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Interview with David E. Miller

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KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 54

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID E. MILLER, SR.

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

THURSDAY, 29 JULY 1999

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 54
Interview with David E. Miller, Sr.
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott
Thursday, 29 July 1999
Location: Mr. Miller's office, 116 South Avenue, Marietta, Ga.

THOMAS SCOTT: The interview today is with David E. Miller, Sr., who worked at the Bell Aircraft plant during World War II. We are in his office at 116 South Avenue in Marietta. Mr. Miller, let's start talking about yourself, your background and when you were born and where you were born, if you would.

DAVID MILLER: I was born August 7, 1923 in Atlanta, Georgia. My home is currently part of the Georgia Tech campus. We moved to Powder Springs when I was five or six years old and my grandfather was elected sheriff of Cobb County in 1932.

TS: Your grandfather? Was he a Miller?

DM: No, he was Legg, Edward M. Legg.

TS: Okay.

DM: My mother was employed as the office manager in the sheriff's office at that time. Mainly it consisted of delinquent taxes and the nickname was fifa, that period of time. The sheriff was charged with collecting the six years of taxes. The seventh year they could advertise them and sell it.

TS: And that term was fifa?

DM: Fifa, F-I-F-A. In 1936 we moved to Marietta and in 1936-37 my grandfather gave mother a house and lot on Washington Avenue in Marietta which she razed and

rebuilt. We retained the original timbers which were sixteen inch square pine. You couldn't drive a nail in them and you could drill them with the antiquated equipment they had, but it made a solid foundation. I finished Marietta High School in 1940 with a scientific degree which allowed me to go to Georgia Tech or some university pursuing a scientific or engineering degree. I went to North Georgia College for one year, taking a pre-Georgia Tech course. I found out in the second semester that it wasn't really set up to be that, so I transferred to Auburn University because of the fact that I was working with the U.S. Corps of Engineers in the summer of 1941. The great starting salary was forty cents an hour. After two weeks, they promoted me to fifty cents an hour. Mr. Jeffreys was the Georgia Tech graduate who was the engineer on the project. A little background on this [project] is that this field, which we were building, was located on what is now the South Cobb Parkway, which we called U.S. 41. When we started to work surveying in 1941, it was not a four lane highway. It was a mud hole. After things got a little bit harder and the War started, the road was four laned on up north of Cobb County line. An uncle of mine, W.L. Florence from Powder Springs, constructed that road.

TS: I've seen that name before. He also had one of the contracts to do maybe excavation or something for the Bell plant.

DM: He had the grading and rubbing contract for the Rickenbacker field, which was a short x-cross runway; and we introduced soil cement to Cobb County and the state of Georgia in this construction.

TS: He's your uncle, your mother's brother?

DM: No, my father's mother's family. She was a Florence. Now, don't pin me down with these relationships. I don't know them all.

TS: All right.

DM: We called Mr. Florence Uncle Will all my life; and he was the most interesting character; and that's another subject with his background. He was awarded the contract

to grade Rickenbacker Field at the time. It was quite an extensive undertaking in that a project of this type had not been attempted in Cobb County before.

TS: Sure.

DM: They did an excellent job. Like all contractors, they wanted to bury stumps at night; but we had inspectors to stop them. Shortly after I went to work for the Corps of Engineers, they moved me in the office profiling cuts and grades since I had had some engineering drawing and understood the concept.

TS: Now, you're actually in Auburn in school . . .

DM: No, I haven't gone to Auburn yet. I don't go to Auburn until 1941, September of '41.

TS: So this is before September of '41 that you're working for the Corps. But you had had your two years, I guess, at North Georgia?

DM: One.

TS: One year at North Georgia College and at least you had had a few introductory engineering courses there?

DM: Yes.

TS: And so you're profiling cuts and grades; does this mean that you kind of inspect. . . ?

DM: No. What you do is you take a field notebook that comes in to you from the man running the transit and the level. You take a piece of graph paper; and you have a station that runs up the runway, say, 4800 feet from the end of it and you have a cross section; you take the levels that have been brought to you; you plot them on the graph paper; and you do this for a series. Then you plot a longitudinal graph and you determine which is the most economical point to move dirt from to make a field.

TS: So you're in the very beginning stages of planning a road.

DM: Yes. Well, we were doing runways which is the same concept.

TS: Runways. But you said you were also involved with U.S. 41?

DM: U.S. 41 was at the end of it. We did no work for it.

TS: Okay. But you're just saying that it was just beginning to be built at this time.

DM: Yes.

TS: Right.

DM: In August of 1941, I went back to school to Auburn through the courtesy of Major Taylor who was a director of the co-op program at Auburn. But he was also our boss from Mobile--we were under the Corps of Engineers in Mobile--and he told me that I needed to go to Auburn and co-op since I didn't have much money; and this worked fine. After my first work session, I returned and worked for the Corps of Engineers until the start of the summer of '42. Mr. Lester Leonard was the General Superintendent for Robert & Company to construct the Bell Aircraft plant. His brother Leroy was the general superintendent. Not only did he offer me more money but it was in an office and not out in the hot sun, or the elements. My job was to keep up with the progress of the subcontractors to Robert & Company. We had 128 contractors.

TS: That's a lot.

DM: And we had what we called blue line drawings, which one was established as a master and we had other drawings that were working copies. I had young men, that were coping or going to school or one thing or the other, that went out each day and saw how much dirt had been moved by using the grade stakes and the control points; and how much concrete had been poured in footings and how much in caps; or how much floors had been poured; and we lined it off on the drawings. We then went to a man named J.P. Wey, who was seventy-five or eighty years old at the time

but a brilliant construction estimator. He handled all of the contracts for Robert & Company that were affiliated with this job. And he took my drawings and converted them into dollars and cents and the contractors were paid every two weeks. Of course, Mr. Leonard approved this before they went in to Red Robert to have a check drawn and contractors to be paid. The contractors would not have been able to function and operate without this system because of the capital drain. And the banks would not finance something of this nature because there's no equity to attach to it. We did everything from build railroads to keep up with the wiring going through the tunnels under the building and whatnot.

I also acted as an inspector at night in measuring the slump on concrete, checking the subcontractor for concrete work to be sure that he didn't vibrate the concrete too much or strip drain walls to compact dirt behind the drain wall improperly to cause the wall to fall. Joe did crack a couple of walls and had one to tumble down on him as compacting earth too tight behind it.

TS: Who is Joe?

