

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Industries in Youngstown

Deck's Metal Finishing Company

O. H. 461

WILLIAM DONAHUE

Interviewed

by

Janice Cafaro

on

July 8, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM DONAHUE

INTERVIEWER: Janice Cafaro

SUBJECT: Metal finishing--climate, types of jobs.  
Steel industry, local and overseas trade

DATE: July 8, 1986

C: This is an interview with William Donahue for the Ohio Historical Society and Youngstown State University's Industrial History Project by Janice Cafaro, at 1746 Bentley Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on July 8, 1986, at 10:00 a.m.

Okay, Mr. Donahue, would you tell me a little bit about your background, where you were raised, your parents, your family, and where you went to school?

D: I was born and raised on the north side of Youngstown. For about the last 30 years, I have been a resident of Hubbard Township.

C: Did you go to Youngstown schools?

D: Yes, I started out at old St. Columba's and then went from there to St. Edward's and to Rayen.

C: Okay, what did you do before you became president of Deck's?

D: I worked here for ten years as shop foreman and then when Mr. Deck died, I bought the business.

C: So you have been here throughout the 1970's?

D: Yes, the company has.

C: You are an industrial metal finisher. Would you please explain what your work entails?

D: What I do is pretreat, paint, and package and ship steel

aluminum and plastics to the customers for such fabricating companies as Commerical Shearing and Hynes Steel that fabricate steel and aluminum and plastics.

- C: How would you describe your company in economic climate of the early 1970's?
- D: We are one of the few companies in this area right now. There were, at one time, other companies that did the same type of finishing, but we are the only job shop that does this type of industrial finishing. We don't do galvanizing or chrome plating. We are strictly painters. The difference between now and then is that business, more or less, stays just about the same.
- C: Because there were only few companies in the area and now you are the only one.
- D: Yes.
- C: So you have a market for this product?
- D: Yes.
- C: Do you deal primarily with fabricating mills?
- D: Well, I would say Hynes Steel and Commerical Shearing equally . . . I do business for people out of the state and country. I just said those two companies because they are local. E. G. Smith, Fimble Door, and quite a few others scattered all over the country we service.
- C: Has your market expanded over the years, declined, or stayed the same?
- D: It has expanded.
- C: Okay. How much steel do you finish each year?
- D: We go by the lineal or square foot and as a general rule, we don't keep track by the ton, so that is kind of hard to say. I never really sat down and figured out just how many lineal or square feet we do in a year.
- C: Have you ever experienced any production problems during the 1970's resulting from steel shortages or equipment problems or . . .
- D: Oh, yes. Yes, there was the normal time which the steel shortage occurred when they switched over from local steel to the foreign steel. This was in the late 1970's during the time that the steel mills shut down, especially Republic Steel, and Youngstown Sheet & Tube.

C: Why was Republic Steel significant?

D: Well, we seemed to have used a lot of steel from Republic Steel; then they switched over to the Warren plant and the quality of steel just didn't seem to match up to the quality and price with foreign steel and availability.

C: Prices have gone up?

D: The prices went up and the quality went down.

C: Has the switchover to foreign steel been beneficial for your business?

D: Yes. For awhile it was difficult because everybody was against using, and are still against using, foreign steel. But then the American-made steel, specificity and availability, isn't as good as the foreign-made steel and the price is more for American steel.

C: Would you say that was from obsolete facilities, or why would you say the availability has gone down?

D: Well, when steel companies went into continuous cast furnaces the availability went down, and it didn't seem to have the flexibility that the steel had. To make special steel in smaller quantities it just seemed like the steel was fracturing and the quality of the steel wasn't as good as the foreign steel that we were buying right out of Ashtabula.

C: What company?

D: I don't know. It was a steel broker.

C: Are you still using a lot of foreign steel?

D: Yes.

C: Would you say then maybe it was the bulk of your business?

D: Yes, yes. About 90% of my business is with steel--part foreign, most domestic--and the other 10% is with aluminum.

C: Do you service anything of Easco Aluminum?

D: Yes, I at one time did finishing work for Superior Industry, a division of Easco, until they put in their own finishing systems.

C: How are you affected by EPA regulations?

D: I'm very much affected by it, and regulated as to what I can do and what I can't do; and I see in the near future that

my type of service will be changed drastically although it is needed and has to be here. The air pollution will eventually mean a complete new process.

