

Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois

Kevin Hale Oral History Interview

Matthew Hale, Interviewer

Pontoon Beach, Illinois

October 6, 2018

Matthew Hale (MH): The following interview was conducted with Kevin Hale on behalf of the Madison County Oral History Project as part of Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive from Madison County Illinois. The interview took place in the house of Kevin Hale in Pontoon Beach, Illinois. The interviewer is Matthew Hale, a student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Alright, so, Kevin how you doing?

Kevin Hale: (KH): Doing well yourself?

MH: I'm doing great I'm great! So tell me a little bit about growing up in Alton, the Alton Area.

KH: Growing up in the Alton area, it was a much different time, I mean those were days you could go outside and you could play and not have to be worried about anything, we'd get up, oh, you know all day long the only time we'd come home when it was time to eat or go to bed, take a bath go to bed as uh in regard to it the town itself, manufacturing was a big part of the area you had Olin brass and Winchester together, one made brass, one made ammunition. Then you had, uh, Olin's Glass Company in Alton, they then made, just what said, bottles and glass products... and then he had the steel mill in Alton, so manufacturing was a big part of growing up it provided a lot of good wages provided, uh, a lot of income to the county in the form of tax revenue. It helped the com... uh... the communities by having people, um, go to the restaurants go to the stores... when, uh, we were growing up it's a much different time though, I recall times when my grandpa would just take people off the street and, uh, bring him in get him something to eat, you don't see much of that these days.

MH: So, kind of going off of that, how late did you and your brothers and your friends stay out, typically?

KH: Depends what night of the week it was, uh, if it was during the week, and there wasn't school, we, we would probably go inside the eight at the latest, if it was a weekend, or during the summer yeah you're talking 10 11 o'clock at night.

MH: So you also grew up in this manufacturing centered city; how big of a deal was that to the residents of the area, would you say?

KH: I'd say it was a very big deal without Olin brass there, Olin Brass and Winchester at the time, you wouldn't have the tax revenues being generated that would keep the, the, the roads fixed would keep other people's property taxes down because the more company pays into it hopefully you can lower the residential tax rate, so it did have a big impact, I mean, people that was their livelihood you take the

manufacturing away, ya, you lose a lot of people.

MH: So... there are other companies in the area but was Olin Brass and Winchester sort of the biggest company that a presence there, or was it more of, ah, joint, kinda, everybody knew who everybody wasn't that equal kind of presence in town?

KH: Well from my recollection, uh, Olin Brass was the biggest. Uh, There were thousands, you know, two, three thousand people employed there. When I was older, I know there were at least 2,500, so I'm sure there were more growing up but, uh, Olin Brass had Olin's Illinois had fewer, ah, people and I think the steel mill had fewer also.

MH: So, so your memory did, did Olin Brass start out as a small company?

KH: Yes it was a very small company and, uh, it grew into a huge, diversified company it split from Olin Brass, Olin Brass and Winchester and Olin Corporation, they all split in 2007 so when we were under Olin Corp we also got into things like core alkalis and, uh, water stuff and, uh, there were all different kinds of businesses we got into. Today it's mainly metals for Olin Brass. Olin Corp still does all the other, other stuff and they actually have Winchester in their, uh, businesses.

MH: So, where's the actual Olin headquarters located at?

KH: The headquarters, our headquarters, is in, uh, Louisville. We also have a, a big presence in Schaumburg, Illinois we have corporate folks up there, we have corporate people in, ah, Louisville, so we're spread out

MH: So, kind of speaking of growing up with Olin, uh, did you know anyone personally growing up that worked there?

KH: Well, my grandfather, he worked there, uh, he worked there for 47 and a half years we grew up with him probably... probably starting around third grade, we moved to him with them for a short time then moved out and then moved back in but basically grew up with him and, and Olin Brass, I remember many nights he'd get calls in the middle of night and say, "Come on down and help us out here we can't figure this out," and he'd yell and moan and groan, but he had the grab his stuff and he'd go it's only like a five block walk from his house and he walked many a night.

MH: So did the rest of your family or friends that you knew did they work close, uh, in town?

KH: My brother worked there briefly he didn't stay too long a... lot of people I went to high school with, they got out of high school went directly into, into Olin, others would try to go the, the college route

MH: So what was the perception of the county from people your age at the time when you were growing up was it, you know, the place to be or was it just a nice place to live?

KH: Well, my perspective from when I was growing up, I remember it being a very strong democratic stronghold. Unions were really big there, uh, every business was unionized, and it was a good union then, they would actually take care of their people, unlike today when the uh, unions my not help so much.

MH: Did you ever witness, uh, say, strikes or protests from unions?

