

Mill Workers Oral Histories

Brady Pope

Bibb Mills

February 8, 1988

Interviewer: Now, tell me when you started and what you did.

Mr. Pope – I started work in the Bibb in 1939 and I started off as a creeler, a learning creeler, at 25 cents an hour. And after you worked so long you get to where you can run a job, they give you a job and you work it by yourself. Until you learn to do it by yourself you work with somebody. Then they give me a job of creeling by myself.

Interviewer – What is creeling?

Mr. Pope – That's when you take bobbins of yarn, and stick up here and pull of two or three of these down and twist them together., that was in the twister room – I made ten years in the twister room. After you creel a while, you know, if you do a good job, why they promote you up and let you be a frame tender. You walk around and count these and see that all the spools I running, so you don't have no weak place in the tire cord. I worked on that and went to school. Then they promoted me up to a fixer.

Interviewer – Now when did you go to Mill Mathematics?

Mr. Pope – I started that Mill Mathematics right after I started to work. I started to school.

Interviewer – Was that at the mill that they did that?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, outside. You'd go on your own time. Just like if you work on the morning shift you go every evening, and if you work on the evening shift you go every evening. You take that time off on your own. You pay; instead of now then the government pays you to learn. You paid to learn and paid for your own paper and pencils and books. About a year and a half then they put me to fixing. Which, a fixer at that time was a supervisor. He puts the help to work, and

then he, just in case they have an order to come in with more twists or less twists in the yarn, you're making tire cord, then you got to change the twist gear in the head of the frame to change the twist in it. The faster it runs, the more twists you put in it. You change the gear; you don't speed up the belt or nothing. You just change the gear. Well, I done that for about three years and then I became maintenance man in the twister room. I stayed in the twister room as maintenance man. They classified me 17 times and I got 13 deferments, on account of the government needed tire cord and they'd let you stay out of the service because that was a government order. I stayed with that until after WWII. Then there wasn't no demand for tire cord – they had come up with nylon and rayon. We was running cotton all the time. They run it through a chemical called Meon, and that stuff treated it to keep it from rotting. They called it HR – Heat Resistant. In 1950 I went to work in the weave room. They put me, I had fixing experience and everything, and they put me to learning to fix looms. They put me on an XL loom which was running 125 to 135 picks a minute. Then they moved me off them looms and onto an L model loom that didn't run but 90 picks a minute. So you get used to a shuttle a boxing and you don't know where it's not getting in or where it's bouncing. The shuttle's supposed to stick in the picker, if it doesn't it'll slam off. It don't run good. It was altogether a drastic change because I had never been on that slow loom. They took me off that fast loom. Two fellows couldn't get along on that slow loom, so they took me off the fast one and moved me over there so I could get along with them. I stayed fixing looms I reckon about a year and a half, and then they moved me up, overseer come to me and wanted me to be a head loom fixer. I had been to loom fixing school, but there was more people in there that had more experience than me. I told him so. He said I don't care about your experience; I want to get

somebody in there who can get along with the help. I want you to take the job. So I learned head loom fixing. Then a feller come along, the overseer did, and wanted me to come in as a night supervisor. That all was in a short period of time. I didn't stay on head loom fixing but two or three months and then they put me on supervising at night. Well, I, you know, folks can't run a job and you've been raised poor, you just can't drive folks. You go over there and help them and show them what to do. They don't do that now. You either get it or get gone. There ain't no personality now. You enjoy going in, meeting your friends, working with your friends and everything. I had a little lady one time who run some bad cloth and I taken her to the cloth room, so she just looked while I run this on a table with the light under it. I'd stop and look at it, and she'd just look off like she was looking for birds or something. I said, Honey, me and you might as well go to our job because you're not interested in what you've done. So she and I went back to the job and I told her to take her coat and go on home. And she told me I couldn't send her home because her Daddy and Mama worked first shift. I told her I didn't care if her Daddy and Mama were president of the company, that she didn't work for me. I wrote her time up. Well, the next morning her Daddy and Mama came in to work and went to the overseer and told him that if she couldn't work then they couldn't work. He said, well, ya'll are making the choice. I've got that man out there to run the job and he's doing a good job for me. Now if you want your money I'll just write ya'lls time up. But they stayed on. They transferred her. I refused to work her any more, cause if I get in here and help her run her job and make more money. If she keep them running she makes more money. If I come along and you're stuck up and I come in and help you to keep your job a running, then I expect a little respect from you.