C: What type of requirements are you obligated to meet? The air pollution control is one you have just mentioned.

D: Yes, air pollution control is one of the biggest things. I have to bake the material in ovens.

C: Do you have filters on them?

D: Yes, and there are some water filters and scrubbers on all of the exhaust fans that I use in the building, but it is the solvents that are in paint, whether it is a water-based, or latex paint, or oil-based paint that are causing the problem.

C: So there is no way to get around that?

D: There is now way of getting around it; no matter how much you filter it there is still a small amount that escapes into the atmosphere.

C: You mentioned that you feel that the EPA's regulations might result in the death of your industry. Is this because it is forcing production costs up and making it unprofitable?

D: Well, right now the one way to effectively comply is to change to a powdered coating system, which would mean anywhere to a three million dollars investment. The small business today doesn't warrant that type of investment.

C: Do you feel that as time goes on the EPA will become more stringent in their regulations?

D: Oh, definitely. But as much as I would like to bitch about EPA, I realize they are doing a job and the job they are doing is a very necessary one. I can see the damage that it is doing to the atmosphere and ground pollution. By the same token, it is going to put me out of business and I know the only solution to it is just to discontinue making solvent altogether.

C: Or the government could give you money to redo your equipment.

D: Can you see a government giving me these dollars to convert this place so that I might add twenty or forty additional jobs. The government can't afford all these giveaways.

C: Or even a break on a loan or something; there should be incentives.

D: Yes, I agree with you, but no matter whether you get a loan

you have to pay it back.

C: Yes. How has your business modernized over the years?

D: Well, I've put in Ransburg automatic mono bell spray equipment. I have the automatic spray, the electrostatic spray, hand units. We upgraded our conveyor system, and naturally our pretreatment is biodegradable, the chemicals. The pretreatment is a problem. Also the paint, that is the big problem right now.

C: How would you describe a typical day as your position as president of Deck's?

D: Well, I don't know exactly what you want to know.

C: Some of the things that you do, your responsibilities that face you each day.

D: Both of my sons work for me and my secretary is my daughter, so it is a family oriented business. There are production problems. There are decisions to be made that my sons are learning. I have to advise them. There is the business of taking care of the office and making social and sales contracts. I don't have a sales force on the road. Contacts are made by personal connection.

C: So you are in absolutely every aspect of the business?

D: Yes, except the actual labor.

C: That sounds interesting. You mentioned about the salesmen? How do you go about making the sales?

D: Normally I am contacted. I have a captive market. I receive phone calls since I am in the directory as an industrial finisher. With no salesmen I can keep the plant busy at its present size. I don't like to advertise because there are too many people who call up and want me to finish their refrigerator or bathtub or something small like porch furniture.

C: Yes.

D: This is one way that advertising on the local level and so forth is bad for me: I spend all day on the telephone telling them that I don't do that business. Otherwise, I am listed in all the industrial magazines, industrial phone books, and registered as a minority small business.

C: What are advantages of having your family work for you?

D: First of all, it is their personal commitment. They will own it all someday. I have a medical condition so I want

to leave this business to them. I am uninsurable so I don't have the insurance to leave my wife and my family. I have the business and I am slowly turning it over to them.

C: I see. Has your business fluctuated over the years? Has it been steady or with any peaks or lows?

D: Well, 1983 was about the biggest year here. We had over a million dollars in sales that year. It has picked up from when I bought the business in 1975 at 65 thousand dollars a year to right now it is running anywhere from 350 thousand dollars a year to 500 thousand dollars a year.

C: So you have grown?

D: Yes.

C: What would you attribute that to?

D: Person contacts, service and a guarantee, people in and around steel, personal contacts I have made in my life. Up until recently, in that last two years, we had done little for Commercial Shearing; now we do most of their finishing work. It is all personal service contacts.

C: You have to sell yourself.

D: Yes, and the company naturally. We give better service, less expensive than what they can do it. That is what makes this company what it is. We personally guarantee everything we do.

C: Why are you able to do this less expensively?

D: We have the latest in equipment as far as pretreatment is concerned. We have the knowledge to do it once and do it right. We have the equipment that is needed. If a person needs three mills of paint on a part, or the architect calls for three mills of paint on the material, we can do that quicker and less expensive. The fabricating company doesn't have the equipment to do this type of finishing.