KH: We... had a strike in the 70s, my grandpa did. He was part of it in the 70s and, uh, I do recall those days though, we didn't eat nearly as well as we used to when he wasn't on strike but, uh, when I was there in 2000 there was a strike, and I was already part of the management team so I had to go and, while the uh, pro... picketers were outside the gates, uh, picketing.

MH: Was it a scary experience or was it something that, you know, you just walked through and didn't really pay much mind to?

KH: In my case, it wasn't bad at all, I mean, I knew the, the picketers and stuff, uh, there's this one guy named Leonard, I won't use his last name but, uh, he'd be... Leonard and I were were real good friends there and, uh, he was part of the hourly union workforce and I was a salary person, but I'd be going through the gate he'd yell at me to, you know, this scab, you know, and all this other stuff and then he'd come up to me whisper in my ear, "Hey can you go get me a pack of cigarettes from Quick Trip," and come on back, so I'd go get those him too then he'd start yelling at me again, you know, it wasn't bad... but there were others who were harassed, uh, and it did get a little nasty, not like the protest today, uh, but it did get a little nasty.

MH: Was it, like, physically nasty or was it verbally abusive?

KH: Mostly verbally. A few altercations, but mostly verbal.

MH: Did they have chants and all that stuff that you, was it a stereotypical strike or was it sort of like a more unconventional?

KH: It was more, uh, they're gonna walk the picket line if you come, if you cross the line they're gonna yell at you. It was, um, was very few occurrences of where they actually stopped tried to stop you from going in or anything like that, it was more of a peaceful strike as I recall.

MH: Did they ever ask you to strike?

KH: No... no. They knew I wouldn't

MH: So did your co-workers kind of have the similar view to you? I know you said some of them were harassed but was the general consensus, uh, consensus, um, kind of... these guys are my friends and they're just yelling at me for show.

KH: I obviously can't speak for everyone but, uh, most of the folks I were with, the people I were with, they would, uh, agree it wasn't too bad. Now, one person, he actually felt scared but, I was never to that point, I never got there I'd actually pick him up and we'd go in together after that, so... it wasn't too bad.

MH: Okay so, uh, jumping in to your educational background, uh, getting in to high school, what was the high school experience like in Madison County?

KH: High school back in those days was very, very differently, I mean, you had the trade schools, you

had electricity, you had drafting, um, machine shop, welding all the good stuff, woodworking the, the trades that were really good, I mean I don't know why we ever got away from those because they're good-paying jobs and they're well needed and you need to have trade schools and today they're kind of frowned upon in some places, but they did thrive back in the day and auto shop, I forgot about that. My, uh, brother wrecked his car like two hours after he got it, they took it to auto shop and got it going, so... took a while but, it was smashed pretty good... but other than that the high school experience, well, it was pretty typical, you had all you had those who wanted to... to do the trade you had others who wanted to do that the science part of it, so... it was very typical.

MH: So growing up, uh, in high school for me, there wasn't many social, like, I guess... uh, cliques I should say, uh. What... What was the kind of the experience of that for you?

KH: For me, uh, I didn't have any... uh... cliques I was in or anything I was very introverted, I didn't want to see people in high school it was just I wanted to go home and do whatever I wanted to do, I had a couple friends but they didn't go to my high school, they went to Alton High. We would hang out together and, uh, that was about to extent my social life there in high in high school, wasn't anything to write home about didn't go to the prom, didn't care if I went to the prom. I just, uh, wanted to go, learn, graduate.

MH: So was there a rivalry between, uh, you went to East Alton...

KH: East Alton

MH: Wood River and was there rival, rivalry between East Alton High and Alton High?

KH: There was. A very good rivalry and also with us and Roxanna Shells. We didn't like the Shells... and uh, they were always good... good rivalry games, it's not like the games that, uh, I went to in, in high school here recently where high school football games I've never seen it when, uh, you had such a police presence there, it's just, I couldn't believe it. Uh, back then it was a friendly rivalry, you know, wasn't getting your face and yell or anything it was, that side of the field's going to scream when they they see something they like, the other side's going to scream when they do, and that was about it, everybody went home and, uh, got along they had a good old time.

MH: So, did you have a favorite teacher or a class that you took?

KH: I had... I had a few good teachers, I liked, um... my chemistry teacher I cannot, remember his name, Mr. Hallameyer, that's who he was. He was, uh, quite the prankster I like that, he'd get us all together and, uh, we'd play tricks on the physics, physics class but with applying the principles of chemistry when we did it. Well the physics class was applied the principles of physics when they retaliated with that so it was, it was, uh, very harmless but it was fun.

MH: What kind of pranks is you guys pull?

KH: Uh, there was a lot of stuff where... I recall a lot of stink bombs going on, and, um, there's my chemistry days are long gone so I can't remember what it was, but we'd made this one thing where you throw, you throw it on the floor and step on it would pop real loud, almost like a, uh, a round going off.

