

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women in the Mills During WW2

Personal Experience

O.H. 1375

MARGARET KOMLANC

Interviewed

by

Joseph Lambert

on

October 9, 1990

MARGARET KOMLANC

Mrs. Komlanc was born in 1924, to Thomas and Aletha Riley in Youngstown, Ohio. She grew up in nearby Girard, Ohio. She attended St. Rose Elementary before graduating high school from Girard High in 1942. Her first outside employment was at U.S. Steel in McDonald, where she worked as a clerk. U.S. Steel was the first mill in the Mahoning Valley to employ women during World War II. She soon found employment elsewhere where wages were somewhat better, namely Packard Electric in Warren, Ohio. She worked there from January, 1943 to July of the same year. After leaving Packard, she got a job at Republic Steel in Niles. She helped to make bombs for the war. After the war, she left her job due to the returning soldiers who sought their old jobs. In 1947, she married her husband, Joseph. She would give birth to two sons, Thomas in 1947 and Mike in 1952. She returned to work at Packard Electric in Warren soon afterwards. Mrs. Komlanc spent a year there before finding employment at Metal Products in Niles, in 1952. She would spend 26 years there before retiring in 1981.

Today, Mrs. Komlanc can't stand to stay in the house. She spends much time visiting and traveling with some of her old friends that she used to work with at her various jobs.

She attends church at St. Rose in Girard and is a member of the Altar and Rosary Society. She also is a member of the Girard Senior Citizens, with whom she does much of her traveling with.

Other than traveling, she also enjoys playing bingo and cards.

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INTERVIEWEE: MAGARET KOMLANC

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Lambert

SUBJECT: growing up, the Depression, working at
Packard, Republic Steel, Metal Products,
downtown Youngstown, recreation

DATE: October 9, 1990

L: This is an interview with Margaret Komlanc for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on women's experiences in the mills during World War II, by Joseph Lambert, at 948 Beachwood Drive, Girard, Ohio, on October 9, 1990, at 6:35 a.m.

First of all, Mrs. Komlanc, can you tell me where and when you were born?

K: Oh, sure, Youngstown, on July 27, 1924.

L: Did you grow up in Youngstown?

K: No, I grew up in Girard.

L: Girard? What was it like growing up in Girard?

K: Well, it was nice.

L: Was it?

K: Yeah. Life was a lot slower than it is now. Yeah, it was nice to live in Girard.

L: What kind of things did you do for fun?

K: We roller skated, and we rode bikes and things like that. [We] took care of younger kids, too.

L: Can you tell me a little bit about your family?

K: Well, I was next to the oldest and had to take care of kids. I had to wash, iron, cook, and still go to work and that.

L: Did you live near the Mahoning River?

K: No, uh-uh, no. Let's see, we lived on Elm Street, then Prospect Street.

L: Did you attend school?

K: Yeah, St. Rose school for eight years, and then I went to Girard High. I graduated in 1942, and then went to work.

L: Did you work at all during high school?

K: Oh, yeah. They had a thing they called NYA (National Youth Association) and I graded papers, and that was it. We worked like the last period of school. I worked there and I think I did house work. I worked at the A&P store my last year of high school.

L: Where was that at?

K: The A&P store was right down there on the end of Prospect, and we made 35 cents an hour.

L: Wow. What was it like growing up during the Depression?

K: Well, you were happy you had something to eat, that's one thing. But on the whole, though, I think everybody worked together and it was pretty nice living.

L: Did you live with your family at that time?

K: Oh yeah. We all lived together.

L: What were your feelings about President Roosevelt?

K: Fine, fine, yeah. Of course, I'm a registered Democrat, so that makes it that way, you know.

L: Did you feel like he did a lot for the people?

K: Yeah, yeah. I really think so. Democrats do more than Republicans any day.

L: When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, could you recall your emotions?