DM: Joe DePalma. Don't ask me to spell his name; he's an Italian from Tampa, West Palm Beach who worked for Chalker and Lund. Mr. Bass was the general superintendent for Chalker and Lund.

TS: Mr. Bass?

DM: Very fine gentleman. But Joe was a "hurry it up and get it done" working with the basic class of people, labor and whatnot to get a concrete job done. He had carpenters who were experienced in constructing the forms and setting them to grade; but, outside of that, Joe's people were pretty rough. During this period of time, I had my first engineering assignment. I was detailed to design a twenty-four hole outhouse.

TS: Okay. [chuckle] That's a pretty big one.

DM: We mounted it on longitudinal skids and as we moved the

job along or the pit got too full, we filled the pit up and dug it another hundred feet.

TS: So this is the port-a-john of the 1940s.

DM: Yes. This is the first port-a-potty. Anyway, Joe DePalma started screaming his head off because his people would go up and sit in the john the better part of the day. So our solution was we took the doors off and we took the roof off. [laughter] Well, the next thing that happened is that Mr. McEntire took a dim view of this-- he was the occupational safety officer for the U.S. Corps of Engineers assigned to the job--and the conferences on this are hilarious with Colonel Randall, who was rather a hard-nosed old engineer whose fame was that he built the Alaskan Highway. His next assignment after this was the Alaskan Highway. It was enjoyed by all.

TS: Well, how did they resolve it?

DM: We put the roof back on but left the doors off.

TS: I see. That sounds like a good compromise.

DM: But it was an interesting deal. We had various and sundry people who worked out there. I suppose that all of these older engineers and construction superintendents and whatnot are deceased at this time. I kept up with Mr. Leonard and Leroy for a number of years but they faded out of the picture. Their children are all still centered around Johnson City, Tennessee. As an interesting sidebar, Lester Leonard was a college professor who went into the construction business in Tennessee because he couldn't make enough money to feed his family. But he was a very thorough individual with a great management style and an ability to get the most work from subcontractors with the least amount of time. You must realize that we built this plant in eleven months with anywhere from 15,000 to 30,000 people working around the clock.

The most difficult job that I had was inspecting the steel that Bethlehem Steel put up because in the daytime the red dirt would become dust and settle on the steel and during the night the condensation provided dew so in

the early morning it was slick. One of the old Bethlehem foremen taught me to walk it and this. You had to inspect the joints to see that they had been riveted and not bolted because, like all contractors they weren't too good with their fieldwork; they were slamming the steel up.

This was the biggest steel building erected. The main assembly plant for the aircraft was a little over forty-two acres under one roof. It was one of the largest air conditioned buildings in the country. Interestingly enough, with all of the people that they hired who were novices in any type of working for someone, we had to tie ribbons on the ventilators because we had no windows. We had some sliding doors; but they couldn't stand it because they couldn't see air moving; and they all started to choking and stifling and whatnot. So the solution was to hang long pieces of yellow ribbon up off the air ducts so they could see it blowing out and they were all happy!

TS: Well, great. I wanted to ask you, I've heard different stories about whether the plant's air conditioned or not and I've read the figures on how much the air conditioners are supposed to be, but I've also talked to a number of people who said it wasn't air conditioned when they were in it.

DM: Well, it was air-conditioned. You have to remember, the state of the art of air conditioning at that time was practically nil. I wouldn't swear that they didn't have an air circulation system and someone hung the name air conditioning on it. We did have huge ducts, some of them as much as six by eight, that were in the tops of the building; and there was a stream of air that blew from them. Now, the period that I was working inside the building, it was so much cooler than it was outside that I do not know where it is. I don't remember a contract for compressors and stuff like this, cooling towers, at the time.

TS: What about the B-2 building? Was that cooled at all?

DM: That was the. . . ?

TS: Where the administration was? Behind the B-1, I guess south of the B-1 building.

DM: McDougal and Company built that thing and I do not know. I tell you, I'm friends with a man who was a construction carpenter on the building, who later went in the service, and he will know. I'll ask him if you want.

TS: Okay.

DM: And I'll call and tell you. You know, there's lots of misnomers about this thing. People were interested in how many miles of florescent lighting we had in it; and, of course, there again, florescent lighting was a novelty in many ways. They had a man that that's all they did was change tubes every day, and they had catwalks for them to walk up and down. The difficulty was in getting them to utilize proper safety equipment. One of them fell off and killed himself out there. You drop from the top of that. . . .

TS: Sure. It's four stories up, I guess.

DM: Yes. It was a well-designed building and it used a tunnel system to move the employees into their work space and release the horizontal traffic.

TS: Right. Were there many tunnels going to different parts of the B-1 building so that they're not all coming through at one place but there's many tunnels. . . ?

DM: There were three tunnels. We called the building at the north end of it, if you're sitting facing the building from South Cobb Drive, this was north and this would be the east face. There were three big tunnels. The tunnels were designed to move the traffic, the employees on shift changes, without disturbing the manufacturing operation. The basic building was designed so, on the east side, the raw materials came into the plant by either truck or rail, mostly by rail, and it was unloaded. The tracks ran the length of the building and it had cross overs and we had our own switch engines and you could unload raw material, aluminum and metal or whatever we had. It was unloaded and it went horizontally into the machines. We had cutting machines to cut it in the right shape to go

into a machine to be manufactured. And then it moved horizontally over to an assembly point, and they riveted it and prepared it to go into the aircraft.

TS: Right. How many tracks were there that ran into the plant? Or ran through the plant?

DM: They didn't run through it. There were no tracks that ran through the plant, but four on the east side; and this is your main plant, these tracks came in here.

TS: So this is outside the plant.

DM: This is inside, this is a covered area.

TS: Okay, so it's a covered area on the east side which would be the U.S. 41 side.

DM: No, South Cobb side.

TS: South Cobb Drive side?

DM: Yes. These tracks were here, and you could shuffle a track over here to a door, and they would unload the boxcars. You had storage areas here for that type material, and you'd have another one here, and I think there were six or eight of those. I don't remember how many of them were in there now.

TS: Six or eight different places to unload.

DM: Yes. And then they had crossovers where you could bring a car here and keep it in reserve; but, they had switches you could move it up to here, or you could move this point back. You could move him over and get him out where he needed to be. There had to be a series of at least four tracks in there to make it functional.

TS: Including the side tracks, is that what you're saying?

DM: No, these include the side tracks. See, there were two tracks that came into it, but it divided off into four.

TS: Right. So two come in, divides into four to make it functional as you're unloading.

DM: Yes. And back out here, why they had spurs off the main line where the railroad came in up here; and they all sat in their cars; and then they had a switch engine that picked them up here. There was a boy named J. F. Hicks who was the chief railroad engineer, and he worked at the Atlantic Steel Company prior to this.

TS: So supplies are brought in primarily by rail then.

DM: Yes. Raw materials.

TS: Where did the trolley let people off?

DM: The trolley ran over here.

TS: Okay. So you're drawing that now in the . . .

DM: This is not to scale but the trolley, from the corner of this building, was probably 800 to 1,000 feet. It varied because it curved in there.

TS: Now, is that the north side of the building that the trolley is running?

DM: Yes. They ran down Atlanta Road primarily.

TS: Right. And then it comes into. . . ?

DM: Originally it was a stop, what they called Jonesville. And then the next stop was up there at Butler Street and Atlanta Street.

TS: You could get off the trolley at Butler Street?

DM: Yes. Atlanta and Butler. And Fair Oaks was down below it.

TS: Right. So you go Fair Oaks and let's see, it's Jonesville, isn't it?

DM: Yes, Jonesville.

TS: Jonesville, and then the next stop would be Butler Crossing coming down.

DM: This is where the old county fair was located, right in here.

TS: You're drawing that between Jonesville and Butler Crossing.

DM: Yes. It's approximately where the Water Works Building is sitting now, the Water Authority Building. That's just about the site of the old Cobb County fair building.

TS: Which would be right about where Butler Street and South Cobb Drive are.

DM: Approximately. It may have been south of South Cobb Drive, 150, 200 feet.

TS: Of course, there wasn't a South Cobb Drive before World War II.

DM: No. There was a Butler Street and it wound up on into a road that made a loop that went down by it and the Hames and the Kelleys lived down there and it went on back over here.

TS: The Hames? And Kelleys?

DM: Kelleys.

TS: Right.

DM: Judge Luther Hames' family.

TS: Yes.

DM: I know you picked his name up.

TS: Yes.

DM: Luther was an institution.

TS: Well, his father was one of the engineers on the trolley, I believe.

DM: Yes sir. He and Mr. Wade are the only two I remember. Mr. Wade lived on Washington Avenue in Marietta. There

was an old man named Hicks that lived out here in the bend where the old, original city waterworks are right in here.

TS: You're drawing now--for the purpose of the tape--you're drawing that where the city waterworks were. Let me think, in relation to the plant, where would the waterworks have been?

DM: It would be north of the plant maybe 200 feet.

TS: Okay.

DM: This road came back over and deadened into Clay Street. The county alms home was up here, and the county work camp was down here on Fairground.

TS: Right.

DM: Clay Street and Fairground and then over on this corner was John Hood's Hotel. Have you ever picked up John Hood's name in your. . . ?

TS: Yes. Now the John Hood's Hotel would have been on Clay Street?

DM: He was the warden at the. . . . [laughter]

TS: Oh, okay, I got you.

DM: I've had several meals out there. My grandfather was sheriff and, of course, I got to tag along and back then they didn't have any barracks for the prisoners; they had a long anchor chain and everybody had a metal ring on one leg or the other. But at night they drew the anchor chain to it and on one end it was tied down to a huge concrete pilaster and on the other end it was a similar arrangement. They locked down the end of the chain to the locked concrete and everybody went to sleep.

TS: Your ball and chain.

DM: They had two rows, one on each side, and a big part of it was just steel cages.

TS: So nobody's going to go anywhere.

DM: No one's going anywhere. The most severe punishment was what they called the hole which was a literal hole dug in the ground about four feet deep and about twenty-four inches or thirty inches in diameter. They put him in and the idea was he couldn't stand up when he was a bad boy, and they put a piece of sheet iron on top of it and put a pad lock on it. They opened it up once a day to see if he was alive and gave him bread and water. Usually after a little treatment in the hole, why, to my knowledge there was no corporal punishment at that time out there. In the teens and '20s there was corporal punishment. They would stretch out--I have actually seen them do it on granddaddy's farm--stretch him out on his back on an old pick up truck and use a leather strap on him. I don't think that after this place that John Hood tolerated anything of corporal punishment.

TS: Now, this is where Larry Bell Park is today.

DM: That's right, yes sir. It was mainly self-sustaining. Convicts maintained the roads in the county; and, as such as it was, in the winter why, up until the '40s, it was difficult to get through some of those roads. Clay Street down here had a noted mud hole.

TS: A noted mud hole?

DM: A noted mud hole down by the hog farm where the sewage and everything ran out.

TS: A hog farm? Where was the hog farm?

DM: On Clay Street.

TS: How far out?

DM: You know where that shopping center is down there on Clay Street? Do you know where Bomber Battery is?

TS: Yes.

DM: Right in that section there of Clay Street.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: If you could drive through that you were proficient.

TS: I guess so.

DM: There were times it was impassible. But the county maintained the hog farm right over there.

TS: Oh, the county did.

DM: Yes, it was the county's hog farm.

TS: What was county maintaining a hog farm for?

DM: To feed the prisoners and to feed the people in the alms house.

TS: Oh.

DM: See, on the corner of Fairground and Clay Street was the alms house. It was a long red brick building for people who couldn't afford anything else and they were elderly. A man and woman had one room; two women to a room. And they were maintained and clean and bug free and adequately warm in the winter; and the food was better than average.

TS: You're describing a pretty poor county it sounds like before World War II.

DM: Yes sir. This county was poor, poor, poor. It was agriculturally maintained. The industry in this county included, over in Austell, a small furniture factory called Mather; and, of course, they had Brumby Chair Company in Marietta; and they had the Holeproof Hosiery. And they had McNeel Marble Works. There was Unique cotton plant or hosiery plant or something up at Acworth, Unique Mills. In other words, the county was pretty well devoid of industry. Cotton was king. Used to you could see anywhere from ten to one hundred wagons with a bale of cotton sitting on the square waiting for a broker to buy it. Many, many of the people were in debt to the company store, so to speak; they were share croppers, and they would live eleven months and three weeks on an

account with McTyre over in Powder Springs and McMillan in Acworth and DuPre here in Marietta. The biggest cotton broker was a man named Mack Fowler. But these people would run accounts with them; and, in the fall when they settled up, why, usually whoever had the account bought their cotton and credited the dollars to it. We used to say that the fellow got two bolts of gingham cloth for his wife a new dress and so forth; a new pair of bib overalls and a pair of brogans for him and his sons and he was ready to start his debt again. My grandfather said that anybody that lived out of a paper poke wasn't fit to be on his farm and he wouldn't let them come in as a sharecropper. His idea was they should be self-sustaining. They should grow produce in the summer and their wives should can it. He always shared hogs with them; and when we killed a beef, why, he shared the beef with them. But there were many, many that was the predominance with the people that grew it, that grew the crops, cotton especially.