Then I had a buddy that me and him fished together, and drank a little together and everything, and I went in the sink room one night and squatted down and told him that his weaver was complaining about him not fixing her looms. And I whispered to him and he told me that if I wanted to run that so-and-so job to go out there and get it. And I told him fine, to go on home. Well me and him both come out of the sink room and I told him to lock his box. He said, "who's gonna run my job?" I said, "I can." He said, "who's gonna run yours?" I said, "I can." So I wrote his time up, and when the overseer come in the next morning he came around and wanted to know how things was going – he hadn't been around to his office. So the boy come in the next morning at shift changing time, 7 o'clock, and said he'd been wronged and we needed to give him a chance. I said, "Well Gerald, it's up to you son. You know that I want to get along with everybody. As far as what you said, I can swaller it. But you're gonna run your job. We've got your papers made out." He said, "Well, I need to talk to Mr. Watley." And I said, "No, we'll go into the office and tear up them papers." Well, Mr. Watley had done been in the office and signed them. So I told him that Gerald wanted to go back to work, that he'd done apologized to me. He said "Well Brady, I'm behind you 100%. They do what you say and either they go or you can iron it out with them." I said, "Well, I'm going to let him work on." I just took the papers, tore them up and dropped them in the waste can and everything was over with.

I had a nigger to go to work for me in 1950. I walked by him and I punched him and woke him up. He was blowing off, cleaning up, you know. I went by him and he was asleep with the hose pipe in his hand. I come back by and he was asleep again and I punched him again. The

third time I come by I just raised my knee up and bumped him on his hiney and told him not to let me wake him up any more. So I go on across to my job, checking my help and seeing how they're running. I come back and I met this gentleman dressed up in a blue serge suit of clothes and a white shirt and tie and I didn't know him. He said, "Mister, I'll just gets my money." I said, "I don't know who you are." He said, "You knows who I is." And I said, "No, I don't know you." He says, "Ise that man you keep coming by and punching and kicking. I just quit." I said, "Come on in at 8 in the morning, the office will be open and your time'll be a waitin for you." He said, "No, I quits tonight." I said, "No, you can't get your money until in the morning." He said, "I quits tonight. I wants my money tonight." I talked to him a little bit. He just determined to get his money. I said, "well come on then." We walked down to the sink room and the sink room door opened back to the right from the inside. I walked in first and when he walked in I popped him. When I knocked him down I snatched him up and I hit him several times. And I told him, I says; "Now you're going to put them clothes back on and work until 7 or I'm going to whoop you until 7." He says, "Well don't hit me no more! I'll work from now until 7." And he retired in 1984 and he wouldn't let the general superintendent have his picture made with him. He said that Mr. Brady Pope made a man out of him and he hadn't never worked over 6 months on no job until then. There wasn't no way that I was going to pay him out of my pocket. I had to whoop him.

I run a supervisor job in the weave room and I got in a little scuffle one time, a fight at the pool room. And hit was in the newspaper! The overseer had me up and told me that was bad publicity and my help wouldn't respect me. And he told me, well, I couldn't associate with my help, I couldn't go drink with them, I couldn't go fish with them or nothing. I'd have to leave

my help off, I'd have to get somebody else to buddy with. I told him that he could take that job and I'd be in the next room fixing looms. He said no, let me talk to you. I said, I told you I'd be in in the morning fixing looms. So I did I come in on the first shift. And I was pattern man, head star changer, first supervisor, anything from then on I worked special authority out of Macon. I didn't have no boss in Columbus. They'd call me or I'd call them. I didn't have no boss here.

Interviewer – Now what were you doing then?