K: All I can remember is I said, "Oh well, we'll be at war." Let's see if I can remember anything else. I can't remember. I know why . . . I had started work over at . . . no I was still in school then. Then, I went to U.S. Steel in 1942. I worked there, oh what, I'd say eight or nine months in the office. Then, I went into the plants because you made more money there.

L: How did you get a job at U.S. Steel?

K: Oh, I just went over to the plant and put in my application.

L: Was that McDonald?

K: Yeah. And like I said, you didn't make too much money, so I went in the plants.

L: What sort of things did you do at U.S. Steel?

K: I was like the messenger girl or, you know, copy machine, that was it.

L: And how did you get to work?

K: We had buses. We had good service. Yeah, we had good service on the buses. The bus would go all the way to Warren, then go to Youngstown. Late at night, too, because we used to work till 1 o'clock and we would get a bus.

K: And how long did you work there?

L: Over at McDonald I didn't work too long, only maybe eight or nine months. Then I went to Packard, and I worked only eight or nine months there, because I figured I'm going where I'm going to make more money. That's when I went to Republic.

L: Well, what did you do at Packard?

K: I torch soldered 'cause they used to make parts for tanks. If you went from one place to another, you had to have a release; or otherwise, you had to stay at that one job. The rule was you couldn't leave one job to go to another job.

L: Was it hard to get that release?

K: You could say it was getting closer to work, or a lot of times too, if you were going into another one [job]

that was like for the war, you know, then, it wasn't too bad. But, you still had to have that release.

L: And then after Packard, you went to Republic?

K: Yeah.

L: Could you describe a little bit of your job there?

K: Oh, I worked on press. We made the heads for the bomb heads. And once in awhile we had to go to the other side, and we'd make Army oil cans. I worked over there for awhile. It was all in the same plant. And then when the war ended, they got rid of you 'cause you got married. That's the way it worked.

L: How did your family feel about you working in a plant like that?

K: As long as you were working, that was the main thing.

L: Did you get a job for the income?

K: Yeah, because my dad had died when I was 12 years old. So we automatically had to go to work.

L: So you took the bus to Niles?

K: Yeah, into Warren.

L: Is that where the plant was at, in Warren?

K: Packard was . . . yeah that was right downtown Warren, 'cause they didn't have the other plants; they only had the one that was right by GE in downtown Warren.

L: Were there many other women that you worked with?

K: Oh yeah. There was mostly all women in the mill.

L: Did you have some sort of special training for your job?

K: No, no. They put you in, they showed you, and that was it.

L: Was it hard to learn?

K: No, not really.

L: Were you intimidated by. . . .

K: No. They just showed you what you had to do and that was it.

L: Can you tell me, the men that were there, how did they treat you?

K: Oh they were nice, they really were. They could help you. You know, if you had something heavy, they'd help you. Yeah, they were helpful.

L: They took care of you, then?

K: Yeah, they took care of you.

L: Can you describe your work clothes.

K: We wore jeans, we wore blouses, but you had to have silk hose sheer, and you had to wear gloves all the time. We had to wear goggles, too, for protection for our eyes. Most of the time, we used tongs, you know, to put the pieces in the press.

L: Could you describe a little bit more of what you had to do?

K: Well, a lot of times they would have sheets of steel and we'd blank out the head. And then the next operation, we'd form it. We had to use tongs and then put them in the press, and they'd form like a bomb head.

L: Did you have to keep your hair cut or anything?

K: Oh yeah. We had to wear hair nets, yeah. I forgot about that.

L: Was it for safety reasons?

K: Yeah, yeah.

L: Was your job dangerous?

K: Some thought it was, but if you worked for a long time there, I didn't think it was. You just had to be careful, you know, or you wouldn't come out with no fingers.

L: Were there a lot accidents?

K: Oh yeah, there were a lot of them. A lot was carelessness, too. Some would stick their hands and, you know, if you stick your hand in, it's going to whack it off.

L: Did that scare you when that happened?

K: I never looked at the blood. I'd walk away. But, like I say, it's painful when you got cut.

L: Did an accident make you have second thoughts about working there?