MH: So, how would you compare high school classes of today, uh, back to, maybe, when you went to high school, because, you know, these days, prank wars aren't exactly smiled upon by today's school's administration.

KH: Correct, and I'm not saying that we're smiled upon by ours either, we just went ahead and did it but, uh, today's schools are, from what I gather, I'm obviously... I haven't been in high school since 1976, but, uh, the high schools today I would not care, care to go. Um, they seem very violent the, the very disruptive student body; I just, I just couldn't imagine myself doing that. I went to the middle school the other day and was, uh, waiting in the office to pick someone up, and there was this student that just came back from suspension, well, for fighting, well the girls that they were fighting, passed by the office and they just came back... from suspension also they more or less put their head to the, to the glass of the door said they were going to jump her later on today so, I, we didn't have all that back in our day you know it wasn't a love fest but, we didn't have a bunch of, uh, mouthing off and disrupting class and, uh, everybody fighting. We did have fights but not to that extent.

MH: Do you think this is because of the location, or because of society as a whole...

KH: I think that's the way society has become, I mean, uh, it's like today, it's you can't tell me what to do. I'm, I'm allowed, I should be allowed to do whatever I want to do and I disagree with that there's, we need to have more discipline in the schools, but as a teacher, you get in trouble from, again, from my perspective, you get in trouble if you discipline your students and I don't understand that. On the other hand teachers today seem to be more vocal about political processes in the classroom and I don't see any, any need for that and just teach the course, have a good discourse but don't bring in a bunch of your opinions and all that. Let's just stick to the facts, I mean, if you want to have a forum where that's what you do, if it's a kind of class where you discuss current events, that's great, but don't just start in interjecting the, the news of the day into your study plan unless it's, uh, necessary.

MH: Okay, so getting into college, uh, can you... name the, all the colleges that you went to because I know you went to a lot of them all around the country.

KH: Well I did. I started out with, uh, SIUE, back in the day when, you know, there wasn't much there. My favorite building was still the, the library and it still is today I love that library, and the, and the bowling alley that's about what I like but it was, I enjoyed it. It was, um, that's when I first started getting interested in talking to other people and stuff, you know, getting their opinion, start socialize I, I'd really like that. After that, it was, uh, Lewis and Clark, for a little bit to start taking some other general studies, that was quite different than, um, SIU I like SIU... I like to format but I like bigger school and, um, nothing against Lewis and Clark, but it just didn't seem quite as good as SIU. After SIU, um, it was the University of Texas; went there for year and a half with the Inspector and Structure staff in the Marine Corps. I loved University of Texas. You talk about, uh, some wild times, I mean, the teachers were crazy and we had a good old time. I've really enjoyed that, that is the probably the best year and a half there. I wasn't a stellar student there, but some of my best classes, some of the classes I enjoyed most were some of those that I did not, um, do very well in. I really loved him. Love the botany teacher didn't do well in botany at all, but the course was fun. Went from there... to, uh, Northern Virginia Community College. Very, very intense. Uh, would go four nights a week at one point that have to be very, very demanding, but in there also took a, a, a brief... um, stint to go to George Washington University now George

Washington ended up being one of those universities that was just did not coincide with, with my values it was a very liberal college at the time and, uh, Iran was going on and I was in the military I was obvious, it was obvious I was in the military and some of the situations... happened that really didn't need to because the teacher just seemed to harp on all the military and stuff and yeah I try to keep my mouth shut and I did, only I only did one semester there because it just wasn't worth the effort. After that, uh, Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois. Got a BS in Organizational Leadership in, uh, 2000. And, uh, I really enjoyed that, it was... you go once, one night a week in Lewis and Clark but you'd always have the Greenville College professors doing the instruction. It was a good, good experience, you'd have the same cohort with you throughout the program it was very intense you have five-week programs you're constantly writing papers, and then at the end of you have a capstone project and it was... it was very, uh, demanding but, I really enjoyed it I miss my professor, uh, Professor Beans; he was very good at what he did and, uh... he kept us all under control in many cases then it could have really gotten out of hand because you have older adults, we obviously have a lot of opinions and some of them came out real quick... but he kept it under control. And that was that's been my college experiences yeah it's been a lot of them, but I've seen a lot of different, uh, aspects of it I've enjoyed it. If I can afford it, I just do nothing but go to college, but, can't do that! Kids want to eat and so does my wife.

MH: So... uh, what's interesting here is that you bounced around from these big universities and also once that community college as well, what was the differences in sort of a vibe and the culture between, uh, these community colleges and these four-year universities?