Mr. Pope – We had a loom shop in Macon, and of course the home office of Bibb was in Macon, and they built a loom parts shop over there. They knowed that I knowed machinery and they got me to take a crew and disassemble parts out of old wore-out looms that could be fixed to go on another one. Then I had an overseer come to me and want me to be head loom fixer, head over all the looms. When I was special authority out of Macon I worked at Anderson Mill and the Bibb. I would check my help and I had to come see what come in on the shop from Macon. I had to go to Macon and show them some things they was doing wrong on repairing stuff. Then, the overseer come to me and wanted me to be over all the over haulers in the weave room. Well, we had 6 weave rooms at that time. We had 5, 394 looms. And you got six overseers and then you got about 30 supervisors that's telling you that so-and-so didn't do a good job. I couldn't stay right with a man. They come in up here when he went on a break to smoke. He went to the clock and punched in. If he went to the supply room to get something to put on a loom he come to my office. And punched the clock. I knowed he was in the supply room, I knowed he was in the smoking booth, or I knowed what loom number he was at. It was just a routine thing that I couldn't run everywhere. They give me a cart to ride on but they was

too dangerous. Folks would just walk out and not look. You stop one of them and it'll go over in the floor. I didn't like it. You didn't wait for the elevator; you'd just catch the stair steps. Wasn't but one floor difference in all the weave rooms. I never used the elevator when I went to the shop I just caught the stairways. I didn't like that little old battery cart that you'd step in and ride it because you'd have to go plug it in while you're in a meeting or you'll run the battery down. I just never did fool with that none.

Bibb expanded out during my time there. They bought a mill in Sandy Springs, Oklahoma. They bought two mills in Newnan, Georgia. And Mr. John Turner, he come to work there at the Bibb after I come to work there, he was general superintendent of the mill. After he went to Macon over all the mills, why, they was a having trouble in Newnan, Georgia at Encore and Arnold Mills, and he called the Bibb and wanted them to send me up there to get them straightened out. All they had ever run was a C & K Loom, and they had a Darby head on it and they wove a thermal blanket on it and made blankets and everything. There was some Excel looms up there and they put a Darby head on it to run thermal blankets. Well when I got up there I asked the head loom fixer, I saw all the looms was throwing the shuttles. He said they were throwing it all the time. I said, is it throwing it on the pick or on the leno? He said, Mr. Pope, I've never studied a loom that close. I said, "Mr. Harper, there ain't nothing to that. I'll tell you what, let's walk over there and I'll tell you if this one is throwing it on the pick or on the leno." It made five picks, Linda; it weaved just like your shirt or your sheet or something. Then it lenoed five picks which means like a honeycomb in there. He had never just walked up to a loom and looked to see if it was weaving or lenoing. I showed him that most of them was throwing the shuttle on the leno. So they sent a fellow from Georgia Tech, a Hoyt McGhee, to

Newnan. Georgia Tech, you know, is a Textile and Industrial college. He come in up there and he told me, he said, "Mr. Pope, we got to have a standard setting on these. " Well, right to start with I knowed that this loom picking, when it started leno on your cloth bagged on you. Well that caused the shuttle to come out. So I put in to make the loom pick later, I had to take off sweep and I had to take off, you got a regular pick set on 11 ½ and I moved it back to 12 inches. Well, he come over there and he runned a set and he told me what to set the loom on, and naturally, well I knowed the man was educated to I went on and set both looms to what the man told me. And lord, I had the overseer of the mill brought all of his help in to watch me. All three shifts. And I am embarrassed that I can't pull a loom, it's throwing the shuttle every time I turned it on. So I just told Mr. Ward to send them folks back on over to do something. I'll fix this loom and I'll show them what I've done, but it's too dangerous. I went ahead and changed the loom and I didn't get out of the mill until 6 o'clock that night. I was living in a motel up there. They paid you so much a mile – you could go back and forth to work or they paid your motel bill, paid your eats and all your expense besides your wages. Always worked twelve hours a day and I would come home on the weekend, because you know, from here to Newnan, Georgia is a long ride. We've got better roads now, but back then, in 1963, there wasn't an interstate. Mr. McGhee come in the next morning and sees my loom had more production on it than any of them. So that's the way we all set them up. I'd go over to Griffin and start up a set, and I says "Wait a minute Mr. McGhee, I says, now if you want to set these looms like you want to set them, he's got all his men in here. You take part of those looms over yonder on the first side of the job and I'll take these over here. I'll set this side up and you set yourn up like them. "He says, "How come, Mr. Pope?" and I says, "Your settings won't work." He says, "Well we've got