K: No. It didn't bother me.

L: Now, what year did you get married?

K: In 1947. See, that's when they told me you got married and you had to get out. See, that was another thing. [Laughter] You worked during the war, and then when the men came home, they got the jobs, and if you got married, you didn't have a job. It's a lot different now.

L: Did that make you angry?

K: No, not really. You had kids and you stayed home. But I mean, what a difference things is now-a-days.

L: Well, was it understood that you were supposed to leave your job when the war ended?

K: Yeah. It was understood that if you got married, you left your job. I mean, you automatically left. That's how they had it worked. But I think that was, more or less, that when men came home from the service, they had jobs, too. That's how it was.

L: How do you feel about that policy? Did you agree with it?

K: Yeah. Like I said, things are different now. They don't have things like that.

L: Did you have to sign some sort of pre-agreement to that, that you would leave?

K: No, no. It was just understood, you know, that if you got married you were out.

L: Were you in a union?

K: Oh, yes indeedy. You need unions. If you don't have. . . .

L: Can you tell me a little bit about the union that they had?

K: If it wasn't for the union, we wouldn't have a lot of things. Oh, I believe in the union.

L: Did you have a lot of union meetings?

K: Yeah. We had a safety meeting every week. Twenty minutes and they were good, Republic was.

L: What kind of things would you discuss?

K: They discussed, you know, where you could give suggestions. If anything was dangerous, then they'd . . . you give a suggestion, and they'd try and correct it. It was good, Republic was.

L: Do you remember if there was anything that bothered you in the mill that you thought was dangerous?

K: No. But then, I went to the other joint that I worked in, Niles.

L: What was that?

K: Metal Products in Niles. I went there in, oh, 1954. I worked there 20 years. There was a full page of complaints, let me tell you. [There was] no union and heavy, heavy, a lot of heavy stuff. You didn't have to do that at Republic. But it's a job, you do it, you know, and you go along with it.

L: Well, what did they make at Metal Products?

K: They made parts for cars and swing sets for kids.

L: And what was your job there?

K: Press operator, same thing. I worked there 20 years. From 1955 to 1975.

L: Did you think that the union should've protected your job?

K: Yes, yes. They were good financially, and they had a strong union. You need it.

L: Did you want to stay on at Republic when the war ended?

K: No, not really because then, we got married. Once you have kids, you have to take care of them. No, that didn't bother me.

L: You lived with your family when you worked at Republic?

K: Yeah.

L: Did you have a lot of responsibilities at home still, when you were working?

K: No, no. Everybody pitched in.

L: What shift did you normally work?

K: When I started Packard, I worked day turn, which had to go to 5:30 or 5:00. So then, I went to afternoon turn and I worked 3:30 to 1:00. We worked nine hours a day, sometimes six days a week. We worked a lot of overtime.

L: Did you?

K: Yeah.

L: Did you like that overtime?

K: I liked the pay. [Laughter]

L: Well, what did you do with this income?

K: Well, being that my dad was dead and I had two . . . Patty and my sister Mary, they were young, so I had to help support them.

L: Was it difficult to . . . because of the rationing during World War II?

K: Oh yeah. I smoked, and we had a hard time getting cigarettes.

L: Oh really?

K: Yeah. But then, they had some places you could get them at all the time. But sugar, you couldn't get sugar. You couldn't get meat. It didn't bother me too much 'cause I don't like meat that well. But, what else? Gasoline, you couldn't get gasoline and shoes. A lot of things you couldn't get. Then even after the war, we got married--you still have to wait around for refrigerators. You'd go maybe six weeks for a refrigerator. If you had kids, you'd have to stand in line for diapers. Oh yeah, it was bad. And now I guess, you stand in line if you don't have the money, you know. One way or the other. . . .

L: But, were you used to that after a while?

K: Oh yeah. You just got used to it and went along with the thing.

L: Did you follow the progress of the war?

K: No, not real close, no. I didn't follow it too close.