KH: The four-year universities seemed more, you know, I don't know if it's focused, but they, this is what you need to do, let's do this, you know, let's go there and Community College was, you know, these are your general studies, you know, try to get some of those out of the way and we'll see how how you're going there. I think the instructors, nothing against the Community Colleges but, the instructors just weren't the same caliber as a regular four-year university professor at least in my experience. I haven't been there in years the might have changed now, uh, community colleges are very respectable they're very affordable. Today's college prices that's what you have to do, and I understand that. Now if they all transfer, good, if they don't, you're wasting your time.

MH: Alright, getting into your military background now, you joined the Marine Corps correct?

KH: That is correct. I joined the Marine Corps, um, March 23, 1978. I got out, uh, October the 18, 1987. I was a legal clerk, actually a court stenographer by trade, but I never took any, any courts. We've seen a lot of cases, uh, we'd have Officer discipline cases where officers would get in trouble and they'd have to be, uh, taken to court-martial or how punished however. Very interesting, uh, very interesting I spent, like I said a year and a half in, uh, the Inspector Instructor Unit at University of Texas then went to the, um, Second Marine Division in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina now there you really that's Marine Corps it took me a while to get used to that, I've done a two years tour in Hawaii where you you'd get up at the crack of 8 o'clock and go to work and you get to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and they'd getting up at five o'clock, I think, "what is this?" But it was very good, I enjoyed it I mean it, the, the work was fun, there was a lot of it a lot of a lot of people in trouble, but they, um, did their best to keep every, every one disciplined and get him go it was it's a good time. Got a Navy Commendation Medal out of it and I really enjoyed it. I don't regret one day of it.

MH: So, being in the Marines, you had to go through basic training...

KH: Correct!

MH: What was that like, because, today you see videos of it and, it's scary people in your face and all this crawling around in the dirt, and doing a whole bunch of, uh, this training how is it back in when you joined?

KH: Today's training it's a lot different than when I went in, in many respects. In some ways today's training is harder, other respects it's not. When I went in, it was in your face type thing you'd get the drill instructor with this campaign covered put it right in the middle of your nose there and just start yelling at you. And, uh, they could get away with it then they can't today. You're supposed to not be able to, to yell or swear and I just don't understand that part because that was part of it. You want to take this group of men or women you want to break them down, you want them to learn to work together to solve, solve the problems together, you want to put your life in their hands, they put their life in yours. You can't have 50 different, uh, opinions going on there has to be one way to do it, you have to have designated people who are going to tell you what to do would want to need to do it and then everyone else has to execute. In order to do that you just have to break it itself down mentally and physically. Once you realize that, it's easy. It took me, oh, maybe two months to realize that then, oh okay, this is why we're doing it. We don't want a bunch of individuals just going out doing whatever they want to do in a combat situation. You gonna have someone say, "You, take that hill, here's how you do it, go." And it's a... much different than, uh, being out in the private sector. From a training perspective, from what I've seen today, today's training just seems harder to me. Maybe it's cuz I'm 60 years old and it just looks like a lot of work but, I don't recall doing the, the kind of training that they did... um back in my day. We didn't have it easy, by any stretch of the imagination, but just seems the courses they have set up now just seem much more difficult and... well I still got to wear the uniform and that's what I liked. I'll always be a Marine it's a brotherhood or sisterhood and... you can start yelling there's other people the Marines can fight amongst themselves, but when you step in the Marines will always tell you to get out of there. We take care of our own.

MH: So you entered the Marine Corps in peacetime

KH: Correct

MH: How would your... how would you think your experience were different if you went in, say, during a conflict?

KH: I would think, like after 9/11, you had a lot of people just join up. I would think after a conflict like that, the training would be very intensified. No kidding around. This is what we're going to do, here is our objective. This is what happened to us I'm, I don't know what they did, but I'm sure they would keep referencing 9/11. This is what happened we lost 3,000 lives from somebody coming into our country. Now we have to go to theirs and we have to even the score, I can't imagine that the training would be very, uh, very soft. I'd imagine be very intensified.

MH: So, did joining the Marines help you with your career today? Do you still use the things you've learned back when you're on the Marine Corps in your job today?

KH: The leadership skills, I think it helped, but, uh, like I was saying with the Marine Corps you usually have one person telling you what to do, when to do it, how to do it then you go from there. The private sector is different. You have to look at everyone that you're in charge of. You have to know what makes them tick, you have to know whether they like to be told what to do or or just be held by the hand and instructed what to do. You have very different types of leadership skills that you have to incorporate to, to get the job done I have people that you have to tell them step by step what to do and others you just say this is what I want done, you let them go and they do it. Somewhere in the middle are the rest of them, so you have to know your people. Marine Corps helped me do that, but, uh, the authoritative style of the Marine Corps doesn't always apply in the manufacturing. Just ask Human Resources they really don't appreciate you getting in everyone's face and yelling at them, but there are times when I didn't appreciate me having to beg them to do their job that that's a different story I guess.