TS: So your grandfather let them have a few acres for a garden or whatever?

DM: Usually it was about an acre that he would let each tenant have for a garden. Of course, the corn, when we planted corn, they'd plant pole beans and they'd run up the stalk. There weren't many good sharecroppers in this county.

TS Because they didn't have any incentive?

DM: No. The Elrods, in the 20s, were one of the finest people that ever were sharecroppers. Mr. Willis Elrod was the patriarch of the family; and he instilled in all his boys the ability to be carpenters or painters or hard workers and they all raised above it; most of them are dead now, but they all became very respectable people in the community. They owned their homes and raised good families. But on the other hand, you had some who never responded to that and never would. Just like today, you've got people who have been on welfare for a hundred years and they'll be on it another hundred. I don't know how to break the chain. Let's get back to Bell. You've got plenty of people who can give you more history than I can. In fact, you'd probably get more from the Cobb

County's *First Hundred Years* more accurately.

TS: Well, I don't know. That's very interesting what you were saying.

DM: If you want to talk about politics, now I can talk about politics in Cobb County in the '20s and '30s because my home's full of it.

TS: Really? I guess so with a sheriff in the family.

DM: There's one thing; Grandfather was the first sheriff ever elected without opposition in this county. He was a very solid man, he wouldn't have ten words to say all day. When he spoke you better listen. But he was a very honest man; he could not be corrupted. He ran his office that way and there was lots of voter fraud back in those days. They used to say that some of these country boxes you could follow them into town in your old Ford by just picking up the ballots by the side of the road that they'd thrown out the window.

TS: Is that right?

DM: Well, I have actually seen them buy votes, I've seen them swap shoat pigs for votes.

TS: Really? That's a pretty expensive vote, isn't it?

DM: Well, you can take a family of twelve, fifteen people in it. Back in those days, the old man controlled every damn one of them. They voted like he told them to, or he took a single tree to them. I've actually seen them pay poll taxes for them. See, we had poll taxes up here until 1936.

TS: Yes, actually I think it went into the '40s, the early '40s it was outlawed in Georgia.

DM: Well, I don't think we had them in Cobb County after '36. You could vote at eighteen. I was the first age group, I was eighteen in August and I voted in November. Twenty-three and eighteen is what, forty-one?

TS: Let's see, you were born in '23? Well, twenty-three and

eighteen would be forty-one. But that didn't come in that early because Ellis Arnall was governor when the eighteen year-old vote came in and he took office in '43.

DM: Well, I got to vote in the first election that we could vote at eighteen years old voting in Georgia.

TS: I think it was probably about '43.

DM: Maybe it was the fall of '42 or something, '43 or something like that.

TS: No, he took office in '43.

DM: The election would have been in '42.

TS: Right. You were probably still twenty maybe, you were under twenty-one at any rate when you voted.

DM: Yes. But I've seen it all in Cobb County, big dirty politics.

TS: Let me ask you a question that would be Bell related: what did you think of George McMillan and his. . . ?

DM: The most underrated man that Cobb County ever produced.

TS: Really?

DM: George McMillan was my mentor. George McMillan's family was from Acworth. They had gone bankrupt in '29, due to the cotton and they couldn't sell it and the debts they couldn't collect. They ran a general mercantile Store and George did the administrative work. He had a family and whatnot and it was arranged that he would run as my grandfather's chief deputy in 1931 for sheriff. And, of course, I was raised in the courthouse and George--my mother and father didn't have a good relationship, so, I looked to George for whatnot. He's the man that talked me into staying in the Navy when I had the opportunity to be discharged. He pointed out to me that I had a good future, that I had started out as an enlisted man and been commissioned and had a commission in the Naval Supply Corps. And the Navy had promised to send me to graduate school; and so they did, and so I completed

twenty years in the Navy and retired when I was thirty-nine and then came home. But George McMillan, Jimmie Carmichael and [Rip] Blair were the three people that headed up the Cobb County delegation to get the bomber plant--as we called it--in here. Carmichael and Blair were attorney's, George McMillan was a commissioner. With George's foresight and ability to cooperate with people and get it done, he was a very dynamic man, he was a leader. I'm talking off the record.

TS: Do you want me to turn it off?

DM: Go ahead, I don't care. In my view, without George McMillan, we would never have had this site designated in Cobb County. They give the credit to Lucius Clay for putting this plant here; that is not true. Richard B. Russell put this plant here; and he put this plant here at the recommendation of McMillan; and he and McMillan met on two or three occasions and talked on the telephone numerous times. George assured Russell that the county could respond and provide the labor pool and the various and sundry services that were going to be needed. Like law enforcement was a major item; housing was a major item; what to do with the schools and whatnot. And in all due courtesy to Carmichael and Blair, they did not have the background or the position that McMillan had, nor the foresight. And if it hadn't been for McMillan and Dick Russell this plant would never have been here. You can blow smoke and print newspapers and everything; but I helped prepare the package that went to Washington to have this plant approved. We surveyed on Thanksgiving Day; we prepared the blue prints; and George and Carmichael and Blair went to Washington the first Monday after Thanksgiving in 1941, I believe it was. I think it was. I don't think it was '42, I think it was '41.

TS: Are we talking getting Bell Aircraft or getting the airport?

DM: Bell Aircraft.

TS: That makes sense.

DM: The aircraft, the basic Rickenbacker Field was approved by a result of Russell's position in the Congress,

there's no two ways about it. Cobb County didn't have a Congressman, just like we don't have one now, that had any weight. He ran around in circles but that was about it. They should have left [Buddy] Darden in there; he was a man that was just coming into a position of having some authority and some influence. But anyway, that's history.

TS: Well, let's see, I was trying to think on the dates. McMillan became commissioner in May of '41, after somebody, I believe his name was Head, had died.

DM: Charlie Head.

TS: Yes. And then they had an election, I guess, in April or May. I guess he died in April and they had an election in May and that's when McMillan came in. And, of course, by that time, the groundwork had kind of been done to get Rickenbacker field. I guess, they still hadn't built it yet.

TS: January or February of '41 was when they really started getting the authorization for what becomes Rickenbacker Field. It takes them a long time to get around to actually building it, doesn't it?