L: Can you tell me a little bit about, for instance, lunch breaks?

K: We only had 10 minute breaks.

L: Oh really?

K: Yeah. And you had to move if you had to go way down there, and you had to be running in and out. You had to really move to go way down to the lunch room and get your [lunch]. And you had 20 minutes sometimes for lunch, but you only had a 10 minute break any time else. You wouldn't eat. That's all the time you got.

L: Were you used to that after awhile?

K: Oh yeah. You get used to it.

L: I bet you were tired at the end of the day.

K: Yeah.

L: What was it like working there during the winter time?

K: It was cold.

L: Was it?

K: Yeah, really cold. Although, sometimes we would work like heck during the day, and at night we still felt like going out dancing.

L: Really?

K: Yeah. Sometimes it would come easy, you know. After you worked, you'd figure out different things, short cuts that worked better.

L: Did you go dancing a lot?

K: Oh yeah, I like to dance.

L: Where did you go dancing?

K: They used to have The Royal Garden and they had the band--what was the name of that other place? The Bluecrystal, they had down there. And you'd go down to the Elms, yeah you'd go down the Elms. They had the Elm and Idora Park. Yeah, they had a lot of places. Yankee Lake, you could go dancing there.

L: What do you remember about Idora Park?

K: They used to bring in some nice name bands.

L: Did you go to the amusement part of Idora Park? Did you go on the rides and everything?

K: No. Not so much for going to Idora . . . only when we'd go for dancing or if a name band would be there.

We always found a way, ride the bus and go out and see the band.

L: What was it like in the summertime on the job? Was it extremely hot?

K: Oh yeah. And you had no fans in the plants like they do now. But I was younger, and it didn't matter. Now, we've got to have the air conditioning. It makes a difference.

L: Was it noisy at your job?

K: Yeah, you had to wear ear plugs. Because that's why now a lot of times my ears ring from the noise, 'cause it made an awful lot of noise in the plant.

L: Did you get used to the noise?

K: Yeah, because you couldn't even hear each other and you'd have to make motions, you know. You couldn't hear and if you wanted to talk to the one next door, you just move your hands and make motions.

L: It was that loud, huh?

K: Oh, yeah. You couldn't hardly talk.

L: And what was causing all the noise?

K: As the presses hit the heavy steel, it made a lot of noise.

L: Was it dirty?

K: Oh yeah, real dirty. Soot would fill your nose. You'd have to get the dirt out.

L: What was the dirt from, was it grease?

K: Yeah from the grease, and the steel would be dirty. Even though you'd use gloves, your finger nails would get real dirty. And your clothes, if you wore them to work, you never wore them no place else.

L: What about your hands, did your hands get callus?

K: When I used tongs, my hands would get sore, 'cause you had to hold them real tight to put pieces into the press. But you got used to that, too.

L: Were you on your feet all day?

K: No. Sometimes, like, you took turns. You'd have a day of sitting down or you did a couple hours of sitting

then standing, but most of the time it was standing. It was all cement in there.

L: Did you, for instance, have to buy your own safety shoes, or did they provide those for you?

K: No. We had to buy them; you bought your own. But on the gloves, if you wore a pair out in a day, they would replace them. If you got two days out of them, you were lucky. You bought your own gloves.

L: Did you try to wear them out in a day?

K: Sometimes they would wear out from the steel, depending on what jobs you had.

L: Where would you have to buy these safety clothes at?

K: You'd buy your shoes and your gloves right there at the plant; they had them there. If you didn't like that, you could go to other stores. I forget where they had the safety shoes, but some of the shoe stores had the safety shoes and the gloves, too. If you really wanted, you could get them at grocery stores, I think. [They] used to have the gloves and that. We'd go where they were the cheapest.

L: I was going to say, were they more expensive at the mill?

K: No. If they had them on hand . . . sometimes, you know, they didn't have them on hand. But they were cheaper at the plant, all that stuff was cheaper.

L: Did they have hard hats?