MH: So, did you almost have to fight that instinct that you learned in the Marine Corps when you first started your job; to not get in their face and yell, or was that something that you just knew right off the bat that you could have to treat everybody differently?

KH: I fight that to the, to this day. People come in, start yelling at me; I have a tendency to just start yelling back, that's the way it is, you're gonna take me on I'm coming back, I'm gonna get you. You're gonna bark at me, I'm barking back. And likewise, if I bark at them and they bark at me, hey, it's usually we're done after that, you know, we don't go fill out a lot of paperwork or anything like that but, uh, we have our own way of dealing with our internal problems we don't like to take him outside our department. We normally handle them there but the Marine Corps has helped me to do that and it has been a curse in that I can't get away from it all the time.

MH: So, how many veterans are... do you work with?

KH: In my department?

MH: Yes.

KH: Five. I've had the Marine Corps, Navy, Army, and Marines.... and Air Force I forgot. He no longer works with me, but he was in the Air Force. So we've had them all.

MH: Do you guys joke around with, you know, make fun of each other for a branch you were in?

KH: Well yeah, I just said this the facts straight, "You weren't in the military because you weren't in the Marine Corps." Yes we joke around that way. I have nothing but the utmost respect for all the branches of service but yeah, we always throw each other jabs at each other that's just the way it is. I mean that's the way it is in the military, you're just gonna do that. That's why I had to go on the mila... in the Marine Corps, my brother went in the Air Force... hey, I'm gonna go the other end of the spectrum here, he'll be in the Air Force, I'll be in the Marine Corps. And that's how that happened.

MH: So what made you want to work for Olin Brass?

KH: I wanted to eat. When I got out of the Marine Corps, I was without a job for six months and then one day I got a call says, "You want to work for Olin Brass?" so I said, "I'll be right there." That's been,

uh, 30 years ago, and uh, going strong since it's provided a good standard of living for me, uh... I've... if I've missed any meals during that time, is it because I wanted to, not because I couldn't afford to eat. I believe it's helped to provide a decent living to support my family, I mean everyone would like to obviously have more of it but, we're really not hurting too much. We have our basic needs and we still have our worries about how we're going to accomplish things but, it hasn't been bad at all it's been a very good experience.

MH: So, since you have relatives that worked at Olin Brass, did that sway your decision?

KH: I knew my grandpa worked there and he wouldn't... mind if I worked there, he passed away before I did get there but, what... he would sent me down and just start talking about Olin and all the people there in all the places. When I walked in there, I felt like I already, I know already worked there I knew the people he was talking about, I knew the places he was talking about it made it very easy. I don't know how he did it for 47 and a half years, but I've already done it for 30 so he did it a much more difficult time that didn't have all the safety standards, you know, you didn't have all your, uh, protective equipment for your ears, your eyes, your hands. They did it in a very, very difficult manner I mean it was a physical job. Not so much today, we have a lot of equipment to help take care of, uh, of stuff that would normally cause injuries.

MH: Do you know what your grandpa's generation did probably, that would make it so physical?

KH: They didn't have all the equipment that we have today. I mean we have specialty, uh, cranes, specialty forklifts and, uh, things to lift all heavy stuff where, in my day even, you may have to lift 7,500 pounds put it on your shoulder and then go a few feet you don't have to do that now you have jib cranes for it and all kinds of equipment to take care of those issues, that's good and bad I mean you if you have equipment like that; now you have more soft tissue injuries because your body isn't in the shape it was, when I was doing one job that was very physically demanding I was in the best shape of my life I felt great, but now I'm obviously not so great shape, but uh... it's... it's a lot different.

MH: So [clears throat]... describe to me, uh... never worked, doesn't have a clue about the operations whatsoever, kind of, describe to me as, uh, someone who doesn't know a thing about it what you do day to day.

KH: Well let...

MH: As best as you can.

KH: Let me give you a bigger perspective here. We'll start with, what we call the DC casting plant, DC stands for direct chill, they take metal, melt it down, put it in what we call, "bar form," it may be 20, 30 feet long and, uh, 7 to 9 inches thick. 26 to 30 inches wide it's put in the bar form. And uh, we take it from there. Those bars are made from scrap, that scrap is either purchased or scrapped that my guys will deliver from the brass metal on metal transport trucks to the casting plant so they can re-melt it so that's part of my, my guys job is to... to take scrap down there to be re-melted. Once they melt the scrap down and make bars out of it, they roll it down some more and they... they process it further and then it comes up to, to the brass mill. The casting plants on Route 3, it's about two, two and a half miles from the brass metal so we have to have my other guys, metal transfer truck drivers, take those coils that just got

processed at the casting plant and bring them up to the brass mill to be processed further, so I have a set of drivers taking it to the casting plant in scrap form and I have a set bringing it up in in coil form. Once that coil is processed at every step, they create scrap. That scrap goes back to the scrap dock, my guys take that scrap back down. Once that whole coil is processed, my other guys come into play that's called the shipping people. The metals processed, it's what we call finished goods, it's ready to go out the door, my shipping crew takes it, loads it on the trailer, we have a clerk that prints the paperwork, signed it's out the door, now we've actually generated the revenue. So it's a... the... operation I'm involved in is that absolute full circle of it. We go from the raw material, all the way to the finished project and out the door.

