I didn't even turn it in, I didn't go to the doctor. (wow) On account I didn't want it to look bad. And uh, now see, I'm stuck, because my back's bad. All I do's take pain pills for it and muscle relaxers (yeah). But I didn't turn in a compensation 'cause I was trying to help save our plant down there.

Jennifer: What was the machine that was the only one in the world?

Flem: It was a press, press machine. (what did it...) There was two of 'em. You gotta press blow machine that presses, makes the pattern then transfers to the front and blows the pattern up (un-huh), and this one pressed and pressed. It done both. No blow to it. (I see) You can make thinner glass, less shipping weight.

Jennifer: Mmmh.

Flem: They was running a 42 ounce beer bottle and it uh, it just presses. The glass is like half as thick than a regular beer bottle. (mmmh) Cause you can form it even, more even, the glass (mmm-hmm) the distribution in the bottle. (un-huh) And the other, another machine you might have a heavier bottom or heavier shoulders and have light sides, something like that. And this just made it, it was more even. (mmm-hmm) Made a nice bottle.

Jennifer: Really interesting, yeah. Well, they're still making glass bottles, they're still making lots of glass. I don't see the market...I hope the market for glass doesn't go away. I don't like plastic.

Flem: It shouldn't. I don't like plastic either. If you look in the creeks you'd know why. All the milk jugs and oil cans and stuff....

Jennifer: All those milk jugs. [laughter]

Flem: Well, it's...it's...you get into pollution and plastic and glass and you haven't got no pollution. You can recycle time after time, one bottle will last you a hundred years. You just keep recycling it.

Jennifer: And you can wash it out and you can use it again. (yeah) You won't have the stains and odors and....and I mean, plastic is nasty.

Flem: Even water, if you've got water in a plastic jug, if that water sits there long enough, you'll get a taste of plastic out of it. (oh, yeah) And like Tupperware, which I won't drink out of Tupperware because I can smell the cup when I'm drinking. (yes, yes, I can too)

Jennifer: And I can't stand those plastic cups you've, that you get at the fast food places and all that, uh, I just throw 'em away. I hate it. Uh...let's see. So, did you socialize a great deal with people in the plant?

Flem: Oh, yeah, yeah, that's my best friends. Like my family.

Jennifer: You didn't meet your wife there, did you? (no, no) I always ask about that.

Flem: She was a school teacher.

Jennifer: So you took part in...so, when you say, when I ask you about socializing, I know there was a lot of, in the '50's and '60's at least, a lot of you know, plant sponsored activities.

Flem: Oh, we played softball, we had softball teams, we had shift parties. We had...each shift had a club. And we had, each shift had a softball team. Then we had plant team, softball team, and basketball teams. We had everything. I mean, it was really, it was a super place to work. I mean, it was just a super place to work. (yeah, yeah) And they, everybody got along real well. And you never heard...you could count the rats on one hand. You know, there was like five rats when I went there. Everybody knew 'em. (yeah) And when I left there it was about 50/50 on rats. It was a lot different.

Jennifer: Were there more management...was there an increase in management or I mean, were there more...?

Flem: No, not really. Management, it went down pretty much the way the machines went down. They, they had the bare necessity's what they had, (yeah), the management. And it's uh, there was some people in management that was real good. But uh, the one's that was real good, usually uh, they didn't suck. And they didn't move up like the others did (mmm-hmm). We had a couple real good bosses that'd get in there and dig with you, and try to make a bottle and

....

Jennifer: ...and reason with you and talk to you when you....

Flem: And some of 'em, some of 'em, they just wanted to suck around. They wouldn't get their hands dirty. If there was a boss coming, another boss higher up than them come by, man, they'd jump in like they worked all day, and they hadn't done nothing. (mmmh)

Jennifer: Yeah. It's hard to work for a living . [laughter] It's hard to work and be honest. It's, it's, it's so....I find it difficult. [pause] Mmmh. So uh, I asked about gender relations. What about race relations? Were there many black people?

Flem: Yeah, there's a few. I had two real good friends there. Well, no, I take that back. I had three black men that worked there that was real, real good friends of mine. Uh, one of 'em, well, Roosevelt Vine was one of 'em. He quit there and he went to work for the city. And uh, Cool Willie was a boxer and he's a real good friend of mine. He, he was one of the first ones I met when I went there. I was on my apprentice program. (mmm-hmm) And uh, Gerald Williams, which was one of the last people hired there. (what's their first...oh...) Gerald. (like Jarrell, okay) And he was one of the last men hired. And he was going to school at Marshall. Uh, you know, working his way through. He was from Logan. (was he?) And he was a super good boy. He was about twenty-two years old. (what did you say his last name was?) Williams. He's a super good person.