K: No. We had hard hats after I got hit at the last place I worked. That's when they got hard hats.

L: You were involved in an accident?

K: Yeah. I got hit in the head.

L: Where at?

K: The last place I worked.

L: Metal Products?

K: Yeah.

L: Can you tell me about that?

K: Yeah, I got hit in the head with a safety device, right on top. After I got hit, then they enforced hard hats.

L: What exactly hit you in the head?

K: A big piece of metal, about that thick.

L: Did it fall?

K: Yeah. It hit me right on top of my head.

L: Did it knock you out cold?

K: No. I just had a concussion and that. But the second time it was a safety device for the three times I got hit. I got hit three times. The second time I got hit, they had to stitch my head and that, and I went right back to work, though. The third time, I stayed home. That was it.

L: Did you have helmets on?

K: After I got hurt, they made them wear helmets. They didn't wear them.

L: Why didn't . . . I'm surprised that you didn't want to quit after the first time.

K: Hey, you needed the money, sometimes. But I didn't really, you know, have too much damage the first two times. The last time, you know, it really was different. I have a lot of problems.

L: And you retired after that?

K: Yeah.

L: Were there many restrictions on women in the plants?

K: No, I can't remember any. We didn't have too many restrictions.

L: Did they have locker rooms for you?

K: Not right away. They had them afterwards; they built them. You had to go way down through the tunnel to get to the room. You'd put your gloves and your tongs [in the locker]. And you'd have maybe two or three that go into one locker like that. Otherwise, someone would have one and some would have to go two and three to a locker.

L: Were there any other tools that you worked with?

K: No. All we used were tongs and gloves.

L: Were they heavy, the tongs?

K: No. Some of them were stiff, but some of them were pretty light. The lighter, the better. They'd make them out of aluminum. I think some of them were made out of steel, which was hard on our hands. In fact, most of them were made out of the aluminum.

L: Where did you pick the bus up in Girard to go to work?

K: We lived down on Market Street then. We'd pick it up on State Street and we'd go up to Robbins Avenue, and you'd walk from Robbins Avenue down to Walnut Street.

L: Was that a far walk?

K: About three or four blocks. But see, there'd be a lot of people going, so it wasn't too bad.

L: What time did you have to get up in the morning to go to work?

K: When I worked day turn, I had to get up at 5 o'clock. I had to get the bus at six.

L: Did you get used to that?

K: For eight months, and then I went to afternoon turn.

L: Did you have the option to change shifts?

K: Yeah, because you worked steady one turn, they never switched turns. They kept the turns steady.

L: Did you normally work five days a week or six days a week?

K: During the war, we worked six. We worked long hours. Sometimes we worked on Sunday, too. If they needed something right away, you worked Sunday, too. We'd work around 13 days.

L: Thirteen days in a row?

K: Yeah, sometimes.

L: Were there times when you worked more than 13 days in a row?

K: No.

L: Was there a limit there?

K: No. All they had was if you worked over 40, you got time and a half, I think it was. But as the time went on, we got the union, and they got things different. I

still think, on the whole, it wasn't too bad working then compared to some of the stuff now. It wasn't too bad.

L: Would you get time and a half for working on Saturdays?

K: Yeah. From Republic, not the other places. For awhile, and then they gave you time and a half. But Republic always gave you time and a half. Yeah, they were good.

L: Did you look forward to working on Saturdays?

K: No, not really. Five was enough, you know, really.

L: What's the most hours you ever worked in one day?

K: Ten. That's about the most.

L: Where was that at?

K: That was at the last place I worked. At Republic, you worked nine and that was automatic; you worked nine hours.

L: Why was there a limit there? Why didn't you work more than nine hours at Republic?

K: Well, they had turns, and they had it set up that one turn would be open to another turn but it'd only be an hour, so that's why they switched and had it work like that. So they had the two turns together for one hour. And that's how they arranged it.

L: Did they have a midnight shift at Republic?

K: On some things, yeah.