MH: So how long does this process take from getting from that raw material to shipping it out the door?

KH: It depends on what type of alloy it is, some of them take, what we call their eight-week alloys, it may take two months to produce and others, four weeks from start to finish it all depends what alloy it is.

MH: So, how many different alloys, uh, do you work with?

KH: I don't know the exact number, but, everything we make is copper-based, uh, so everything we make has copper in it goes up from there, you go from what we call alloy 110, which is just almost pure copper, all the way up to 260 which is copper and zinc, and then we have those high- performance alloys which is a hybrid of other, uh, materials that we put in and that's usually our high-dollar stuff that we make.

MH: So, what led you to this position in the company? Did you choose it, or where you just promoted it up to it?

KH: I was, a, a foreman... and I had talked to my boss when I was watching one of his metal transfer trucks from down the road, said, "That job ever comes open, the foreman for that, I'd like that job," and I got in a few years later, but... you know be careful what you ask for because they've been, uh, many occasions I wish I hadn't... didn't have that job that I do, I've stuck in there... it's a good job. If you get the right people to work for you, it's a pleasure.

MH: Is there a lot of people managing skills for your job?

KH: A lot! I mean you have younger people, you have older people getting ready to retire, you have everything else in between, uh, you have... people who don't mind working and the people who just want to get a paycheck, don't want to do anything else. Yeah you have to learn how to motivate them, how to, to take care of them, how to get them to do their job.

MH: So how far do you... uh, your branch ship? Is it nationwide, worldwide?

KH: Some ship worldwide, we have, uh, plants in China. We send stuff to, to Canada, we send stuff to Mexico. And, uh, we do get some of our material from Germany so, uh, it is worldwide.

MH: So describe some of the things that your product is used for.

KH: What we call Mint metal, it's a metal for the United States Mint. We make strips that the mint will press out, they will actually stamp out and it's four quarters, half dollars, gold dollars, or golden dollars

would be the correct terminology, dimes and nickels. We make all that material send it to either the Philly Mint or the Denver Mint and they stamp it out. I really, really like that. There's automobile parts that get stamped out, a lot of electronic stuff, we have stuff for, uh... oh, uh, households... very big in construction material.

MH: So would you say, everywhere you look, there's, uh materials from Olin Brass in something?

KH: A lot of places you looked at, now whether it all comes from Olin Brass it obviously doesn't or we'd have one heck of a business, I mean it'd be huge! Everything came from there but... uh, I'm sure we have a respectable market share.

MH: So, I'm kind of going back to the process of manufacturing and shipping the metal, how has that process change over the years or is kind of stick to this tried and true method?

KH: No it's changed a lot, we used to not have a DC casting plant. We used to just make it all on, uh, in one location well the business grew so much, that we had to find other property and build other buildings and expand and that's how we got the metal transfer trucks involved. They have to actually go from one area to the other. What's great now though, is back in the, in the day some of the coils were so heavy that you could only put one on a... on the trailer, because of the weight, we now have specialty trailers that, uh, can haul four or five coils at a time so, instead of one truck going with one coil and then coming back, I actually have one that can bring back four or five.

MH: How many trucks are operating under your jurisdiction?

KH: We have uh...

MH: Just give me an idea.

KH: We have we have two on scrap – two that can go on scrap. We have two that can go on coils. Then we have our other specialty trucks that, uh, go to other various facilities. We have... one, two, three... probably... five trucks... and seven or eight trailers, I'd have to give the exact count but...

MH: So are those trucks your companies, or are they somebody else's that have been, uh, loaned out to you?

KH: Three of those are owned by us, the rest, uh, we lease.

MH: What kind of companies, uh, lease those trucks to you?

KH: Oh any, any trucking company well you have Ryder Trucking you have Hogan Trucking. If we have needs we would go and try to find them.

MH: So do you have connections to other metal companies like US Steel locally here in Granite?

KH: I do not. I know no one from the steel industry. Steel and copper are two very different

forms of metal... and, I don't know anyone at those places, uh, I'm glad to see the steel industry's back in

Alton and in, uh, Granite City, that's a good thing for everyone.