to have a standard setting where we can learn these folks how to set.” I says, “Well, that loom there is a running. And I can tell you what the pick is what the sweep, what the speed and everything is on it.” So he come over there and he writes down everything I’ve done to the loom. I lined the boxes, squared them and lined them up. He says, “I’ll go on to Griffin”, his home town was Griffin, “And I’ll type them up a manual on how to set these looms up.” But I stayed about two months up there and I took each man and trained him, showed him just exactly what I done – how much I raised the power on the loom, how much sweep I put on it, and how to line a box, how to square a box, how the squares read. How to dress his leather – they never did need no book – they knowed it. I told Mr. McGhee, I never went no further than the 9th grade. I wasn’t educated. I didn’t get to go to college or high school. But I had a lot of common sense.

Interviewer – You knew machines.

Mr. Pope – That’s the only way that I ever learned. Is just through self experience. There’s lots of ways you can go out here to do anything, and you can find a shortcut if you try different things. That’s the biggest trouble with all the loom fixers. Years and years before they ever started a training school I learned the fellers how to fix looms. Just a man come in here and they’d put him with me. We had a man to come to the Bibb, of course I was always sort of partial, I was a Southerner, I never did like niggers and I just didn’t know how to get along with them. We had long haired men that we had to train, and you had to talk to them, and you’d get up close to their ear, and there’s lots of racket in a textile mill, so you’d get up close to talk to them and that hair’d get all in your mouth and all in your nose. You’d get so aggravated. It was

plum disgusted. Then you'd take a nigger, a colored man, and he'd have the doggone body odor and you can't stand back, you've got to get in there with them to show them anything. I had one, and of course you don't know what I'm talking about, we had a heel pin, you've got a picker stick that throws the shuttle. You've got a foot down here, and you've got a shoe that fits up on it that's got a guide. Well, this picker stick goes down through that foot, hooks on a strap down there, goes down through the shoe and hooks on a spring down there on the foot. When it throws, that spring pulls it back. Then you have a bolt that goes through that picker stick and through your shoe. Well, when that heel bolt breaks, that loom will turn the shuttle, it'll throw the shuttle, it'll slam off, but you have to throw the shuttle back to the end where the heel bolt's broke. So I had this boy, I'd had him several weeks, and I'd sort of resented him, and uh, he'd come in drinking that morning and smelling his odor and smelling that I was just about drunk. I told him, I did, I let him sit there and wrestle because I'd showed him a million times and he said I wouldn't let him get in there and do it. So went to a loom and I just let him hunt to see what it was.

Interviewer – He was trying to be a fixer?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, and so what I did , he left the shuttle in the right hand box but the left hand heel bolt was broke. He was straining. It was all in a strain because his spring was trying to pull it back. If he'd have throwed it back the spring would have had relief. When he had pulled and tried to get that bolt I just punched him and said, "Al, get up." He said, "I'll get it." I said, "I want to show you something" and I throwed that shuttle to the left. When I did I squatted down there, but the bolt in and I said," put the nut and washer on it." He fastened it and when

he did I said, "Get up and let's go to the office." He wanted to know what for. I says, "You'll know when we get to the office." I went up there and told the man, I says, "Listen, I don't make no more for smelling these niggers and eating this hair than none of the rest of them in here. I get paid for fixing looms. If you want this man learnt, you put him with somebody. He says, "What's the trouble, Brady, you've been getting along fine. " I says, "Yeah, I swaller this odor, But as far as what he's been drinking, I ain't got to smell that. I don't get paid for that, and you can have it." The man went on to be a supervisor, he fixed looms at the Bibb, he went on to be a supervisor, they run him off from the Bibb, and he went up to North Carolina and worked, Virginia and worked. He was a smart cookie but he thought he knowed everything – you couldn't tell him nothing. He said he hoped he'd get to be my boss someday. Some of them told him, says, "Al, if you do get to be his boss someday, he's gonna whoop you. He may lose his job, but he'll whoop you before he leaves here. "Al Yates never gave me another bit of trouble, and he was supervisor, and I was head loom over hauler. When one of my boys done something I told them, "I don't push you; I want you to do a good job. Don't shim this, don't file this. I want it fixed right. That's one thing I don't believe in, is patching. Shortcuts. I never believed in that. A fixer'll come over here and tear this down, a fixer has to put in frictions and flywheels, that's a drive that pulls a loom, well, he come over there and tore it down, a shim'll get misplaced, it'll overheat and catch a loom on fire and burn it down. I never did believe in patching. You going to do anything if you're not on production and getting paid by the hour, do it right and do a good day's work.

I've always been partial. Men let the women meet the dope wagon, If they had a new nigger boy, and he came up here and broke in, they'd just walk up right here and just tap

him on the shoulder and when he looked around just let him slide off. You couldn't. They wasn't no such a thing back then. I went to the sink room. A fellow come to me on my job and told me about a boy in there, and I went in there and talked to him and told him that's what caused trouble. I told him there was 10 steps around there. You've got as nice a sink room as we've got, that's going to cause trouble. Ya'll keep it clean and it'll be just as clean as ours.

Interviewer - They had separate sink rooms? I didn't know that.

Mr. Pope – Yeah, Why, he didn't say a word. I come on up front up there and stopped to take a leak, and when I got through, there he was standing behind me , had a hammer in one hand and a pair of twelve inch pliers. He was knocking the nails down in the floor to sand the floor and put neoprene down on the floor. It'd shine just as pretty. He says, "We's can go where we wants to." And I popped that nigger and it sounded like you'd shot a firecracker. I looked down there and couldn't see nothing but the white of his eyes. He lay there a few minutes, and I seen him. I said, "Get up from there boy, and get out of here or I'll kill you. That hammer don't mean nothing." And he did. And I had to talk to every boss man through the mill. They had me up. But I never did. I went and visited him other day. He said "That's Mr. Brady Pope there. He's a good man, but he'll fight you in a minute."

Interviewer – What were you doing when you retired over there?

Mr. Pope – I was over all the over hauling at the Bibb. I didn't have to work. I mean, you walk up here. Linda, it's like I told you. You go to your boys, it don't matter if they're black or white, now after you work folks for years and years you can get along with anybody. You walk up there and you knew where he was and eyeball him to see if you could catch him shimming

something. You catch one patching, punch him on the shoulder and tell him to come on up to the office. Or just tap him on the shoulder and tell him, "Don't you let me catch you patching." When they had me on special authority over here, he asked me for some little old (unintelligible) on a loom, and he asked me for one of them. I asked them, what does he want with that? And they said, "You know what he wants with it Mr. Pope, he wants to smoke reefer with it." And I said, "What's reefer?" Well, he'd gone to the sink room and come back, you didn't know what in the world had happened, he was so happy and all fired up, standing there joking. You'd have to tell him, "Here! You ain't the master of ceremonies around here. You come here to work, get out there and go to work." He'd be all lit up. I carried him – one department had give him to me, every one they wanted to run off, they'd give them to me – I carried him back over there and told them Ise through with him and they wanted to know why. I said, "Well, he's just messed up." I didn't know what reefer was. They'd call it pot or grass, we called it marijuana. You work with all types.

I had to go before the safety board one time. Paid one up, and our personnel manager told me, "Brady, you can't get by with that. We're going to have to put him back to work and pay him for back time." He had lost my phone number and didn't call me. He'd come in every day fifteen minutes late, He'd stay out a day and tell you so-and-so was dead, this, that and the other. But he told that I paid him up on account that he didn't call me. Well, you don't say nothing when you get before the safety board. You let them do the talking, just like you're being tried. When I did, I seen a folder. Our personnel man hadn't never showed me nothing and he hadn't ever even talked. When they'd give him a pass, I'd write my name and telephone number on the back of the pass. When I seen that clipped on his record I asked the man could I

say one thing. I wanted to write my name and telephone number down, and for them to look on the back of that thing and see what number was on it. And I had my case.

When I went to work at Bibb, you enjoyed working. You'd meet new friends. You got paid by production, so the more you run the more you made. But when my wife retired, now I had to go down there and talk to them. They would run a loom out and it wouldn't get started up until the next day. And these folks would make production on it and they'd get on to her because she didn't make production. Hit would set today on her and be waiting until tomorrow to get set up and she wouldn't make production neither day. I told them I knowed what was being done. They'd run the clock up, and Lillie Mae didn't never run no clock up. You just didn't put up with that. I told them, "Now don't make me come back down here. I can't come in the mill, but I can meet you outside." They laid her off one time for running some bad cloth over here at the Anderson Mill. I woke up, I was working at night, and there her and the maid was. I said, "One of you girls got to get out of here and get you a damn job." And Lillie started crying, "I told him I signed that cloth and Pete wouldn't fix it." I went down there to see him; he wouldn't come to the gate. Mr. John Turner sent for me to come to the other mill. I sat there a while and waited on him but he wouldn't come out to that gate. They transferred Lillie Mae over there. I never did believe in mistreating folks. Treat them right. But it's got to where now you haven't hardly got time to eat; you work until you've just got to go to the sink room. They just keep pushing you more and more.

Interviewer – Now are they paid by the hour or by production now?

Mr. Pope – By production.

Interviewer – Still?

Mr. Pope – Then they add on more, your production gets higher and higher. Back when I went in the weave room 30-32 looms was a job. When I retired 100 and something looms was a job. That's just exactly the way it was. They drive you, they drive you, they drive you.

Interviewer – With things like that happening, Well, I know that the Union never did come in and organize, but was there ever any interest?

Mr. Pope – Well, they tried to. That's why you see that I climbed the ladder so much. They didn't want no Union, and I never did believe in the Union. And they wanted me to listen out, and if you was talking Union, why your job's in jeopardy right then because I'd go and let the squeal out on you. They sent a man and made pictures one time out in front of the Bibb Mill, they was out there handing out papers, and I seen it and went out there. He made our pictures walking up but he never did develop it, because when I got to the top of the steps, I knocked him and his camera out there and went and stomped the camera and got in my car and come home. Of course, they sent word that if there was ever anything done that they'd pay my fine, I didn't have to worry. The big men knew how I thought about it. The honest reason that I never did believe in Unions is that there's so many people who's worked hard and saved things, and then they go on a strike, and they have to live from week to week and lose their homes and lose their cars and everything and I just never believed in folks working for stuff and then paying a man with a white shirt and a tie on not to do nothing. He don't get you nothing.

Interviewer – Now, I'm going to back you up some. When did you come to Columbus?
And where did you come from?

Mr. Pope – I come from a farm down three miles north of Malvern. I was raised mostly as an orphan. My mother died when I was four years old. I was making ten dollars a month and my board, plowing a mule on a farm. I come to Columbus in 1939 and went to work at Bibb. I worked 41 years and 9 months.

Interviewer – Did you meet Lillie Mae up here?

Mr. Pope – No, I met her down the country, but I went back down there and we got married. Like I told, I went down to her home one time and I didn't have no stick with me to keep the women beat off, and she got me.

Interviewer – You may have, and I didn't know it. Underwood's – you all lived right through here when I was growing up. Did you ever live in the village?

Mr. Pope – They wanted to give me a promotion – they used to give these houses out as you put in your application. When me and Lillie Mae got married we lived across the street – we boarded there. We lived there about a month. Bought some furniture on the credit. She had to have an operation, and I didn't have no money. I went to tell the man that I couldn't pay him for a week or two, cause she'd had to go have an operation, she'd had appendicitis. I'd asked for a house in the village. They wanted to give you a better job, they'd come and ask you where you wanted to live in the village, we'll give you a house wherever you want. I told them no, I didn't want one, my furniture had been out in the weather ever since I had asked for a house. I wouldn't have no furniture and I wouldn't have no need for it. I had my furniture in a house and I still wouldn't need it. They was real cheap then, you didn't have no water bill, no light bill, you had about two rooms and a bath was about all you had long time ago. We just never did move

in the village. You know after you work a while and get on the ground, you just get independence and don't want nothing.