L: Did you ever have to work midnight shift?

K: No.

L: What was your mom like when you would come home at 1:30 in the morning? Was she waiting for you sometimes?

K: No. She was sleeping.

L: Really?

K: Yeah, she'd be sleeping.

L: Did she worry about you being out so late?

K: Oh, she always has.

L: Did you have the chance to save money.

K: Not very much, let me tell you. Not when you had younger brothers and sisters you had to help support. You really didn't get a chance to save too much.

L: So you weren't able to buy yourself something special ever?

K: Oh, if you wanted to you could put things in lay away, but you still had to figure ways how to do it, because you had to help with the bills.

L: Did you ever go to downtown Youngstown?

K: Yeah, it was nice.

L: Was it? Can you describe it?

K: Oh yeah, you could ride the bus and go down and stay down there all day. Yeah. What a difference. You never had to lock the door. You'd get on the bus, spend the whole day. From one end of Youngstown to the other, you had all those stores. You'd go in and the stuff was nice.

L: Do you remember some of those stores?

K: McKelvey's. They had Strouss' down there. They had Klein's. They had a furniture company, Reickart's. They had Lewinson's down there. A shoe store, there was a lot of shoe stores. They had Isley's, a lot of different stores.

L: Was there a lot of people downtown?

K: Oh yeah. Saturday was always crowded. They even had food stores and meat markets down there. It was nice.

L: Did you feel safe down there?

K: Yep, yep. You could walk and never worry. You could get on a bus late at night and never worry like you do now. Now, you worry in the day time. And I think the people helped each other more. They really did. Now-a-days it's, "I look out for me," you know, and that's how things work.

L: That doesn't seem possible. Things are so different today.

K: Yes, yes. Even the people seemed different. A lot of them (people today) don't help each other, you know. A lot of them--if you go to the church, they try to help

them. It's not neighborly like before. Everybody's busy; they don't have time.

L: Getting back to the Depression. Did the neighbors pull together a lot?

K: Yeah. That's how I mean that a lot of people were different. They don't have that now. Even the churches, it's still different, altogether different. They lock the churches today.

L: Were you driving at all at this time?

K: No, I never learned how to drive. But I was always fortunate, I had friends who drove, and I always had a ride to work.

L: Did you always take the bus to downtown Youngstown?

K: Not all the time. Sometimes we rode out there with someone, you know. Some of the women got cars and that, and we rode down there. It was nice taking the bus, though. They were dependable, too. Every half hour you could get a bus.

L: Was it crowded on the buses?

K: Oh yeah.

L: What would you do on New Year's Eve during the war?

K: Well, we usually went and found someplace to dance, and bring in the new year or have a date and go out with them. But then later on, we played cards to bring in the new year.

L: What did you . . . specifically what do you remember doing on New Year's Eve?

K: I can't really remember.

L: Dance halls maybe?

K: Yeah, I went to them.

L: Did you date?

K: Oh yeah.

L: Was your mother strict about you dating?

K: No. If you wanted to go out, you went out. We were 18, though. I mean, you were 18 and you were working and were considered an adult.

L: Did you do a lot of things with your friends at work afterwards?

K: Yeah. We'd go dancing or we'd go shopping. The same friends you had then, you stayed friends with. A lot of them I worked with and stayed friends with for 40 years, and I'm still friends with. We go for breakfast, we still go for breakfast, and we go shopping, go on trips, even after 40 years. That's a long time.

L: Back then, if you left work, would you go shopping in Youngstown, or was there someplace in Niles or Warren that you went to?

K: Niles used to have a downtown. Girard used to be pretty good, too. Warren, we used to go to Warren, too, especially when we worked for Packard. We'd stop up in Warren there. It was nice, too. It sure has changed, not for the best, either. [Laughter] Maybe, I don't know, who's to say?

L: Was Warren crowded downtown?