MH: Would you say that the different types of metal for the demand for different types of metal have they changed over the years?

KH: Yes. They have changed as the economy... not really the economy, but as we, we have newer... technologies that come into place, we have different alloys for that. It has changed a lot, but some of the stuff has stayed tried-and-true like the mint metal. That's from the 60s and it's still the same stuff today so...

MH: Uh... have... has your company experienced, uh, sort of the change in regulations an increase at all?

KH: Any change in regulation affects us, yes, we have... just like in the other business, you can emit so much into the air and you can only haul so much, uh, per your Department of Transportation regulations, so yes. The EPA and the, the DOT are heavily regulating to us.

MH: So, how much technology do you think has been implemented over the years? Say computers or, umm, other kind of digital devices that maybe we weren't able to be used 50 years ago?

KH: I won't even go back 50 years, uh, we used to do everything by pen and paper probably... in the late 90s, mid to late 90s we'd still do everything by hand. It's just incredible when you sit back and think about it today. You guys had people with notepads just writing stuff down they go to each, what we call a mill ticket and they make all the changes and stuff, now we have the computers and all the technology starting to catch up with us we still have a long way to go we could do newer and better technology but, uh, compared today to what it was just a few years ago and it's amazing. It's a lot cheaper too you know, all those computers are relatively cheap now. When I was in the Marine Corps, I was so happy we had a computer we just got one and, uh, at work, and it had 64 megs of RAM in that thing [laughs] and you like it stuff today, and oh my word, I mean, look at your phone! It's amazing... and to think that we were real happy with that, you know, look at us. But it has changed a lot and we haven't kept up with it like we should have though I think we're making the turn.

MH: So when did the company first start using computers?

KH: I don't know when the first started using them.

MH: Uh... I should say when did your department start relying on them?

KH: Oh we start relying on them, more on them in in the late 90s, uh, early 2000s and it's worked up a lot since then, you know, if now the computer system goes down, no one knows what to do, which is kind of funny because in 2000, we had to do they come up with our plan in case the, the whole computer network went down because it's 2000, you know, we'd have to have a back-up plan which obviously nothing came of fruition of that at least for us, but, uh, I don't know how we would operate without our computers we can't, we can but it's not, uh, it's not a pretty sight.

MH: Is it odd working with people who are younger, more my age who pretty much rely on computers

just to live or, uh, compared to working with people in your generation or older that are have, or used to not using computers, uh, to function?

KH: I would take the younger generation any day the older ones, the computers just boggles their mind some of them, and it's, it's not a good thing. The younger ones know what to do, you know, I've even gone to them, "Hey how did I fix this?" "Why here's all you have to do," yeah I prefer the young ones who know how to use those.

MH: Would you say that the younger generation, in general, is more compliant, or they more do their own thing when it comes to their work ethic?

KH: There's the rub, I mean I'll take the, the younger generation for the computer aspect of it but I'll take the older one for work ethics. It seems like the younger ones it's all about them and the older ones are old school like I am, say, you're gonna pay me, I'm gonna work for that pay some of the some of the younger ones, not all of them, just want to be there and expect you to just pay them to show up. But they can have a good computer skills. No it needs to be somewhere in the middle. I'm, uh... I really like the old school work ethics that gets it out of there on time and we all go home and everybody's happy

MH: So how many jobs do you think, roughly, have been taken out because of computers in your department?

KH: In my department, none that I can recall. Everything we do is labor intensive I mean you'll need a forklift, you're gonna need a tractor-trailer, you're gonna need a crane to load and unload, you... I don't see where a computer would have taken anything out, we need a a billing clerk to actually run the paperwork. Nah, it hasn't affected us in my department.

MH: So is your department largely rely on the human aspects of work or more rely on the digital aspect or is it a good blend of both?

KH: Ways to blend of both a lot of it is the human aspect but, our guys can't take the metal until a computer actually says ok this is what you have on it, we printed this paperwork, you always have to have paperwork with you when you go down the road for DOT purposes, you have to show them what's on your, your trailer and what your load is. We can't bring the metal up without a manifest, we can't take you down without a manifest, It, uh, mostly human, but we still need the computer to get it done. That aspect of the job though it's easier to write a bill of lading, a manifest, if you will, by hand than is any other job

MH: So where do you see the future, of you, of Olin in the county?

KH: I hope it's here for a long time, um, it's had a good impact on the county provided a lot of jobs, a lot of revenue. I hope it's here for a long time, hope it's managed correctly and everyone gets to benefit here for many years.

MH: Now does outsourcing jobs heavily affect, uh, Olin?

KH: Not that I can see, I mean I obviously don't see all the jobs go on but I don't see a lot of outsourcing.