DM: No, they started in May of '41.

TS: Right.

DM: See, there was a series of these things built. The other one, I was familiar with was Auburn/Opelika Airport.

TS: Auburn/Opelika.

DM: That was one of these series of runner fields under the Civil Aeronautics Act. When you get down and, later on, I had the opportunity to study as a naval officer the national buildup and this was the foresight on the part of Roosevelt and the people that he had around him, Admiral King and other people that were surrounding him. Without Admiral King we would have had our tails kicked. But you got to study it and this was Roosevelt's long range build up preparing for war. Roosevelt knew it was coming. See when you're a regular Navy officer, part of

your training and whatnot is wartime activation of plants. They talk about closing this plant up here. Now, to my knowledge; and, from what I knew when I was in the service, this is what's classified as an essential plant subsidized by the government.

There's Hughes in Tucson, I was the contracting officer for Hughes when we did this so I got familiar with what was going on. We moved Hughes from Copper City, California and El Cajon a big part of the operation so, in case of national attack, we would have two guns to our defense rather than one. And Hughes, at that time, and he is now, was one of the leading electronic brains in the world. There are numerous other plants; the Boeing plant in Kansas City was one of those designated spots.

TS: Right.

DM: The Pratt & Whitney plant in Hartford, Connecticut; G.E. in Evandale, Ohio; there's been such a merger and takeover of the aircraft industry that I think it's sheer folly. Because God knows if we had to fight a war today; one, we have such damn poor leadership in the military we are going to get our ass blown off. But two, the railroads are not able to sustain the logistics, the highways are not able to sustain it, the bridges and supporting activities, facilities haven't been maintained, especially in the cities.

You can read in the newspaper and other documents that the water systems, pollution systems, sewage, everything else, [and] this county's foundation for the water and sewage system was laid by McMillan. And then Ernest Barrett is a man that should be given a tremendous amount of credit. He got the Chamber of Commerce behind him and we had a bond issue of about twenty-five, thirty million dollars; and then Lyndon Johnson gave us 200 million to go with it; and, so that's where we got the water and sewage system. This county has more paved roads than any other county in Georgia. We used to have about 1,700 or 1,800 miles of paved roads, but they were cheaper than dirt roads to maintain. And it allowed commerce to move and the people were safer.

But you come back to the Bell plant, the only direct

connection I have with Bell is that the equipment that was sent out here from Oklahoma City, where Boeing was building B-29's, couldn't be used. It wouldn't marry, we couldn't marry the tail section to the main fuselage; and we had to redesign a lots of this stuff and modify it and whatnot; and this is all just straight calculus. At that time, we didn't have computers so we couldn't use that. Everything was by hand.

TS: Now, you were working for Bell at that point?

DM: I worked for Robert & Company. Technically. When I was in school in Auburn and when I came home from Christmas, they hired me to work in a lofting room. You wouldn't know what a lofting room is; but, it's a large, flat area where you get in there with your socks on and white gloves and you lay this stuff out. Then you mathematically prove that you're right or wrong. And it's all tangents, co-tangents.

TS: A lot of drafting tables?

DM: You didn't have drafting tables. What you had was a Monroe calculator that you turned by hand and you had tangents and co-tangent tables and logarithm tables. It's just like laying out a runway out here; if you get the runway and you want to taxi coming off of it, then you lay it out with tangents and co-tangents, which are civil engineering terms. Well the same thing with the tail section coming off, it came off like that. And you had a point here and then you measure off your distances and you keep it running smooth. But they paid me happily and they paid me well. I nearly froze to death. Got a cold out of it.

But anyway, the Navy took me into the service in 1943. I had had a B-7 designation in the Navy; and I requested to fly; and they made me a B-5 which they told me to go back to school and when they needed me they'd call me. So I went back to Auburn and the Navy sent me to Pensacola. I took senior privileges and ruined my eyes; I didn't have any depth perception and saved my life probably because I would have been dead. Half the people that I went to school with at Auburn wound up dead that went into aviation. And we were the prime cannon fodder just like

the people that were second Johns. I was a junior in ROTC at the time and they took all of the senior class ahead of me over to Benning in the fall of '43. Anyway, they took them over there and commissioned them to second Johns and sent them to North Africa. We call it the one-legged class at Auburn because so many of them got their legs blown off with land mines.

TS: Wow.

DM: My roommate, he had his leg blown off. He was a Callaway from Mobile.

TS: Now, what did you do to mess up your depth perception?

DM: Took senior privileges and sat up all night studying.

TS: Oh, I see.

DM: I passed all my courses and got my credits; but, I paid the price for it. But on the good side, I'm alive and all those others are dead. You never do know.

TS: When were you working in the lofting area at Bell? Was that '42? Actually the plant is still being constructed, I guess, in '42; so, it had to be '43.

DM: Yes. It wasn't '42, I went in the Navy in '43.

TS: Which month did you go in?

DM: May.

TS: So this would have been before May of '43?

DM: Yes.

TS: Let's see, the plant, I guess, really kind of starts production sometime in the spring of '43, doesn't it? It takes a year to build it.

DM: These dates all run together.

TS: I know it's a long time ago.

DM: And I haven't ever kept any written notes; this is the first time I've ever sat down and reviewed it. My wife tried to get me to sit down and the only work I ever did sometime in that phase is to work in the lofting room, assisting the engineer they sent out here from Oklahoma City to work the mathematical solutions. I was fairly decent in calculus. Jimmie Carmichael was a friend of the family's, and he knew it. So he had three or four college boys in there helping, and they trained us. We got to where in three or four days we picked up what they were trying to do. Of course, I took aeronautical in college so I had the basic elements of what was going on,

TS: But you were taking courses in aeronautical engineering?

DM: Yes.

TS: You had said something to me, I guess last winter, about surveying the control line at Rickenbacker Field. Can you tell me about that?

DM: [chuckle] In the fall of '41, Thanksgiving of '41, Mr. Baskin, J.P. Baskin from Rome, got a job to make the prospectus for Bell Aircraft for the field, for the airfield as we know it now and whatnot. They had had a line run, a control line to establish the parameters from the coastal geodetic marker on Atlanta Road to go over to the four lane highway. The people that ran it didn't do it in good engineering principles; so, Mr. Baskin was hired to run these lines and prepare the drawing. He was a brilliant man, a Georgia Tech graduate, civil engineering; and he got a hold of some of us that worked out there through George McMillan and other people. I ran a transit from Atlanta Road over to there. We had to do what was called break the chain, twenty-five foot, fifty foot intervals to get a level line as the terrain [changed], because if you measured 100 feet you'd be off. You're supposed to close this thing in triangular relations--somebody's running this way and somebody's running this way. Everything's supposed to close in twelve inches or one foot. I ran that line; and it was sleeting, cold; and I tell you it was cold as hell.

TS: You say it was sleeting?

DM: Yes, freezing. And it was sleeting and we ran that line all day, Saturday and Sunday. We got about sixty percent of it, maybe a little better done on Saturday. But we started that thing about 7:30 or 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and we were still out there just as long as we could see. And the next morning we were there when we couldn't see until we got it finished. And then we went into an office up there that George McMillan gave us and plotted this thing and went to Atlanta Blue Print; and they made drawings; and then George and Carmichael and them took them to Washington. And it was cold out there. My fingers near froze off; they get wet. And the people pulling that chain, I tell you, it was brutal. But that was how we got Bell Aircraft. I've always given credit to George McMillan for getting it here. They write all these stories and the glamour and everything else. George McMillan never made a dime out of it. He drew a salary as county commissioner and that was all. Blair and Carmichael got rich. They built this village out here.

TS: You're talking about Pine Forest?

DM: Yes. They built that thing; and I reckon it was a reward for getting it in there; McMillan wasn't a party to it. So being a novice and not knowing better than to deal with two lawyers, I don't know, I don't know the facts of why he wasn't in it; I don't know what the story was; but he was not. I dated his daughter. We didn't have a thing; we were friends and if she had somewhere to go and didn't have a date, why, I would go with her and whatnot. And we were friends after the War.

TS: Which daughter was this?

DM: Jo. She's dead, she died last year. She married a man named Mize, that had an electrical contracting business over in Cumming; and she was a fine person, very good girl. George had four or five girls; he never had a son. I don't know what's happened to all those other girls.

TS: One of them is still in Marietta, I think.

DM: Well, one of them married a preacher, Fernandez or something like that. Hispanic.

TS: I don't know.

DM: But I don't know of any of them. Evelyn was his wife and she died in a nursing care home. She and mother were good friends.

TS: You said that when McMillan sent the package of material to Richard Russell, that you put it together for him?

DM: No, Mr. Baskin was the engineer on the job. I helped put it together. See, I wasn't old enough to be in charge of anything. I couldn't even be in charge of emptying wastebaskets. Back in the society of those days, why, anybody that didn't shave every morning regularly, why he didn't have much clout.

TS: So, Mr. Baskin puts together a package of material.

DM: He did the engineering work, the surveys and this type. They had set up a parameter of what acreage was going to be required and the general contours. But this area out there, where things are located, you can see that it was possible to build it with a minimum of earth moving. And it was possible to move it with a minimum of disruption of people. And so it made an ideal spot. That four lane highway coming from Atlanta could move people; Atlanta Road was in with urban transportation; we had adequate water; we had sewage; and, of course, they made the plant self-contained. Recently that plant had a four-stage sewage system out there now, which is one of the better ones probably in the country. You can say what you want to about it; but, the whole topographical location, and including the work that had been done at Rickenbacker Field, made it a natural.

TS: Sure.

DM: And another thing about it is by putting it in there, you had to consider the economics of it that land wasn't worth a hell of a lot in Cobb County back in those days. And there wasn't a whole lots of it was farm. Mr. Thomas had a large farm out there that he farmed, Mr. Joe Thomas. And Charlie Thomas' house is still standing out there on that lake at Dobbins Air Force Base. Right there behind that C-130 training building they just put

up.

TS: Okay.

DM: Mr. Joe Thomas was quite a character. Charlie worked for W.P. Stephens Lumber Company in 1940 and '41. When we went over there to survey that thing, Joe met us with a shot gun and run our tails out, and we had to go to town and get Charlie and Charlie came out there and told him, "This is bigger than you are Papa. Put your shot gun up or they'll have the sheriff after you to take you to town."

TS: Now, this is the survey for the control line that you're talking about?

DM: This is just a general survey of the property.

TS: Now, my understanding is that until Pearl Harbor there is not really talk about bringing an aircraft plant in; they're building a commercial airport until then.

DM: Well, it wasn't really a commercial airport. The concept of the Rickenbacker Field was civilian use. Mainly a civilian type Piper Cubs and that type of operation. In fact, in those days, you had old Stensons and a lot of homemade aircraft. But that was the object. Of course, you're acquiring land that was easily expandable into a national defense field. There were lots of these fields converted into air force bases all over the country. In Florida, you know, you get 5,000 feet and cut the engine off and there wasn't a place you couldn't glide into either a Navy or an Air Force field. In north Florida they were mostly Navy. Closed them all up in 1946.

TS: So this isn't going to be the second Atlanta airport; it's just going to be for private plane owners?

DM: Yes. The only people that's ever dreamed of that being a second airport is the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta newspapers. Of course, with the powers that be, it only had one runway on it; and it would be very difficult to get a second runway in there today unless you paralleled it. And with the build up, you're going to have trouble with glide angles anyway. But the whole

air field is going through concept. I don't know what's going to come up; probably some day it will be a commercial field for cargo or something like that. But, I don't see how you'd get anything in there. Of course, you realize that every time one of these aircraft comes off the production line, regardless of the quality controls they have and everything that's going on nowadays, that it is still a dangerous operation, the first flight of that bird. And when you're starting with experimental aircraft, why, everything goes up and comes down in a damn hurry. The Air Force will tell you the accident rate is not that bad with reserves. But, you take people that are flying one weekend a month or one day a month and put them out there -- it's a lot more dangerous than a man flying three or four days a week. They get in these sophisticated aircraft and every once in awhile they auger one in. The next time they auger one in there'll be lots of people killed.

TS: They auger?

DM: They crash them.

DM: See, I spent my entire naval career in aviation. And so the slang term is when an aircraft meets dry land he's augured in. When he hits the water, he's splashed. That's what happened to [John] Kennedy [Jr.]; he got disoriented; and he had more aircraft than he was qualified really to fly, more power, more aircraft; and he didn't know how to use his instruments. If he'd had a higher R-training he'd be alive today. I told my wife what happened when we got the first reports. He got disoriented and the aircraft actually had power on when he hit the water. That's what killed them. We had the same trouble around here for awhile when they got a series of aircraft around here; and they're supposed to watch the gyro and use it; and they didn't. They started to get fixation and bam!(fist hit table) broke the line and killed them.

TS: At Dobbins?

DM: Yes. That's what nearly killed all the German Air Force officers, the F-104's.

TS: Well, let's just talk about some things in general about the plant. You were mentioning something about the flexibility of the labor pool.

DM: Their requirement of the number of people that Bell was going to require to build aircraft, as well as the construction: a large number of the people that went to work for Bell had worked in construction at one site or another and the flexibility to get these people marshaled. They came from all over north Georgia predominately; but there were people here from all of the southern states because the wage base over the southern states was nothing compared to what the federal government was requiring Bell to pay. They had a large contingent of people. There was a big absence of college graduates to draw from because we didn't have that many colleges; we didn't have that many people that went to college. But the training of these people, they had people anywhere from sixteen to eighteen years old up into their sixties that were actually working out there five and six days a week, some of them eight to twelve hours a day. But their ability to be trained and their attitude and esprit de corps is what made that plant. Of course, it was a huge economic shock when they closed the plant after the War and Tumpane came in to preserve the machinery and whatnot. I was not involved; I was in the Navy away from here; but there are people that are still alive that are familiar with the Tumpane operation. You can get lots of this information on Tumpane from the morgue of the *Marietta Journal*. Anyway, maybe you can find names; and one name will lead to another. Basically, the people that are in my age bracket are few and far between; there are not a lots of us left. I don't know of anybody out there that was left in positions of authority at the top echelons back in those days. You may be able to resurrect one here and there; but then you're going to run into senility.

TS: Well, they're going to be in their nineties or so.

DM: Where you're going to run into senility. I've always given the plant credit for my being able to go to college because, basically, you might have money in three months to go to college for a year, two semesters, tuition at Auburn was \$54.00 a semester. And in today's market

that's nothing. But I feel that the plant was a tremendous economic boom to the county. There are people on the other side of the fence that despised it because they were paying niggardly wages and this upset it. There are people whose wages for 1970s that were still cussing me because they were running various types of metal fabricating outfits, machine shops and whatnot. And, of course, the machinists could go over to Lockheed and make twice what they wanted to pay him. So this has always been the crux of this outsourcing fight that's going on now with General Motors and all the other large manufacturers.

TS: Sure. Who were some of these people who were against the plant? Can you name any of them?

DM: Back then, I don't know. You have to remember at my age level; I went to college when I was sixteen years old. I can just tell you though, in summation, in looking back, that the people that owned plants probably weren't in favor of it at all. You could figure it out where it was and that would be it; but people who owned land, you know, there's things that could sell the land to them at a large profit and did. Overall, the attitudes of the people and meshing these people into the local society without friction was done as well as you could ever hope for it to be. The churches had growth; the churches got people in that they came and they went; they caused problems and everything else. Lots of the local girls, especially with the air force continuing to come in and through USO dances and whatnot, met young men and married them. We have friends who married them and have become valuable members of society here in the local community. But, overall, the county and the city handled the integration . . . the influx of people. See, the city of Marietta had 7,200 people approximately.

TS: A little under 9,000.

DM: They counted the cemetery to get 9,000. The county, I don't suppose had 20,000 people total in it.

TS: There's 38,000 in 1940. But you're right, it's very small.

DM: And I probably knew these facts at one time, but that don't help you sell life insurance. Anyway, I don't know where they got 30,000. Marietta was the biggest city; and then you give them 9,000 that was a fourth of it. Powder Springs wasn't even incorporated.

TS: It was very small at that time.

DM: My family lived over there. Acworth, I don't know as they had 1,200 people. Smyrna didn't have 2,000.

TS: They were all very small.

DM: And the agriculture was scattered. You add up 40,000; it takes time. The Chamber of Commerce got you up there in a hurry. Anyway, the county people accepted them is the biggest thing. They didn't ostracize them; they took them at face value. There were two cultures. The northern culture from the Bell people who came in here from Buffalo. Have you ever been to Buffalo?

TS: Oh, yes.

DM: All right, then you know what I'm saying. I didn't get familiar with them when Bell came in here. I did later on as a naval officer when I had the Chevrolet plant that was making 3350 engines for me up at Tonawanda. You got very familiar with that culture in a hurry.

TS: I know where Tonawanda is. That's very near the Niagara Falls plant.

DM: Yes. That's the dirtiest city I've ever been in in my life.

TS: With the steel Bethlehem Steel and so on.

DM: You put a clean shirt on in the morning, and you go to work out there at that damn engine plant, why, five o'clock that thing looked like it had a gray side. But you have to admire the people. We used to say, " You Yankee boys come in here and get a bite of cornbread and turnip greens" ; and they weren't fixing to go home and eat that dadgum scrapple.

- TS: This really does begin the migration of northerners into this area, doesn't it?
- DM: Yes, this opened the door. And I think the local people handled it well. Of course, you have to remember now, I'm an outsider looking in because along about this time I went in the service and I was divorced from it. I didn't come home until 1963.
- TS: Must have seemed like a very different county when you came back in '63.
- DM: Well, of course, we had been fortunate in that I married a local girl, and we had been able to come home fairly often. We didn't get married until '47; and I was stationed at Warner Robins for two years; so I saw the expansion. Things would be different every time I came home after two years or three years, something like that. But you didn't have whole lots of friction. Mother was in the sheriff's office at the time; and, of course, I'd get a first-hand review of local problems taking place of the two societies meshing. Sometimes they didn't mesh; but, most of the time, there were really no problems on the business side of it. But agricultural started slipping out the door very rapidly after the War. I don't think there's a single farmer in Cobb County today; and there hadn't been one that's actively pursuing a living except for truck farming for twenty years. Maybe, that's the good Lord's design; that's the way he wanted it. But I can say that I'm proud to be a Georgian because we contributed to the War effort and we did a good job. The Bell plant, the enormity of the plant was the thing that startled most of us. We didn't have any concept about any forty-four acre building. We had no concept of putting rail car loads of three by five, three by six Mississippi pine on the roof and declining it and how to do it. We didn't know. We had to be trained, we had to be taught. And then build it up and get it done. But the design of the building was good. Robert and Company needs to be commended. And it did it economically. This is the cheapest plant that was built during the War for the size of it. When you got into the cost figures.

TS: I probably ought to ask you a few questions about that. I know you were very young at the time, but my impression is that Robert and Company got a lot of contracts because they had a lot of political connections.

DM: They did.

TS: But they must have been able to do a pretty decent job if they could build a plant like this.

DM: Well, not only that, but they built army bases; they built air force bases; they built a big part of the nuclear system up at Oak Ridge. While I worked for them, I went to Hinesville, and we estimated what it was going to cost to put up the barracks and prepared the cost estimates and everything. Sat in that dadgum motel room down there where the motel was a cabin--no air conditioning, all the mosquitoes you wanted, greasy food, and no recreation. Corn liquor to drink and plenty of it. God knows nobody would touch it. But Robert was a tremendous company. They had some outstanding people working for them -- Mr. Wey. Mr. Robert himself did not interfere with the operation of the building of this plant. None. He used no political input because Les Leonard was the key to it. Red Robert was the vice president in charge of it. He had an administrative office over in the . . .

TS: Red Robert?

DM: Red Robert. I don't know what his name was; that's all I ever knew.

TS: Was he one of the Robert family?

DM: He was a brother to Chip, but Chip did not interfere.

TS: Chip is the one that gets his picture taken every time. But Red is the one that does the work?

DM: Red did an excellent job of bringing all the ends together. But the man that built the plant was Lester Leonard. They had the army Colonel Randall in here. Boy that guy was something else.

TS: Something else?

DM: Yes, I thought he didn't know who I was, didn't have any use for me whatsoever. And one day he had a lieutenant, his aide Northstead--we were having lunch--and Northstead said, "David, the colonel wants to talk to you." I said, "What have I done now?" I said, "The only time I see him he's chewing." He said, "Well, come on in and talk to him." The colonel wanted to give me a second lieutenant's commission and go with him on the Alaskan Highway. I told him, I said, "That place gets cold, doesn't it?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Uh-uh then." Of course, I didn't tell him I was already in the Navy. [laughter] He might have shot me.

TS: Now, when you were involved in keeping up with the progress of the sub-contractors, were you involved in all aspects of the building of the plant?

DM: We covered every stitch of it. Everything from Broadway electric to stringing cables into tunnels out there, under the building. If you get a real liberal tour of that place, there's tunnels that run the length of the building; and this is where the utilities were supposed to be put; and we had hangers that we put on one wall.

TS: You said they were supposed to be put?

DM: They were, yes. That's where the heavy-duty wiring was put. Then they had another contractor, a combustion engineering, that did all the mechanical work. They were out of New York and they were a good company. The Broadway was. They had a general contractor named Miller Electric from Jacksonville, Florida. They did all the electrical work, you know, general, putting in switches or something like that.

McDougal was the general construction carpenter type thing. He did all the finish work in the B-1 building and he built the administration building. One of the most interesting buildings out there is the storage building that's located on the east side of the building. It has one of the first ring lock expansion . . . that building has wooden thrusts in it, it's total wood. And they used a ring with a slip ring in the joints to make

it stay tight, to cover expansion and contraction. It was a real engineering design job. And the B-6 building as I remember was the paint building where final finish, was a nice building, well constructed. It had water screens and it controlled the spray paint over-runs and prevented combustion.

TS: So, you don't have any horror stories of building the plant then.

DM: Well, we lost people. Bethlehem Steel had people fall off that steel out there and get killed. And everyone of them walked off the job, they're gone today. That was their code; the way they lived. But we had turnip poles that were running out there and those suckers run forty-fifty miles an hour; and when you get a sprinkler raining on that red clay out there and they popped the brakes on one of those things, why, it'd just do that. We had some people killed. But there were no real horror stories, there were no conflicts. The only people we had accused of swindling was two inspectors that worked for the Robert & Company; and they were taking bribes from Joe Palooka.

TS: Joe Palooka?

DM: DePalma.

TS: Taking bribes from Joe DePalma?

DM: Yes. They looked the other way when he was pouring concrete and filling. One of them was a great old, big fella and they were wrapping hundred dollar bills around those Havatampa cigars that had the cedar wrap around it; they were putting a hundred dollar bill and then hand it to him. Nobody would pay attention to it but the FBI caught them.

TS: I guess they had to do it over again then, didn't they?

DM: It was quite a bit of hair pulling about it. Leroy Leonard and Bass worked it out. Leroy was a field superintendent; he had a cocked eye and smart as hell. He was everywhere at one time. He drove an old Chevrolet automobile, tore that thing all to pieces. But they

worked out all the details. Arthur Pew was a good contractor. He put in all the sewage.

TS: Now, what did they do to DePalma? Did he go to jail?

DM: I don't know what happened to DePalma. He got caught about the time I left Robert & Company and became a permanent resident at Auburn and a resident in the Navy and all that stew was going on about that time. But the Campbell Coal Company, believe it or not, prepared all the concrete. An interesting sidebar to that construction was the concrete trucks; they had four and the biggest trucks they had was a six yard truck; and a number of them that we had were pouring that thing. It looked like a little convoy all the time with them just running in circles from the plant, see. So we had requirements, why we had a fifty-seven stone that was called Rollo stone from a quarry over in Augusta.

TS: What kind of stones?

DM: Rollo. And it's number fifty-seven which means that it passes, under federal C's, a fifty-seven is about that square. And then we had sand that had to have a certain granular construction--moisture content and you put bulk cement, so much bulk cement in the hopper and so much rock, so much sand and then so much water. They agitated it and mixed it and they had a slump test that had to be performed with each truck and --do you know what a slump test is?

TS: No, not really.

DM: You have a square board and you have a cone just about that big at the bottom, about yea big at the top, and you fill up the cone with concrete. You wait at a determined time, lift the cone up, if it falls more than three inches or four inches what the spec is on it, you're rejected. Because it's one; they got too much water in it or two; they don't have enough sand or three; they don't have the proper amount of cement. And then they have another contractor, Mississippi Testing Company that took round samples about six inches in diameter and twelve or fourteen inches in length; and they were three day, seven day, fifteen day, twenty-one day, thirty day, sixty days.

They had a huge hydraulic press with all kinds of dials and gauges that you could measure the breaking point with it and so after it's determined if the concrete was the proper mix and that it poured properly. They had an office at the old Gardner House.

TS: The Gardner House?

DM: Yes. That's where Lester Leonard and Leroy were headquartered, where all the superintendents of the various projects. We had mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, railroad engineers, all the people housed there. I don't know; the contractors just went on and on as you can imagine and some of them had significant jobs; Bethlehem Steel furnished and erected all the steel in the company and there was another company that provided the doors and hung them. And I've forgotten what the name of that paint company was. They had the most drunks I've ever seen, though. But they didn't get drunk on the job.

TS: Well, thank you very much for the interview.

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