C: How did you get interested in this?

D: I was an industrial paint salesman. I was with Sherwin Williams and with Cavanaugh Company. During the shake-up, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, we were all let go and that was when Mr. Deck knew that I had had engineering and that I was into paints and he brought me up here.

C: Oh, you had made contact with him through your job?

D: Well, he knew of me. The man that was working here as his superintendent and I were friends, and he was leaving and

so I was brought in as his replacement.

C: What did your engineering experience entail?

D: I am a qualified diesel engineering technician and I have trained in schools as a paint finishing engineering technician.

C: These two things are important to your business?

D: Oh, yes. The diesel engineering has basically nothing to do with it, but it gives me a mechanical background as far as the motors, pumps, circulators, and some electricity that is necessary to be a jack-of-all-trades around here.

C: What is paint engineering?

D: When I say paint engineering, I qualified through the grandfather clause with the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, after testing. I became a qualified AFP technician.

C: What does that mean?

D: Associate of finishing products technology. It has been very helpful since I'm listed in all of the same journals; that is in engineering.

C: That has to do with mixing paint and knowing the chemical consistencies of them?

D: Yes.

C: What determines whether or not you are going to have a successful year?

D: Satisfied customers. There are a lot of contributing factors. Whether I can maintain the operation without any major catastrophies. I mean major breakdowns. I have four conveyor lines that are very expensive to maintain. They are made to withstand a 600 to 1000 degree temperature range, so they get very hot. They are made of a specialized steel.

C: What is the longevity on them?

D: They say about eleven years, but some of them have been here twenty-five years. I credit that to proper maintenance and really taking care of the equipment.

C: Does anything else determine a successful year?

D: The economy. If the economy is down then your steel fabricating companies are looking to farm out their small job lots, but when the economy is up and the money is



available then they can afford the added cost.

C: What do you mean by farm out?

D: To get a job shop such as mine to do the small orders. It is less expensive for them, but it is a little more of a hassle because I don't have trucks and they have to arrange to have it shipped in here and then they have to pay the freight to have it taken out.

C: How have you been able to increase your business with the state of the local steel industry? Is it just because you are one of a few who does this?

D: No, it is because I can do a better job with less headaches for managements than they can do themselves, and I do it less expensive than what it will cost them.

The bottom line is, as a customer, if you are getting a piece of steel or aluminum, you want a finished product, not something that you have to examine to see if it has been finished properly. If the paint is going to fall off, and if you would have the parts sitting there and you assemble them and after you have it all together the paint starts to fall off or the finish starts to fade or is off color, then you have a problem. I would guarantee that these problems wouldn't occur. Then it is not your problem, it is mine.

C: Right. You have been able to steadily increase your business because of the quality of your work.

D: It is the name that I have built up in the last twenty years. We have a name of not only doing good work, but standing behind the work that we do. We don't give them the hassle if there is something wrong and the customer is not satisfied. We take care of and worry about the problem of whose fault it is after the problem has been rectified.

C: How would you describe your business now as opposed to when you started and Mr. Deck was president?

D: He was content with basically one or two steel companies. He didn't want to make any expansion. He didn't look to expand. That was one of the reasons. He was satisfied with the way it was. He wasn't looking for any new business or he didn't want any more business than what he was doing.

C: Can you think of how he could have expanded? He had been established since the 1940's. Do you know why he was just happy to stay small?

D: He did not want to make the investment. He just wanted it the way it was. He was a very brilliant person. He personally

engineered these finishing systems that we have here. There is nobody in the country that had systems quite like ours. Our big ovens are so designed and they were written up in the national magazine. They were one of the first companies to use the idea of recirculating the heat instead of putting the heat out the chimney in the bake oven. We circulate the heat and reuse it. He designed the whole system here. Not only that, but bake ovens and heating ovens could be used for recirculation. This was in the late 1930's and early 1940's. This heat was just expanded out the exhaust; now they recirculate that and use it. Now our exhaust from the ovens is cool enough that you can hold your hand over it.

Of course, since then they have expanded on it and made a lot of changes, but basically the idea came from this one big oven I have out here.

C: Are you using this same oven?

D: Yes, I am using the same oven.

C: Was Mr. Deck an engineer?