MH: Now does the movement toward buying American products, from a consumer standpoint, did that positively affect your business compared to buying metal from China or other overseas competition?

KH: I don't know how much of our business has been lost to overseas companies and we stayed pretty steady for a while. The American made is... I mean, we are proud to put our American- Made labels on each product that we send out and you, you realize that, uh, it's gonna cost more but you've also helped other Americans maintain, uh, their lifestyle so I really don't have any idea how much outside companies contribute, uh, to this economy.

MH: So do you think there's a stable future for the metal industry here in America?

KH: I would hope so but, uh, you never know. Always the trade wars and all that stuff they're good and bad. I understand that you want to keep stuff here in America you wanted Americans to, to benefit from it, but you may reach a point where you don't and the other companies just say I'm gonna buy it go overseas and buy it and bring it back in so even though they'll pay a higher tariff. It's hard to say.

MH: So one last thing I want to touch on is your time at the US bank in St. Louis. When did you start there?

KH: I don't have an exact time I've started there. I worked in it for seven and a half years. A lot of that was to save money to to spend for college tuition, I should have stayed longer apparently, it was a good ride we had I made a lot of friends there, I really enjoyed it. The work I was on my feet for eight hours high-speed environment and when you're an old man it's it's hard to do, the, the young kids could do it but I was already in my 50s when I started so, it was difficult. I missed the people, I don't miss some of the, the ways that they operated it. But I was only part-time anyway so I just grinned and bury it. I really did enjoy it though.

MH: So what was your favorite aspect of the job?

KH: at US Bank?

MH: Yes

KH: Actually being able to see, how your work is helping the economy. If you processing 50 or 60,000 checks a shift just yourself that's money that's going in and out of the economy you're actually helping other businesses get paid and keep everything going and I really enjoyed that.

MH: So, how much of that impact you think reciprocated back to Madison County?

KH: From U.S. Bank? That would be difficult to say. I don't know what other companies worked with US Bank or anything like that I only have a very limited scope of customers three or four and that was it. They obviously have a lot more than that.

MH: So, what was the culture like of working in downtown St. Louis compared to working in East Alton?

KH: All downtown St. Louis was always an experience always, always, always there were days I'd be pulling up and you'd see cars coming out of the, the parking garage the wrong way, someone was still in the vehicle, and the tires would get blown out when they hit the spike stuff going the wrong way but they're just going down the road sparks a flying there was an occasion where President Obama was coming to town and someone had fired a round through the through the window, so the Secret Service was there they were there ahead of his, his tour Secret Service came down and did all that. I got jumped one night, I did two stints at US bank oh my first one I got jumped and by six teenage boys. And uh, that wasn't a very good experience I was always happy when I was on the bridge on the way home. The East Alton, totally different you know you just stroll into town hardly anything going on and it was very, very good, but I do recall one day back at the bank, if I may go back there, we were having a fire drill and we were outside the bank and there was a please tape out there everybody's asking what happened there so that's where somebody got murdered last night, so a very interesting time that they had the police come in and give us a little I don't know not a lecture but they would inform us of all the crime in the area it was mind-boggling because you never really realized there was that much but it was a fun place, they all take care of you and you know we've all walked out together and stuff like that so that was always good.

MH: So, going back to your first stint, um, was it, how much long did it take for you adjusts, uh, from working in East Alton to working in St. Louis?

KH: On my first stint, it took a lot to adjust it was really something I was not good at. It had to use a we put on the MICR numbers on the bottom of the check I had to be real fast all night long you're just ten key and everything, everything I just couldn't keep up with that and it was it showed I didn't stay there real long I knew I couldn't do that. I couldn't keep up with it everyone else it's just amazing how some of those people would just fly eight hours steady just bang, bang, bang I don't know how they did it. I couldn't I realized that and had to give that up.

MH: Now get your co-workers, uh, for reference you worked next to the dome or close to the dome, uh, for reference so did you co-workers say, "Hey don't go to this area it's dangerous."

KH: Well the police did that the night I got jumped they said you know you really shouldn't be in that area anyway. I said well where were you like at midnight when I was leaving, that you couldn't tell me that then you know. It was a strange deal cuz I went to the garage owner the garage worker I should say so could you call the police I've been attacked, he wouldn't call the police, went into the hotel down there in St. Louis and said listen will you call please I've been attacked no we want our car police we'll give you the phone new call please so I called them and then the police come down took my statement they said you know you really shouldn't be in that area that late at night okay I realize that now, but they were kind enough to escort me to my vehicle so I could get on the bridge and go home.

MH: Alright, well, that's all the questions I have, uh, is there any last statements you would like to make?

KH: Um, no.

MH: Okay, well, uh, thank you for your time, uh it was a very interesting interview I learned a lot. Uh, yeah, this is the conclusion of the interview.