K: Oh yeah. You had a lot of plants in Warren. Even Girard had plants. They had the leatherworks. So they had quite a few plants, too. Youngstown had plants. We used to make parts for a lot of the plants. All over, there was a lot of plants. You could practically choose the job you wanted. You could always find a job.

L: Okay, if that's the case, why did you go to Republic in Niles?

K: Because some of my friends went there. We always stayed together. The same group usually worked together and we've stayed friends all these years.

L: Were these friends from high school or growing up?

K: From growing up, grade school. So that's a long time.

L: So they were all from Girard, most of them?

K: Most of them, let's see, yeah Girard, Liberty, and a couple from Niles.

L: What do you remember about the Ohio Leatherworks?

K: I guess they worked pretty good. They had a lot of people working down there. They even had a lot of women working there, but I didn't want to go there.

L: Why is that?

K: I don't think I would have wanted to work there. They worked hard down there. A lot of times they'd get on the bus with us, and they'd say that's one place you didn't want to work.

L: Did it smell?

K: Yeah. So did it down at Brier Hill and when you went past those open hearth and that, too.

L: What do you remember about the open hearths at Brier Hill?

K: You'd look up in the sky and see the flames and the smoke. You don't see that anymore.

L: Were those kinds of things intimidating for you?

K: No. A lot of people worked in the mills, but I didn't want to go there. I'll take the fabricating places. It was a lot easier.

L: Safer?

K: Yeah, really.

L: Was there a lot of pollution in the skies then?

K: Oh yeah. You'd hit down there from right around the bend. You know where Kay Lane is? Well, Sheet & Tube used to be there. From then on, all you'd be able to see is that smoke, even past Brier Hill and down into downtown Youngstown.

L: How did you feel about seeing that pollution up there? Did it bother you one way or another?

K: Never even thought about it. But now, if I go for a walk, even to smell a car bothers me.

L: So you notice it more when it's gone.

L: Yep. That's one thing that's in the plants, too. We used to have a lot of that odor. They used to have those loaders to move parts from one place to another, and they'd have that. You'd see the smoke coming out them when they brought them around the plant. There'd be blue smoke if you looked up in the sky, but you don't see that now.

L: Did you have to wear any sort of masks for protection?

K: No. We never wore anything like that.

L: Did it bother you, though, the fumes and things like that?

K: Oh yeah. You'd have a headache a lot of times. But that was something else you got used to.

L: When the war ended, was there celebrations all over?

K: Oh, I worked afternoon turn and you couldn't even get a bus home. Everything just stopped. Everybody was celebrating, I don't even remember how we got to Girard. Somebody took us home from Niles. I ended up in Girard, but I don't even remember how I got home. Everybody was celebrating. They shut everything down.

L: What was downtown Girard like when the war ended?

K: Everybody was out in the streets. They had streamers, everything. It was a happy day.

L: Did you have any relatives that were in the war?

K: Yeah. I had brothers-in-law who were in the war--and cousins.

L: Did they all come home safely?

K: Yeah. None of them were killed.

L: Do you remember how you celebrated the war being over?

K: I went out and had a drink. [It was a] happy day. [Laughter]

L: What didn't you like about your jobs?

K: I didn't really mind them. You took turns. If you got stuck on the same hard job two days in a row, they'd rotate you. But sometimes they would stick you on it day in and day out. I didn't like that. I liked getting rotated every day.

L: Did you look forward to going to work?

K: Yeah.

L: Was there ever a time between jobs that you weren't working?

K: I always worked; I always found a job. I always felt if you were working, you were going to gain something, you had something to look forward to.

L: What year did you retire?

K: 1975 on disability. Let's see, we had to get out when the war . . . the war ended in 1945. That's when I got out the first time. That's when I got married, and then I stayed home until 1952 and went back to work.

L: Were you bored between jobs?

K: No, I had kids. You didn't get bored. [I] didn't have time.

L: How many kids?

K: Two.

L: What are their names?

K: Tom and Mike.

L: Who watched the kids when you went back to work?

K: Well, he worked day turn and I worked afternoon turn, so that worked fine.