D: No, not really. He started out painting cars. When the crunch came on before the Second World War, a steel company asked him to paint some parts they had for the government. He started in the garage on the west side. He started doing those parts and then grew and they grew into the Industrial Finishing Company. After starting on the west side, he moved into the Hazelton area and then expanded to here. He leased this building for years, and I continued the lease from the Ewing estate. This building was originally Lake Shore Motor Freight Terminal. They moved out in the early 1950's.

C: Getting back to the time you assumed the presidency, I would like to know about the type of people you employ.

D: I have a different type of employee. I use mostly the minorities. I use the ones from the casual labor office.

C: At the Ohio . . .

D: Out of the Ohio State Employment Office, casual labor department. There are skilled jobs that I have in the plant. We train the unskilled.

C: And that is your policy?

D: Yes. Then I work with the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries and some handicapped people in here, not the sighted handicapped.

- C: How do you work with Salvation Army and the others?  
Do you call them up?
- D: They generally call me up and tell me that they have somebody and they send people down and I give them an interview.
- C: How many employees do you have right now?
- D: Right now there are about fourteen employees. They come from the casual labor office or from Goodwill Industries.
- C: Your employees are basically young?
- D: All ages. As a general rule, I try to get family men; somebody who has had hard trouble. The Ohio Pardon and Parole Board come over every once in awhile and tell me they have so and so and I try to use them. I am very active in St. Vincent DePaul and the Catholic Charities. I am on the board for Trumbull County Catholic Charities, so I bring people in that I know are having a rough time.
- C: Do you think family orientations makes better workers, more steady workers?
- D: Yes. I'm more concerned with the children. I know good and well that it is a bad environment for them to be living on welfare and seeing their mother or father laying around the house all day long. I firmly believe in giving them something to do.
- C: That is beautiful. What do you do with Catholic Charities?
- D: I'm on the board. I am vice-president of Catholic Charities in Trumbull County. Then too, I must say that I am involved with the optimist club in Hubbard; I am president.
- C: What are they?
- D: Our motto is: A friend of youth. We have a golf tournament, a punt, pass and kick tournament, soccer tournaments, bowling, boy of the year contests. We give Christmas gifts to needy children. We have a local boy who won the district and the state tournament in golf and is now going to Southern California to the national tournament.
- I have finished work on the gym equipment down at the YMCA. I have also finished some things up at the Jewish Center for the Boy Scouts. I am a member of the downtown Kiwanis. They are doing service for the elderly and the youth. They get Camp Fitch ready every year, and they do youth projects. They handle the traffic school at the Juvenile Justice Center on Andrews Avenue.
- C: That's great.

- D: That is part of the social end of this business.
- C: You're making contacts with the businesses.
- D: I'm meeting people and getting to know them and for them to know us.
- C: Would you say there are special problems working with minorities? They're coming from a hard background into a work situation.
- D: Basically, when a man comes up to me and asks me for a job or I need something, I tell him that I don't care what you did yesterday, you come in here for a day's work and I'll give you a day's pay. You have to know that I allow no alcohol or drugs of any type here. If I ever suspect that you are a user, you are first warned, and then you are out and you don't come back. They all know that. Before they start it is a standing rule that I enforce. Anyone who I catch using anything is out, no excuses or alibies. I just say that if you can't go for eight hours without using, I don't want you.

I am also involved with Alcoholics Anonymous. I know that they themselves cannot be helped unless they want to be. I know that they are putting other people in jeopardy and that is another reason why I don't want them here. They are jeopardizing other people along with themselves. I don't feel that is is right for you to be working alongside of a person and worrying about him dropping a piece or doing something that would injure you so you can't work, and your family is made to suffer for it.

- C: Has this been a problem?
- D: Occasionally, but not often. They know how I think about it and they know the company rules.
- C: They want to work.
- D: That's right. The majority of them want to work. I found that the mere fact of the type of people that I hire, they know what my exact feelings are.
- C: Let's return to your current work. You mentioned that you just put a roof on a car plant in Michigan.
- D: There are four or five pieces sitting out on the dock right now. We made an extension on it. I did the roof of a mall in Pittsburgh and a Cement Company down in San Antonio, Texas.

I mentioned two local companies, but I do quite a bit of business for companies outside of this area.