Jennifer: Did you ever see any kind of ugliness between the black and white workers? (no) Was there any kind...?

Flem: No, no, didn't have nothing like that.

Jennifer: No kind of separatism either.

Flem: No, because we both done the same kind of job and we got just as hot together and just as dirty together. It was just, you had, you had people there that didn't like black people. (mmmh) But that's everywhere. (yeah) You've got black people that don't like white people. And that, it's just.... No, we never had no race problem whatsoever. Now, I'm speaking for the department where I worked. Now up front I don't know. (yeah) I knew some black people out there and we were good friends. But I don't know how they got along with people they worked with. (yeah)

Jennifer: Well...mmh. [pause] So did you brothers work in the plant, did they retire with you? Your brothers?

Flem: Well, one of 'em didn't have enough time. And uh, one of 'em was already retired when the plant went down. He was next to the highest boss in the forming department. Then I had another

brother quit there. He had twenty-two years in. He was a boss in shipping. And he quit there and went to work for Kerr Glass. (oh, yeah) And he retired from Owens, Kerr, and he's working another job now

Jennifer: Wow, driven. [laughing] So...so you had, so you retired how many years?

Flem: Well, it was, they end up with 18 years and 4 months after they cut the time I lost where I was laid off. (right) But I got a disability. (I see)

Jennifer: 'Cause I was gonna say... 'cause usually you have to have like thirty years in for retirement.

Flem: Yeah, thirty, thirty or '55. I was, before the plant went down, I left May 9th, and I didn't get my retirement until December 16th. But I didn't know the plant was going down then. (yeah, yeah) But I got a disability on my lungs. (mmmh, on your...?) Lungs. Yeah. [laughter] These wouldn't hurt you. What we did we sprayed sulfur (yeah) out of a spray gun in to a how bowl and that smoke came right back in your face. And it'd take your breath and your face was yellow where you sprayed, your clothes.

Jennifer: Why were you spraying sulfur? Some cleaning agent...?

Flem: No, it heats, sulfur heats and will patch a hole in a mold. Like if you got a little pin in a mold (mmm-hmm) and you spray it, sulfur melts and will patch that. It makes the mold run hotter. It uh....

Jennifer: Did you do that to every mold or just ones that were kind of getting old or...?

Flem: No, we done it on certain machines, like on a beer bottle. You just about have to spray sulfur on a beer bottle to make it. (mmm-hmm) If you didn't, they'd check something wrong. (yeah) The checkers. It's the place where the bottle'd break at. (mmmh) A little shiner like thing. We sprayed sulfur, then we sprayed dope and all that come back in your face and stuff. (dope?) Yes, it's lubricant. Blank molds.

Jennifer: Did you work with asbestos much?

Flem: Yeah, that's why I got disability was asbestos. (yeah, yeah) I wished I'd never seen that place. (really?) Yeah. (wish you worked somewhere safer or...?) Well, I'd rather work for less money and had, you know, had my health when I got out. (mmmh, yeah, yeah) Most people comes out of that place ain't got no health left. It's gone.

Jennifer: Most of the men I've spoken to they're either hard of hearing, terribly hard of hearing (yeah, yeah) or the vision. They've got like dust and problems.

Flem: I got...well, like me, I got a bad back, bad lungs, bad shoulder, three hernias (goodness, hard work), can't hear. [laughing] You see that phone there, it's all the way up where I can't hear on it. (yeah, yeah) I play the t.v. too loud. And I still can't understand a lot of things.

Jennifer: Yeah. Well, what would have rather, what would you rather do? What would you pick now? What would have been your perfect job to work for for twenty years?

Flem: I had my perfect job, but I had to travel and my wife didn't like it. (yeah, so) I had a job I loved. (what was it?) I worked at a chemical company. And I worked, in the winter time I restored equipment and welded on it, and weld pipe fit, welded on it. Mechanic...little of everything during the winter months. And during the summer months I go out on the road and uh, spray chemical on weeds and brush and stuff, and kill 'em. (you were out there in the wilderness) Yeah. (practically) Yeah, swamps in Louisiana and everywhere else. (oh, wow) But you got to see a lot of places (yeah). Had a nice expense account. Unh?

Jennifer: Was that mostly down south or was it...?

Flem: Yeah, south, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Texas, all the states (yeah).

Jennifer: Bet you saw a lot of animals. (yeah) A lot of creatures.

Flem: Alligators, cotton mouths, I seen 'em all. Louisiana I see a lot of 'em.