L: You probably didn't get to see too much of each other, then.

K: Well, he was a painter. They made their own hours.

L: So nobody had to watch the kids for you?

K: I had my nieces who lived down the street. He worked until 4:00 or 4:30, and I went to work afternoon turn at like 2:30. My nieces would come up and stay with them, and my sister lived down the street. She would stay. I was fortunate there to have somebody in the family to take care of the kids.

L: Did they have day care systems set up for you if you needed it?

K: No. That's another thing people forget about, you had to take care of your kid. Not anymore.

L: Did you think it was hard to juggle a job and maintaining the house?

K: No. I know a lot of things that still haven't got done. Paper work, I keep pushing back. But I mean, you had a schedule. You wash certain days, iron certain days. You had to have a schedule when you do work.

L: Were you tired when you had to go to work and then come home and take care of the kids?

K: No. It didn't bother me.

L: What did you feel like on the day you retired?

K: Well, all my friends were still working, I was only 51 when I retired. They kept on working, and we still made plans. We'd go out and things like that. We always kept up the friendship.

L: And today, you still have contact with them?

K: We go out for breakfast and go on trips.

L: What kind of trips do you go on?

K: We go on senior citizen trips, and we go in the car or if we want to go somewhere, we call one of these agencies. When somebody says, "Do you want to go?" we go.

L: What's the last place you've been to?

K: Ft. Erie, Canada. I don't like going to Canada, everything's too high. Canada is high.

L: Do you have fond memories of working in the mills?

K: Yeah. Like the last place. We had a party. You could cook potatoes 'cause you had these ovens. We baked potatoes and we'd have corn roast. If we hurried up and got done what we needed to do, then we could cook. We'd have barbecues. But you had to work like heck first to get done what you had to do. But that was afternoon turn; that wasn't day turn. You worked it different when you worked afternoon turn.

L: Why is that?

K: Not as much supervision.

L: Were the supervisors real strict with you?

K: Not the afternoon turn ones. Like that last place I worked, they'd say "Well, when is it (the food) going to be done?" so they could try it, whatever we cooked.

L: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about your experience of working? Would you do it all over again?

K: Yeah. I enjoyed working.

L: Do you miss it today?

K: No, but I still go. I need the people. People are real important. If I had to stay in the house, I don't think I'd like that.

L: So you miss your friends more than anything about working?

K: No, I see them. They come every other day, in and out in and out. [Laughter] It's like Grand Central Station here. Between the grandchildren and the kids, there's people in and out of here all the time.

L: How many sisters did you have? Any brothers?

K: My mother had children, one set of twins. I had 16. There's 10 of us living yet. That's one thing, you come from a big family, you stick together.

L: Did any of your brothers or sister work in a mill?

K: Not the oldest sister. Jack and Emmitt worked in the mill, that's about it. Oh, Mary [did]. And Patty works at Packard. But the other ones, my other sisters didn't work. They had kids and their husbands went in the service, so they stayed home.

L: How many grandchildren do you have?

K: Six. That's what I do, too, I babysit.

L: They keep you busy?

K: Oh yeah, that's why grandma goes out. [Laughter] I don't want a steady diet of babysitting. Twice a week's enough.

L: Did any of the other women that you worked with during the war have children?

K: Oh yeah.

L: Did they have any problems finding a babysitter?

K: No. They either had the mother-in-law, or their mother took care of the kid. They were lucky. We all were when you come down to it, because you had somebody that would take care of the kids, and you didn't have to worry like you do now. Some of the babysitters now, I don't know. In a way, when you went off to work, you didn't have that much worry. And if you don't worry, then your mind's on your job and you don't get hurt.

L: But from when you can remember, there was no day care system set up for the women and their children?

K: No.

L: Did they ever somehow demand that at all?

K: No. That was up to you; you found a way to work, and you found somebody to take care of your kids.

L: There's nothing else you'd like to talk about?

K: No.

L: Okay. I thank you very much.

K: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW