

Interview with Ron Wigren?

No Date Listed

Interviewer (I): What year were you born?

Ron Wigren (RW): '36. 1936

I: What kind of career did your dad have?

RW: What country was my dad?

I: No, career, did your dad have.

RW: Oh, he was in sales for Sears and Roebuck

I: Yeah? Was he a part of the union?

RW: No.

I: No? No union?

RW: No union.

I: Okay, when did you start working?

RW: I started working in 1955.

I: Yeah? And where'd you start working at?

RW: It was manufacturing at Manning, Maxwell, and Moore. Building cranes. Budgit Hoists.

I: Okay. How many different jobs have you had?

RW: Well, man oh man I have had- I'm going to tell you about 35, maybe 40.

I: Yeah? Were any of them unions or...?

RW: Some were. Probably about, probably about- oh I'd say 30% of them were union jobs.

I: Yeah? Did you have any strikes that you were involved in?

RW: I did but that was at Michigan Springs but I was in management then so I had to work.

I: So what was the strike about what were they striking about?

RW: Just wages.

I: Yeah, wages?

RW: Wages and benefits.

I: Would you say Michigan Springs was your favorite job?

RW: Well, I retired from there so I'd have to say yeah it was.

I: Just because you retired there?

RW: I enjoyed the work, and I worked out on the quarry for many years before I went into management, so it was pretty easy for me to understand the things that were going on because I had been on both sides of that wall.

I: Yeah? Could you tell me some of your worst experiences?

RW: Well mainly, as far as experiences go, I learned to run and operate- set up and operate many different styles of machines. Forming machines, compressors, breaks, blades, big drill presses, [Unintelligible] drill press, radio drill, so, you know it was a pretty rounded education on running manufacturing equipment.

I: Okay. Do you have any bad experiences from work?

RW: Oh bad experiences. [Laughs] Getting laid off and having to find new work mainly.

I: Yeah? Did you ever have to- Because you said you were in management, did you ever have to fire anybody?

RW: Oh yeah.

I: Was that tough?

RW: Oh, not really. You know, because by the time I had to fire them they already had it coming. These were people who either wouldn't come to work, or they wouldn't work while they were at work. Nothing marginal, you know?

I: What would you say some of your most proud accomplishments are?

RW: Oh boy... Well I built that machine the [Unintelligible] tow hook machine from the ground up. That was to form that, I think it was 5/16 rod for the [Unintelligible] tow hook. That was a pretty good accomplishment. Going to work out in Texas, running that plant for Michigan Springs for four months till we got it off the ground was a pretty good accomplishment, and then actually retiring from one company after 30 years of service or 35 years of service was quite an accomplishment. [Laughs]

I: Yeah, that is quite an accomplishment nowadays.

RW: It don't happen usually, you know.

I: Because businesses are going out and across the seas.

RW: For sure, yep.

I: So, throughout your lifetime of jobs what kind of social problems have you gone through?

RW: Social problems?

I: Yeah, any social problems?

RW: Not really.

I: Any economical?

RW: Oh yeah, you know when I was laid off in between jobs I had to travel all the way over to Flint just to lay blocks to make a living. For work, you know? In the '60s there wasn't a whole lot of work around. I had to do a fair amount of traveling just to find work. One job I had at the Michigan Foundry Supply was shoveling cast iron dust and that was- [Laughs] that was pretty tough.

I: Yeah, I bet. Sounds kinda exhausting.

RW: For minimum wage, you know.

I: Yeah. Did you have- You had kids throughout the '60s didn't you?

RW: Yeah. I had Rhonda.

I: You had Rhonda?

RW: [Grunts to the Affirmative]

I: So what was going on through the '60s that was so hard to get jobs?

RW: The economy. The economy in Michigan was down like it is right now. So there wasn't a whole lot of available work.

I: Was that because of political reasons?

RW: Not really. I think the economy, the auto manufacturing was off and, you know, that kinda runs Michigan. I mean, you know, if they're down long enough that kinda effects everything. It was just the economy, about like it is right now. The economy just sucks right now, you know?

I: Pretty crappy around here, hard to get jobs.

RW: It is. You look at most of the jobs you're gonna find are service jobs, you know, service oriented jobs. Not a whole lot of manufacturing jobs are available.

I: Yeah. Lot of minimum wage jobs out there.

RW: Yep, a lot of them. Minimum wage you bet.

I: Was there any critical decisions that affected your job history, your career history?

RW: Not really.

I: No? Okay, I think that's pretty much it.

RW: Okay.

I: That's all of my questions for you.

RW: I hope it helps!

I: Yeah, I hope it does too. Thanks grandpa!

RW: You bet buddy!

[Interviewer hangs up, forgets to turn off the recorder, and listen to reality TV for almost half an hour before he turns off the recorder.]

[END OF INTERVIEW]