Interviewer – So you felt like you were more independent outside the village?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, yeah. They would treat you just like I told you about having me up in the office and telling me I couldn't associate with my help. They wouldn't respect me. But there was plenty of boys and women that had respect for you. They went in there and run a job. They didn't take advantage of you. It was just a policy. They didn't want you to associate with your help. I've always liked friends, to heck with the job.

Interviewer – What about, when you came, did you come up by yourself?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, yeah...

Interviewer – But there was already a lot of family up here?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, Aunt Gertrude and Uncle Ed was up here, but all the rest of them moved after.

Interviewer – Oh really? I thought maybe Uncle Clarence was up here by then.

Mr. Pope – No, No, he stayed on the farm until after the war. Farming was essential back then. He come after the war was over.

Interviewer – Did Gertrude ever work at the mill? At the Bibb?

Mr. Pope – No, Gertrude never did. She worked over in Phenix City at one mill for a little while, but we never did, you didn't make no money back then. You made twenty five cents an

hour, twelve dollars a week. Of course it didn't take much money, but where I went to fixing looms for about 3 dollars an hour, fixers now makes eleven dollars an hour.

Interviewer – Do they really?

Mr. Pope – Heck yeah! In textiles they make good money!

Interviewer – When did ya'll buy this house?

Mr. Pope – About 25 or 30 years ago.

Interviewer – And Gertrude lived over there?

Mr. Pope – No, Aunt Gertrude lived here.

Interviewer – Oh, Okay, well the Antleys lived over there?

Mr. Pope – The Antleys lived right where this room is. There was a house. I just built this room. Virgil lived over there.

Interviewer – Oh, that's it. Okay. I knew all back and forth on both sides of the street. I just couldn't remember who lived in which house, cause I was back and forth between the two of them. So you've had this one for a long time. You've made this a pretty place, too.

Mr. Pope – Well, I tore down two houses and added on.

Interviewer – So you've got three lots?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer – I know that Ernestine and Margene never worked in the mill, but what would you have done if they'd wanted to?

Mr. Pope – Well, I told them, Linda, that that was why I worked hard and sent them to school to get a good education,. Both of them's got good jobs and they can go to a funeral or they can go to a hospital and visit or something and they don't have to go home and change clothes. They can get off to go to a funeral. You know, in a textile mill you don't have somebody to run folks jobs. You got a job; you'll have to catch up. You just got advantages and I wanted them to have something better than I had. Now, my children never did have anything extra, but they didn't suffer. They just had stuff to get by with. But I can tell them that I walked from here to the Medical Center to see their mother. They said, "How come, Daddy?" I said, "Well, you could ride the bus for a nickel, or you could ride a taxi for a dime and I didn't have it. I said, "Shug, when I went out the front door I trotted to the mill." I did. I never walked. I could go right up here and I could go through the old field and I could run to the Medical Center and trot back. I played ball, stayed in good shape. You know, I was just raised to skimp by and I had to get by or they's folks that don't, but I just loved to save.

Interviewer – You mentioned staying in shape and everything. Did you ever feel like, I know that there is so much dust in mills. Did it ever bother you?

Mr. Pope – No, and it never did bother my hearing either. Now we had to wear hearing aids...

Interviewer – You mean plugs?