- C: You've gotten work throughout the country through advertising and building up a reputation.
- D: I've gotten work mainly through personal contacts. The man from Connecticut was here and he was getting aluminum work done in the area and they wanted to get the finishing work done in the area, so they came over. They became a customer. Pittsburgh doesn't have an outlet to do this, so they ship it up here to get it done.
- C: What company in Pittsburgh?
- D: E. G. Smith, Bowman, Cyclops, they are all one. I also do Canadian work. I do work for Tamper Corporation or Canron out of Toronto, Canada.
- C: How do these places bring their material to you?
- D: They ship the work in by commercial carrier or their own truck. There are times that I make arrangements for the shipment and there are times that the owner makes the arrangement for shipment.
- C: Do you feel that the location of Youngstown is disadvantageous to the steel industries because there are no waterways to ship the steel on?
- D: I don't know. The heavy steel that I do goes to Japan and it would be advantageous to have waterways. For the most part, I ship a truckload at a time. It goes to a customer that may have another use for it and they can only use a certain amount. Fimble Door in New Jersey only can use so much material at a time. I am not big enough to use a barge load at a time.
- I can see the users being able to use it to their advantage. The only thing that I would be able to do if the canal was here is to put the steel on the boat right here in Youngstown instead of shipping it to the other side of Ohio, to Chicago, and putting the steel on a boat there.
- C: You mentioned Canada and you mentioned Japan.
- D: Yes.
- C: These are also personal contacts?
- D: Yes. There are people in Saudi Arabia too, King Khali Village. We did these parts here. This is a piece of aluminum that is extruded right here in Youngstown. I finished it. This is just one part of it. They come in sections, five feet wide and six feet long.
- C: Yes.

D: We think that the design of them has some religious significance to it. They put these on the outsides of their buildings and windows down there. A Burger from Saudi Arabia was here. There are twenty-three of these in one unit. They have big hinges on them. He told me that they mount machine guns behind these. These are designed so that they can tap this with their foot and it will just swing open. The access is free for the gun so they can use it. They are very expensive. They are shipped by boat. The paint is highly controlled. The sand and the sun in Saudi Arabia takes the paint right off. There is a special paint made for it and it is controlled by the government in Saudi Arabia. It comes in about seventeen different colors. Every building in the village is going to have one of these on the window.

C: How did Saudi Arabia contact you?

D: They were fabricating the aluminum here in town. It came from Easco. John Rotunda from Struthers fabricated it and made arrangements for me to paint it. I put in spray guns just to paint this. It was about a \$50,000 investment.

C: That is interesting. The job entails modernization or new equipment for you, but yet you took it on so it must have been a big job.

D: Oh, yes. It was a tremendously big job. We went three-fourths of the way through it and found out that there wasn't enough money into it to continue it, so it was farmed out to somebody else.

C: How much of your business is devoted to foreign markets?

D: I don't really know. I know that right now about 40% of the business that I finish goes outside of the country.

If you ever stop and look at the geographic area of Youngstown, a good 250 mile radius around Youngstown, you will find out that is the greatest industrial area in the world. Of that, the Youngstown area has the most qualified people, water, electricity, and freeways. If they ever put the canal through, I look to see this area boom again.

Right now we are holding on with small businesses. I look at the foreign steel and I think that we're at the end of that era.

C: You believe, then, that the canal would be beneficial and that it would help revitalize the area.

D: I think that if it ever comes to the time that big steel or big manufacturing has use for large quantities to be shipped,

I think that it will. If it stays in the small businesses, then I can't see that.

- C: I know that we have a very trained steel-making force in this area. Many of them have not relocated, hoping for revitalization. Do you think that a revitalization is possible, either through small businesses or through the return of large industry? We have much working against us: our facilities are obsolete; we don't have the resources, the coal, et cetera used in the steel-making processes.
- D: The basic factor that we have here in this section of the country is mechanically-minded steel people who can cope with little things. Their whole idea and philosophy is attuned to this type of living. If you go down south and ask a person for a crescent wrench, they ask you what it is. They don't have a steel oriented society that you and I have grown up with all of our life. These people have to be taught. We are, more or less, very familiar and adaptable to it. People, that is our biggest by-product of this area right now.
- C: You believe our skilled labor pool alone will attract industry? We do have the resources.
- D: Oh, yes, definitely. They overcame that situation before. Right now coal is the big item. I think if they had to, they would overcome the pollution from the coal. I think they could come up with a way to use our technology, so they can use the tremendous amount of coal that we have in this area.
- C: Yes. When you say they, do you mean small business or the big companies?
- D: I would say the big companies. Once they get the pressure put on them, they would see that it is plausible; they would come in here and overcome it.
- C: Why did they allow the area to run down?
- D: I don't know. I think the people who were responsible just got tired. They didn't have enough young blood. They found that it was cheaper up in Ashtabula to get steel and it was better than what was here in town.
- C: Yes, no commitment.
- D: That is right. The old-timers had put in their day. There were really no young people here with the foresight to see that this was coming.
- C: Do you feel Lykes sale of Sheet & Tube to L.T.V. was a good move?