Jennifer: Yeah, they've got some weird creatures down there. [laughing] It's a whole different world.

Flem: We'd...it was a good job. (yeah, yeah) But, you know I...I went uh, I was...I went through seven states. And so we started in Florida. No, we started in Georgia. (mmm-hmm) And I went through seven states. And I come back in, you're supposed to get like thirty days before you have to go back out. Well, they had me scheduled to go through fourteen more states. And I'd just got married, so...(yeah)...my wife didn't like it, so I quit. And I went to work as a welder, building mine equipment. Worked there about a year, and then went to work at Owens.

Jennifer: Where did you learn your skills to begin with? Your mechanical skills.

Flem: Just doing it. (just doing...like when you were young and stuff?) Yeah. Thirteen, fourteen years...anytime somebody was doing something, I'd help 'em. And I learned to weld myself. Learned to rebuild motors myself. Hotrodded. I drove stock cars. (did you?) You just pick that stuff up. (yeah, if you've got a mind for it. That's cool, that's cool) Yeah, because I didn't like school. [laughing] (yeah) Squirrel season came in, they didn't even expect to see me. They knew I'd be gone. (and deer season) Yeah. And now I couldn't hurt nothing. I mean...it's been fifteen, sixteen years since I hunted. I couldn't hurt nothing.

Jennifer: What happened?

Flem: I just didn't want to hurt nothing. I just couldn't...couldn't shoot nothing. I had twenty-eight guns and I give 'em all to my nephews and I quit.

Jennifer: Yeah. I think there comes a time.

Flem: I just...like I got squirrels out there in the yard. I got eight rabbits, I got groundhogs, I got coons, I got deer. (yeah) And they come right out...they bed right back here in these pines right here. (do they? yeah) And then I got, then them rabbits had babies out there. And I got squirrels that stays in that walnut tree, and we buy peanuts and feed 'em.

Jennifer: Yeah, when you started talking about rabbits, I wasn't sure if you meant to be like, getting rid of them, or you were like taking care of them.

Flem: I'm taking care of them. I drove stakes in my yard and I ain't mowed my yard in two weeks. [laughter] (oh, that's sweet) They have that clover and stuff to eat. I got, of the night, of the evening about 6, 7 o'clock, there'd be eight or nine rabbits out there.

Jennifer: That's nice, that's nice. Yeah... I couldn't shoot anything. I could maybe shoot a bird up in the sky, you know, for the sport of it. But I don't think I could kill anything with eyes.

Flem: I used to mine. They have a hard enough time without somebody going out shooting [inaudible]

Jennifer: Anymore, I tell you, absolutely.

Flem: Deer, I..you know, really, deer are overpopulated here. They, they need...it's better to get shot and killed than it is to starve. (yeah, yeah, I'm not against them, but it's not for me) Yeah.

Jennifer: Mmmh. Well, let's see. Let's go back over these, this

biographical data, since I think we missed it at the beginning of the tape. Could you speak your full name?

Flem: Flem Allen Brumfield.

Jennifer: And you were born...?

Flem: Ten, six, forty-two.

Jennifer: And you are married. (yes) And you have a ninth grade education. (yes) And you began work at Owens in...

Flem: ...1969.

Jennifer: And retired...

Flem: ...uh, December 26, '93.

Jennifer: All right, great. That takes care of that. And my name's Jennifer Stock. And I'm interviewing Mr. Brumfield at his home on July 21st, 1994. Mmh. So...so you don't, you pretty much stayed around Wayne County most of your, or Wayne, most of your life.

Flem: No. (I mean, aside from...) Since I got married. But before that, no. (because you went all over the place) I was in Detroit, Columbus, Mansfield. I was everywhere...Wooster...everywhere before I, I left home when I was about 13. (wow) Or 14. And I took all I had. I had 35 cents, and I took off and I went to Cincinnati. Stayed out there about a year and something. And uh, then...

Jennifer: At 14.

Flem: Yeah. And then I went uh, went in the Army when I was 16. And they caught me, sent me back home. (Oh) And I waited 'til I was 17. (yeah) Went in, spent a couple of years in the Army. (yeah) And then I just...I've been, I don't know, I've been all my life, until I got married. (yeah) Since I got married I've stayed pretty close to home since then. What do you think's uh, the future of Huntington, Cabell County...this area?

Flem: It don't look good. (no) No industry. I blame it on uh, on the government, state government (taxes) tax-wise. They don't give 'em a break. And everybody went to Kentucky (yeah) There was no reason that Huntington shouldn't be one of the largest cities (in West Virginia at least) in West Virginia because we got our river for transportation, we got rail service here, we got interstate. There's (flatland), there's no reason (plenty of) except tax-wise.

Jennifer: Mmm-hmm, and uh, government, policy. I have to agree.

Flem: And 'cause we got everything here. (mmm-hmm) I mean, we've got absolutely everything. (mm-hmm)

Jennifer: We've got a, you know, a university, we would have an educated work force and they could stay around here.

Flem: Marshall is probably the biggest industry in West Virginia now. (In this area) In the length of Cabell County. (that and the hospitals) Well...Marshall's training doctors. But Marshall probably is the cash flow. It's probably the biggest one in Cabell County.

Jennifer: I...probably think they probably might be.

Flem: 'Cause there's nothing in Huntington. (no) No (no jobs) industry (no factories). West Virginia Steel, they just laid off some. (yeah) And it just....

Jennifer: Yeah, it's depressing. It's depressing.

Flem: There's no future for any young people in West Virginia. I mean, in the whole state that I can see. (mm-hmm) I got a nephew that me and my wife raised, we got him when he was a year and a half old. We sent him five years to Marshall in Computer Science, and he's working at Pepsi. [laughing] (Pepsi?) So that'll tell you about your education. And he made real good grades (oh, sure), he's a smart person.

Jennifer: And very capable. It's a very difficult thing, do you think?

Flem: But he don't want to leave (right), so.... He's working at Pepsi. He's running their computer. (probably a little more creative than that) Yeah, he could do a lot better (yeah), the way he is.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. It's a, it's a dreadful problem for the young people. I mean, it's uh....

Flem: It's just like my wife. She works at Corbin's. And she drives to Cannonsburg, Kentucky, because they moved the offices, she works in the office. And they moved the offices to Cannonsburg.

Jennifer: Is that a men's clothes place? (mmm-hmm) And they moved the offices all the way there?

Flem: They moved all the offices, all the personnel was, is in Cannonsburg. And they built the new factory over there. And West Virginia could have had that factory, 'cause they had spent a hundred-some thousand dollars for a survey, uh, up on the east end

of Huntington, up on Route 60. But the taxes and stuff, and they went to Kentucky. Kentucky offered them a better deal.

Jennifer: Why do you think that our government persists in having...

Flem: Well, they're stupid. The legislatures, they're stupid. They don't realize that people working are paying taxes. People ain't working are not paying taxes (yeah). So give the factories a break on their taxes and get them, get the people working and they'll pay the taxes. (yes) I guess they think unemployment is, is the way to go. I don't understand it. Because they borrowed to pay the unemployment from the federal government, they have to pay that back. (right) Why not create jobs?

Jennifer: Yeah. Yeah, I don't...I don't understand. I don't understand. Uh...mmmh. Well, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about?

Flem: No, no. Except social security. You can't get the damn stuff. [laughter]

Jennifer: Yeah, my parents are going through that.

Flem: That's another joke. (mmmh) And....

Jennifer: If we're gonna do welfare, if we're gonna have good welfare programs, we should have good ones. We shouldn't have you know, hold-overs and band-aid programs.

Flem: Well, you work and you pay in. I started working real young. I passed papers. My brothers had the paper route, and they put me where I couldn't get hit by a car and I passed papers when I was seven years old. (yeah?) And I don't even remember when I started paying social security. I know I was real young. (yeah) And I've always worked. And, and uh, then when it comes time where, when I can't work, I'm supposed to get social security, then you got to go hire a lawyer and pay him 25% of your social security to get it for you, which is not necessary. (shouldn't be necessary) Because the doctors all said I was, couldn't go back to work. And they said when they asked the question will he ever be able to work part time or any...they said never, permanent, total disability. (yeah, clear as that) But yet, I got to go hire a lawyer to try to get my social security.

Jennifer: To tell the people to fill out the right forms, to know the right people to talk to. Yeah, yeah.

Flem: It's a joke.

Jennifer: It's no good.

Flem: If they'd take and fire about 2/3 of the people working at social security, and then never hire a lawyer to get social security, then, then, they could pay everybody that even put in for it without even checking on 'em and what they're paying just to process the paperwork and stuff. (mmm-hmm)

Jennifer: Mmmh, yes, legitimated corruption.

Flem: That's exactly what it is. That's what our government is right now. But it's the best one. There's none any better.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. [laughter]

Flem: That's the bad thing, though, there's not any better than that.

Jennifer: For a country this size, you know, as large as and as diverse as, you know, so many different people, kinds of people, races and such, it's...it's a difficult job. It's difficult. Well, mmh, thank you for talking to me.

Flem: That's all right. I don't do nothing but lay around and watch t.v.

END OF INTERVIEW