Mr. Pope – Yeah, ear plugs, to hold down the noise. That’s why Lillie Mae is hard of hearing and has to have hearing aids. She’s more sensitive. I wore ear plugs to muffle the sound. I would walk up to a loom and just about tell you what was wrong with it. It was like listening to a car. Just the sound of it. I knowed what was wrong. I just studied one and worked one so much. As far as folks are thinking, just because you put a piece of nylon in this here and you’ve got the right filling that you’ve got a smooth weave on your yarn. Well you don’t. You can have it set too low or too high and you can have little knots on your cloth. Or you can drop it down too low. You don’t have a smooth surface finish on it. There’s plenty of folks that fixed in the mill for 30 years that couldn’t count the picks in an inch. They know what their job is, but they never did study nothing no further. They’d go in there and run their job and that’s all they ever wanted to do. Learn one job. One thing.

Interviewer – You mentioned something about Daddy. Do you remember when he used to come up here? I know he was in High School. Did they use a lot of young people like that, because I know he had to have been 16 or 17 years old.

Mr. Pope – Linda, they had a habit, if anybody come from Dothan they hired them, because folks was raised to work on the farm, they was raised to work. They wanted to do better, and get further. That’s the type of folks that they tried to hire. A personnel manager interviewed you and everything, of course. Weldon was working at the mill, but the first day I went to the employment office there was so many waiting out there that I didn’t get to sign up. They come out and asked if anybody was there yesterday that didn’t get signed up. I help up my hand; I ain’t never seen the employment office. He come on up there, and they interviewed me

and carried me on into the mill. Took me through. The day Lillie Mae went down there, they signed her up, interviewed her, and put her to work that evening. She didn't even come back home. I went down there to see and the poor old girl hadn't even been in a factory. Her face was just as red and she couldn't hear a word. Didn't have the money to buy her nothing to eat, nothing to drink. But she was working. They wanted to work that day. They worked folks. You know, when I went to work there, you had to take this part and work on it and everything. When I quit, they'd get a new part. That's why they had me on special authority out of Macon. They is so much stuff being throwed away. They would take off aluminum and just throw it away. They got the same price for aluminum, copper, cast iron, steel – one price, everything throwed in one bin. Then I put in to having it separated, and the first load of aluminum the Bibb ever sold they got \$2,000 for. They sent me a plaque. They had never had nothing like that. I didn't see no need – aluminum was high priced, copper was high priced. I got a crew here. We saved lots of money. They couldn't keep parts. You write an order in Columbus for fifty of something and you send it to Macon. They look up in a record where you didn't use but 35 of it last year. Then they cut you down to 30 this year. Then when it come in they had some of these fellows who had never learned to fix, didn't know what it was, and they would just waste stuff. They had to do something to cut down on the expense.

Interviewer – I did you ever think about going back (to the country)

Mr. Pope – I thought about going back and being buried down there. I had mother's grave fixed up. Me and Lillie Mae went back down there to a funeral in the early 40's, and I paid John Ingram out of Ashland to put in our vaults. He was down there doing some work and I

asked him to put cement down for mama, and chip. Well, after Lillie Mae raised her children here she got to feeling like this was home and she wanted to be buried up here, and so we bought some lots here.

Interviewer – this is home, then?

Mr. Pope – Lillie Mae says that if I die first I'm going to be here at Park Hill.

Interviewer – Did people from back home feel like you did the right thing?

Mr. Pope – there was 12 in Lillie Mae's family, 11 of them lived, and every one of them come to Columbus, Georgia They boarded with us until they could get a house. Until they could move up here. Raymond used to board with me. Arthel Lewis out of Panama City. I know boys that come down from there that I used to buddy with. They come up here and got a job and never took their pay. They left. They just couldn't do it. They went back to the farm. Course, when you was raised like I was, when you got out of school you got you a job at a sawmill or something and you hauled slabs or dent lumber or stacked lumber and boxes, you worked right on during the summer, and you laid by. I'd always been raised to work. The then there's some, they'd never been raised that when you was put on a job they had to stay there. Some of them didn't do it. I mean, they just didn't' do it. I've laughed at lots of them. Lillie Mae's got Gladys, Nellie Pearl, Jeanelle, Vida Lee, Eulis, Dewitt's dead, and they all stayed. Then she had Annie Clyde, her and her husband come and they didn't like it, they went back. Then she had another sister and her husband – there's folks that just can't stand the pressure of having a boss man. Then there's some that it don't bother