- D: I truthfully think it was a very good idea. I think today if I got to the point where the foreign steel was costing more than what they could make it for here, they would have the steel mill in here tomorrow. I truthfully believe that. The people are there now. I don't fault them for selling it because the plant was junk anyhow. They got out underneath it and made their money. Somebody else got stuck.
- C: You don't believe in pointing the finger at anyone?
- D: Yes.
- C: There isn't one cause; there is a whole problem.
- D: That is right. Do you comparison shop when you go to buy something?
- C: Sure.
- D: That's right. If you can buy a dress for thirteen dollars and it costs you twenty dollars to make it yourself, the same identical dress, then what are you going to do? That is exactly the situation right now.
- C: What do you feel we need to have a comeback?
- D: I think that it will eventually take care of itself. That is my idea. I think these other countries are getting to the point now with the labor troubles they are having and water for production, and the slave labor they have producing and the next to nothing they are paying for it, these people are starting to realize they don't have to do this. Eventually it is not only going to get back to the price of steel where it was here, it is going to get higher than what it was here. At that time, the people are going to come back in here and say let's make it ourselves.
- C: Yes.
- D: If I raise my prices to the point where it was costing me more to finish and it was costing a company more for me to finish it, they would say this is costing them more, and they would do it themselves. It is worth the investment and they will do it themselves. That is what the problem is today.
- C: You're talking about a big investment from the companies, perhaps even a lessening of government regulations. Would you support taxes on foreign steel to bring this about or do you think in the laissez-faire economy it will take care of itself?
- D: I don't think we need to play with the taxes or worry about the money. The money would be there. If you show a company



how to make a profit, a good profit, then they're going to make the investment. The money is around for them when and if the time comes.

- C: The same way you have modernized. You got a big job, there was money in it, and you put in spray guns, automatic spray guns.
- D: Yes. That is it exactly, if it can prove feasible. What is the use of making it, because the steel that you make wouldn't be as good as the steel you could buy, and you are going to pay more money for it.
- C: Is this because of obsolete facilities?
- D: No, I think it goes back to when we put new modern mills in the big majority of these foreign countries. We gave them all of our technology. They have taken our finest engineers from here and they have worked out all of the bugs for them. It is working and their labor market is so low; it is virtually impossible to compete with them. Some of their incomes are very low.
- C: How would you say unionization has effected the industry?
- D: The union has been a wonderful tool in this country. I'm saying when they nationalized the unions, when the unions went national, that was the beginning and the end. They forgot about the local people and looked at it on a national scale. I think that I'm very much for the local union. When they are affiliated nationally, then the locals lost their identity.
- C: Do you feel that they don't have the same bargaining power because decisions are being made nationally?
- D: You have too many people with their fingers in the pot. Some of these men are paying \$30, \$40, or \$50 a month for their unions.
- C: We'll end this with a general profile of your business. Who is your average worker? How much are they making? How long have they been here?
- D: Yes. I have two foremen or superintendents, whatever title you want to give them, in the shop, my oldest and my youngest sons, Bill and Tim. Tim is more mechanically oriented than Bill. Bill is more like myself in sales. He is an artist. Some of the men have been here a good many years. I'll say the maximum, when I say a good many years, is five or six years. I pay above minimum wage. The average wage of the laborers right now is between four and five dollars an hour plus benefits. It is the same way with the secretary, who

is my daughter; she has been with me for about a year.

C: So they are early twenties or middle twenties, most of your workers?

D: My youngest son, Tim, is in his late twenties. My oldest son, Bill, is in his middle thirties, and my daughter is in her early thirties.

Most of the people here are from twenty-two or twenty-three years old, all the way up to sixty year olds working here.

C: Do you have contracts or is it when you are there so long you get raises?

D: Normally, when the time and business warrants it, I give them a raise. Generally, about every six months I give them a raise. It depends on how much business. Last year I was doing all the bumpers for the AMC Jeeps. We were busy working twenty-four hours a day, six days a week. They made more money. I started to include other side benefits such as hospitalization and insurance. Now that the contract has been ended and we don't do the bumpers anymore, things have slowed down. That is why I said in 1983, 1984, and part of 1985 that the difference was well over a million dollars a year that year.

C: In 1985?

D: Yes.

C: Your benefits and pay rates are directly tied to how well the company is doing at the time?

D: Yes.

C: Do they decline as business decreases?

D: No, I try to keep them on and see to it that they get at least ten hours per week. Even when business is slow, they are painting, sweeping, cleaning; they're doing something to keep them busy. I know they have families, children, and support themselves.

C: What do you see for your future?

D: I would like to consolidate it. I recently bought all of this property. I put additions on. I'm in the market right now to get a powdered coating system so I won't be out of business when and if they ever pass a law eliminating solvents. If I can get a powdered coating system, make the arrangements for it, then I will see business increasing. I have the plans now for an additional 25,000 square feet here.

C: You're expanding?

D: Yes.

C: That is great. So it depends on how business maintains for the next couple of years, that will determine if you get your powdered system.

D: Not only that, it depends, because the powdered coating system is a tremendous investment. It has to be repaid. There has to be that amount of business there that I can make the addition, plus that has to be on top of what we are doing right now. The market is there.

C: Currently your business has been so well that you've been able to expand. What will your new addition be?

D: I am going to use it to give us more room and storage space. I lack storage space. I have to have something. They ship raw steel in to me. If I can't put it inside then I tell them that they can't ship it in until I need it. A lot of times that creates a problem because they will maybe do 300,000 tons and sometimes I can only accept 50 tons. That creates a storage problem for them. If I store it outside it becomes rusty and means more cost for me. I have to put storage space over here and to give us more room to work.

C: Have you had any problems securing loans?

D: Just normal.

C: What does the bank look at when they evaluate how much they are going to loan you?

D: They look at our proforma. What we had was made up by YSU, the Cushwa Center by Dr. McBride.

C: Yes.

D: He made one up a few years ago for me. It was for a roller coating system. It was about this time that the EPA was starting to push. I put everything on the back burner. That was about the time that everything slowed up. My credit rating was average for the times. I talked to them at MVEDC. My biggest problem is not getting the money, it is how you repay the money, the additional work that it will take to repay the loan.

C: How do you anticipate your future business?

D: I am going to try to keep it more or less status quo right now as long as I can, and build up an iniquity in a reserve so that when it comes time to change over, I will have it

there. I won't have to go so far in debt to make the changes. Or possibly one of the growing companies in town will want to put it in here, knowing that we have the experts in here that are able to run it and take care of it. Maybe they will invest in this and even buy this place out and put it in here themselves for their own benefit.

C: What exactly are you talking about putting in?

D: The powdered coating system and upgrading the treatment. Eventually I will get to it. It is just a matter of time.

C: You foresee, perhaps, a bigger company taking it over?

D: Yes, I kind of look to see that.

C: Are there any final comments, thoughts, about your company, your role, or the steel company industry in general that you would like to leave with us?

D: I look to see this area getting bigger, and right now I look to see that the fabrication end of it is going to grow, mainly because we have the manpower here to maintain it in a profitable manner. My quality here is continuously going up. A customer five years ago would accept anything as long as it was coated and didn't show rust. Today they have to have desk top quality on all of your finishes. With the new modern finishes that are out today, you don't get that unless you have had the actual hands-on experience. I think that is what makes this company valuable today in our community. You cannot ship anything, regardless of what it is without some kind of protective finish on it. If you do, it arrives in bad shape and causes a great deal more expense. You have to have some type of facility like this to give this protection. Not only does this concern steel, but aluminum is just as bad as steel is as far as oxidizing and white rusting.

C: You plan on playing a key role in the future maintaining that?

D: Yes. My sons can. I would like to slide out the back door and just consult here myself.

C: Well, thank you very much for your time. It has been a pleasure.

D: Yes. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW