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Dave Knoche Oral History Interview

Jacob Riedle, Interviewer

Maryville, Illinois

October 17, 2016

Jacob Riedle (JR): This is Jake Riedle and I'm here with Dave Knoche at his home in Maryville, Illinois. How are you doing tonight Dave?

Dave Knoche (DK): I'm doing great, how are you doing?

JR: I'm doing good.

JR: So, were you originally from the Metro East?

DK: Yeah. Born in Godfrey lived there most of my life till after right until I graduated from high school and then I moved away to a couple different areas in Alton or Godfrey, right outside the outskirts of Alton, almost border line in some of the areas right on the edge.

JR: So, what was Godfrey and Alton like during your childhood?

DK: Well, I was just thinking that you know, that has changed quite a bit as far as what we will have to offer now than what we had to offer when I was little. You know I just remember playing and being able to do pretty much anything I ever wanted to do. You know you go ride bikes, play in the creek you know your parents never really even cared, at this day and age is really not the same. We use to go to uh, there was actually a skating rink that doesn't exist anymore. That that went away a long time ago, called Mr. T's. There was that at actually kind of close to where my parents live now in Godfrey and now it's just a carwash is there now and a gas station. Shows how much has changed. And we had our mall when I was little was gosh, full of stores, full of stores that we use to go to all time, bookstores, movie stores, CD stores, you know and you just don't have that anymore. We had a movie theater also I remember seeing my, seeing Batman the original Batman there. You know that place closed down and it's been sitting there abandoned for probably twenty to twenty-five years just sitting there just stranded. No one's ever picked it up, no one's ever tried to buy it, just a huge lot, big parking lot and a decent sized building just sitting there abandoned for all those years. The movie stores. It just seems like nowadays it is all these chain restaurants, chain stores, gas stations, fast food places that just kind of take over everything. You don't have the real like Mom and Pop like little stores anymore. You know. It's kind of sad actually.

JR: So, what are some of your favorite memories of going to the mall?

DK: Well, there was a store that me and my, me and couple my friends used to go to, and we use to buy these little figurines out of pewter, little dragons and stuff like that. We use go do that all time, use to collect them and play with those, and comic stores. We use to have comics and baseball cards and just

card stores. There were several of those in Alton, so I remember when we get our allowance, we'd always go there and we'd just stock up on you know try to get all that rare cards and try to buy as many packs as we could and get all the comics we wanted those, those are some fond memories. That, and of course you know just hanging out with the friends and we use to go and play in the creek out behind my parents' house all the time too. I feel like nowadays just probably not, I don't know, I just don't feel like that's that would be acceptable. You know I don't know if I'd let my kids just run and play in the creek for hours and you know four or five hours and not know where they're at. So I don't know if that would happened anymore.

JR: You said you grew up in Godfrey?

DK: Yeah

JR: What was the house like you grew up in?

DK: Oh, goodness. My original house in Godfrey was a little like a ranch style house. We had a little pool in the back, a little above ground pool. My little brother actually jumped into pool quite often and my dad had to go in there with all his clothes on several times to save him. But yeah, it was a nice little two story house in a really nice subdivision. We use to go play around. There's probably like four or five kids you use to go run around with all the time. All the time. Go and play in the woods and just hang out. I just don't know that, I would have been four, five, six years old. I think before I moved from that house and I don't think I don't think that I would let my four, five, six-year-old just go and run around in the woods for hours and stuff anymore, it's kind of sad but a different time

JR: When you moved when you were six, where did you guys move to?

DK: We moved to another part of Godfrey. My dad was doing really, really well in his business and he built a house out there. Richland Woods is what the subdivision is called, one of the first houses out there and a nice couple acre plot of land and yeah, it was great, we had a lot of the land and we a nice little pool and just hung out there and play and we use to play in the creek back there all the time to, it was a fun place.

JR: What was your dad's business?

DK: He started his own business back in '87. It's called HGH products, which is hot glass handling products. He makes, manufactures steel and graphite parts that go into the glass bottle industry and the hot end is the take-out tongs, inserts, and holders, like all of your beer bottles, wine bottles, jars, perfume, mason jars any type of jars or any glass, that's all period that has to be glass you know made in the same glass goblet format. It was picked up by these, this our product will touch. You know we have to manufacture different types of products for all these different sizes and different types of bottles.

JR: So, did your mom help with that business or, what did she do during?

DK: Very seldom, but no she had her own. My parents were both entrepreneurs. She had a Libby's Bridal and Formal Wear. So, she had her own bridal shops. She had three bridal shops. I don't remember where all three of them were at. I know Collinsville, Alton, and another one, I know she had to close down one

or two of them. She had three different ones. She just ended up leaving the business altogether, was a stay at home mom after that. I don't remember how old I was, probably eight years old, ten years old, somewhere around there whenever she decided to stop.

JR: How many siblings did you have?

DK: Three siblings. So, there is four of us all together. I got an older sister, a year and a half older, and then two younger brothers, three years younger than me and six years younger. We would always play together, ball with each other. It was good times.

JR: Did your mom ever say that was more, like the businesses were actually easier than trying to raise four kids?

DK: Probably, yeah probably. That's probably why she was did that in the first place. Yes. I would have to say she did.

JR: So, where did you go to elementary school?

DK: Evangelical Elementary School, it was in Godfrey, not too far from my house. I went there all the way up, went there for preschool, all the way up 'til fifth grade then I went, actually after that I went to Saint Louis, to Oak Hill. It was a boys and girls Catholic school. I went there for a year then I went to Chaminade, which was all boys prep school for seventh and eighth grade. Then I realized it wasn't for me being in Saint Louis when all my friends were here. So, I went to public school for high school, Alton High School for ninth through twelfth.

JR: Why did you go to Chaminade, and Oak Hill?

DK: My parents really wanted me to. My mom was really for it, I never really cared for the idea, but I was a pretty smart kid. So, it just wasn't, it was always too easy for me. We thought about moving to Saint Louis to which we never ended up doing but yeah I went there and tried it out. It just wasn't for me. So, it's just you just can't really go into St. Louis that late you know and everybody, it's just tough and especially at that age you know. You know it's all boys too and I wasn't too fond of that either. But yeah I mean after that I went to like I said Alton High for four years. After Alton High, I really wanted to just get out of the area and it was either, I wanted to go to the mountains or to the beach. So, it was Berkeley California or Bozeman, Montana and I chose Bozeman Montana, my two main options, and I chose a great choice. I wouldn't I wouldn't take it back at all its a Gorgeous, gorgeous place, really very, very far 24-hour drive. So, it was a long way but it was well worth it.

JR: Backtrack a little bit, what was it going to Chaminade back to public, Alton High School like?

DK: Oh, it was like night and day difference you know, obviously, I did have friends you know at Chaminade and everything but you know I had like lifelong friends at Alton. So, going from, you know, not really seeing those guys all that much and then coming back, it was a big difference. It was just being reunited with my friends. So, I got in a lot more trouble being there. It was good times and I wouldn't take it back at all.

JR: What did you play any sports, any clubs?

DK: Oh, yeah. Well, no clubs. Well I was in, what was it called? It was after, like an after school like academic program which was, was interesting and I didn't do that for long, but my main thing was soccer. I always played soccer my whole life. So, that was my main, my main passion. I did that. I also played tennis. I played tennis for three years. I loved tennis, I played tennis for, since I was younger. Then I, well, I ran track at Chaminade and I also played soccer there too. But, I didn't continue that at Alton. But yeah soccer, was my main, I played soccer pretty much all year around, didn't have time for a lot else.

JR: Were the school sizes any different between Chaminade and Alton?

DK: Yes, it's exponentially different. Chaminade was a lot smaller. I mean Alton, you had twenty two hundred or so, twenty four hundred students at Alton. In my class was like four hundred something or five hundred, I think it was five something. Yeah it was a big difference. Very big.

JR: You mentioned going to Montana for college. How was it?

DK: It was, it was incredible. I went there 'cause I like snowboarding, was one of my greatest passions and obviously going snowboarding in Alton it is a lot different than snowboarding in actual real mountain in Montana. That was a big change. It scared me to death whenever I first got on a mountain but I grew to absolutely love it. It was, I went there for, my original major was architecture. I took some architecture classes in Alton and absolutely loved it, and I'm more crafting, designing, and drafting blueprints. Then I went to Bozeman and it was much different. It was kind of more of an abstract thinking, a lot of stuff about space and it just wasn't really for me, I really just wanted be drafting and doing that because I was very, very good at it. I actually ranked second in Southern Illinois drafting competition. I would of got first but my teacher did not tell me a certain thing and I had to know. He was like, "Oh yeah! I completely forgot to tell you that." But yeah, after that, I decided to change my major after my first year of college and I switched it to business marketing. I thought that was a little more personal and it worked you know. Also, I minored in entrepreneurship with small business to 'cause I wanted to eventually own my own business. So, it was great, was in marketing club for two years, did great things with that and took a lot of a lot of credits. Even after switching my major my freshman year, still graduated in four years. So, I did a lot those last few years especially.

JR: What was the school in Bozeman, what was it called?

DK: It was called Montana State University.

JR: How big of a university was this?

DK: Like 14,000 or so all together. It was great. They had an entire sorority system there. So, it wasn't like it was like a really small school or anything. I mean, I know it's like in Bozeman, Montana which kind of weird but, it was great. It is a really great school, I really loved that school. I would go back there in a heartbeat.

JR: The decision to go to Montana and not let's say SIUE, did it come down the mountains or?

DK: No, I just needed to get out of the area. I just, you know just being here forever, I just wanted to see you know, get out and explore and see new things. And kind of branch off on my own, was kind of my main thing, just had to be on my own kind of go off by myself kind of thing.

JR: How would you compare then, Bozeman Montana to Godfrey or Alton, Illinois?

DK: It's like night and day difference. I mean Bozeman was like it just such a cute little town. You know it's like three hundred and sixty degree mountains and you know just it was all like mom and pop type shops you know it's not like a lot of chains there you know. You couldn't build a building above thirteen stories because it would take away from the mountains you know that was like a rule there you know. It was, it was just very different. You know being able to just leave and go and hike up a mountain within 30 minutes or go to three different ski resort within a half hour. It's quite a bit different. You know of course you didn't have a big city like St. Louis next to yah, which I have no problem with that. I mean, I could live in a small little cute town you know out in the middle nowhere you know. I'd go back to Bozeman in a heartbeat. So, it was me you know I've never been in that situation or been there. But I realize that's more me.

JR: So, compared like what would you do there for in Montana for fun compared to what you know you have here in the Metro East?

DK: Ah, I mean I was snowboarding I was snowboarding like all the time. Snowboarding, hiking. Those were like the main, that's what I really spent most of my time doing, snowboarding like all the time. Where there's a lot of, what do you call them? Snow bunnies, and you know like the snow bums that is all they do is like snowboard you know, I can see how they would do that or ski. That's all they do. I absolutely see how that can be a life. You know, I mean it's just amazing. I mean, literally, that's what I could spent my whole time doing that.

JR: You got your four-year degree then from Montana State. Where do you go after that?

DK: I went to Temecula, California. So, I went to my beach which actually I was forty- five minutes from the beach and I was really close to San Diego about 45 minutes from San Diego. It was not like San Diego at all. I mean it was the like low desert. So, it was, you know, really hot and it was just night and day difference. It just that place wasn't me either because I was single at the time and it was like a family type of place. I just didn't really know anybody and you know was a lot you know older people in that town. It just wasn't really for me and it was real expensive there. I worked for a window manufacture called, Milgard Windows, and it was great experience. You know I am Inside Sales Rep. Wanted to become an Outside Sales Rep and then I was there about two years, and then my dad's business, he really needed some help. He was, he was really, really busy. I decided you know that place wasn't really for me and I decide to come back and work for him. And that was several years ago when I worked there for a couple of years. And then I decided to branch off after I got him you know back on track. I decided to branch off and do my own thing work for ADT security for a couple years, or for eight months.

JR: As a sales rep in California. What was what was that like?

DK: I was an Inside Sales Rep, so I was had like, let's say started out with like 15 accounts probably left at like 40 or 50 accounts and I was like their main contact at Milgard Windows for ordering purposes or

for questions and customer service. It was neat and it was a great company, great industry, learned a lot through there. I learned I was really good with people and customers and could help people out with no problem.

JR: What were like California, Metro East, what were some similarities, some differences?

DK: I would say there's probably no similarities. I mean, that place is really expensive. Like all there was were like these little, I guess all little chains and little restaurants everywhere, I mean everywhere you could see and everywhere you go you had like ten different choices fast food restaurants. It was kind of ridiculous. It wasn't a whole lot to do there. I mean that's the similarity. There was there wasn't a lot to do. If you wanted something to do you have to go like LA or go to the beach or something. You had to travel a little way but there was not anything to do, it was the desert. It wasn't like you could just go out and play. I mean I feel like you know just I guess if you had the expensive toys, which a lot people did, you know like the doom buggies and stuff you can go out do that type of stuff, but just everything there was really expensive. It wasn't for me either.

JR: How would you compare the people and this goes with Montana too?

DK: Compare the people? I think the people in the Metro East are great. Very, very nice, very caring, giving people. Montana the same way. I mean, they are just really just down to Earth people. They're kind of a little more hippyish out there, I would say, you know, more in touch with their like spiritual side. I would say a lot of like Indian reservations and stuff in Montana. So, a lot of people were, have that culture kind of you know growing up with around that. California people were not all that nice. It just it was kind of night and day difference you know. And plus, there's a lot of Mexicans, so that was a big difference. We were forty-five minutes from the border. So, it was really neat. I mean, I took Spanish in high school and so I thought that was really interesting, especially to visit there.

JR: So, where did you move back to when you came back to help your dad?

DK: I actually moved back in with my parents because I didn't have a place to stay. I actually stayed with them for quite a long time, 'till I bought my own house, till I saved up. So, it's convenient too, so, I could just ride right to work with my dad. Worked there for about two years

JR: So, after saving up what made you decide to stay back in the Metro East?

DK: At that time, I left my, my parent's house obviously, bought my own house, but I also left my dad's business, cause I kind of got them back on, back on track, and branch out and started my own you know, didn't start my business. I went with ADT Security and I was making decent money, and I was like it is time for me to buy my own house, get out of the house, you know, and do my own thing and I was only there for eight months and it was a strictly all commission job. It's just, it's tough, you know. All commission, and that time of atmosphere. It was, was a business to business kind of knocking on doors, cold calling, I'm not a fan doing that. Of you know, going up to businesses and just walking and trying to sell them on a security system. It's kind of, kind of difficult. I know people don't really liked to be bothered that much, especially, you know just some random person walking up in here, trying to sell you something. So, I left there and I actually went to, started working for enterprise. In Enterprise, I was there for almost four years, start from the ground up and I really made a name for myself there. I almost

every single thing you need to know about selling, customer service, really running your own business too. I had my minor in entrepreneurship and small business, but there you actually ran your own branch, after you'd been there and you worked your way up and prove yourself, but I ran several branches and we were really successful. That's kind of what really made me want to go back and get back into the manufacturing industry and I left there, went to work for a company called Dow Screw Products and they did. They made there, they didn't have their own product but they made, they had screw machines and machinery and I was sales and marketing manager for them for three and a half years. I got to a point where I'm ready to go and work back for my dad and take over the family business. So, after learning all that experience I figured I'd go come back to the family business.

JR: Where were some of these branches and other places you work located at all?

DK: All over, well, I started in Alton. That's my cause I lived in Alton. They usually start you close to where you live at. So, I was probably there eight months or so then went to Granite City. I was in Granite City say probably for four to six months maybe, then went to Saint Charles area, St. Peter's, Paige, Saint Louis too. I work at several branches, probably altogether, probably five or six of them, worked in Greenville for a little bit and Highland. They were off branches of Edwardsville, worked there also, all over the place. The ones I actually ran were in St. Peter's, Ferguson. I was assistant manager out there, gosh I'm just think there was a lot of them, and then Paige was the biggest one. One of the biggest in Saint Louis.

JR: So, what did you take away from these businesses that will help you with running the family business?

DK: Well, Enterprise kind ingrains in your head that in order to grow, their philosophy is take care of your customers and your employees, growth, and profits will follow, which is I think is a really strong, it's just a strong statement, you and I saw it the whole time. I mean, one the things I was really, really good was customer service and that was the most important thing to the company and I had some of the highest customer service scores at the company. Some of the branches I worked there ever had and for a continued amount of time. I mean, several months in a row. Every month, you get evaluated against every other branch in the whole entire Saint Louis area. And we were one of the top branches, consistently. Also, you learn how to run your business. I mean, when you are a branch manager and you learn every single thing there is to know about that branch and about being a branch manager. So, you could essentially go to any branch and kind of figure out you know, you have access to everything, you have access to your income statement, you have your return on investment, your revenue, and growth, and every single thing, your bad debt, even had to do collection calls and make sure people are up on payments and it was you and your team doing everything. So, it just you know, I learned how run everything you know do the whole the whole king caboodle.

JR: So, you said you ran a shop in Highland, Granite City, Alton, I mean were there any like differences you could pick up on with the towns, or?

DK: Absolutely. Yes. I would say Edwardsville, Highland, Greenville, it was all out of the same branch that services different areas, those are definitely the nicest. The nicest. I mean, your clientele is you know, they are usually business customers. That's one of the things, is that each branch had their own little

niche. You know, some of them had a niche and all they had were retail customers like Granite City. Alton had a big retail also. Retail customers depending on where you're at, you should bring more money which is, which is great, but it also you know, has its challenges too. There's a lot of let's just say, bad customers that wouldn't pay their bills in certain areas. You know, that was just, there's certain areas that were just known for that you know. Granite City we had, at East St. Louis it was you know, came to us 'cause we were the closest branch, which is a very rough area and we rent to almost anybody. You know, if you were like the they were the only company that would allow you to pay cash. So, you're giving somebody a \$20000 car. You have to verify like everything you know, and it's just very different and then you've got like Alton which has a high retail but they also have a lot of body shops. They got a lot of insurance business. So, like an insurance company, somebody got an accident or their car is going to the shop, or whatever reason, they have to have a vehicle so then they would contact, contact Enterprise. So, it was just very, very different. I mean, Edwardsville had a big, big body shop area too but there was a lot of like corporate businesses, corporate customers that would rep the companies.

JR: And why did you decide to leave Enterprise?

DK: So, Enterprise, they have very long hours, kind overwork you. So, I was going into work, getting to work at 7 am, then not being home till 6:30 or 7 o'clock at night. I just had a newborn daughter while I was with them. So, my main focus was my family and I not being able to see my daughter ever. She was asleep when I left for work and sleep when I came home. That was my big, my big reason for leaving. My family.

JR: So, after leaving Enterprises, where did you where did you go?

DK: Oh, I left Enterprise and I worked for Dow Screw Products Company. They make bolts of all different sorts, shafts. It's just like an, we have probably 6,000 different individual products that we've, that they made over the years. And they, the owner, bought that business in '86. So, I mean, just over the years so many different customers. They work with Emerson, was like one of their biggest customers you know, which is in Saint Louis you know, local kind of yeah, a local, kind of, yeah, down there in Saint Louis business but they, they, they made your part for you, you know, you would give them a blueprint saying, 'hey, you know, can you make this? I need this many parts.' And you know, they would that, would actually come to me and be like one of my customers or even a new customer. And I developed, and it would be like a different type of bolt of some sort of. We didn't do a lot of screws or anything that, but I know it's called Screw Products but there were screw machine that kind of, we would be able to set up to make kind of whatever we needed to, like up to 3 inches in diameter, heck, we made some that were all the way up to 3 feet long, you know parts. So, it was neat. I was a Sales and Marketing Manager, learned a lot about a shop, there was like 45 employees there, you have to learn a lot about, a lot about that industry. You know, a lot of connections with the steel industry manufactures, raw materials, steel, and just I had a lot of customers so I got you know, great like, Cooper Industries, you know, Cooper Eaton was big customers. Husky was one of our customers. So, I really, really got to meet some really, really interesting people, really network.

JR: Where did you go after leaving there then?

DK: There, I ended up leaving them. I just, I didn't really care for the way the company was being ran by the owner. It just rubbed me the wrong way. He would treat the employees and he was too involved in the business. It's like almost like, 'hey, just let us just do this, we got it.' And everything and it would be running smooth, but I got to the point where I was working at my dad's business, HGH, at night for three or four months. So, I would leave St. Louis at 4:30, drive all the way to Godfrey which is a 45-minute drive for me and I would work until nine to 10:00 o' clock at night and then drive back to Maryville. Which is where I currently live. And after doing that so long, I was talked to my dad and I said I would really like to come back and work at the family business and eventually take it over and buy it. But that's where we're at right now.

JR: So, what made you want to have that talk with your dad about possibly taking it over?

DK: Been wanting to own my own business for a long time and he's you know, my dad's you know, 70 years old this year, or 2017 he'll be 70. So, he's going to need to retire soon and if something ever were to happen to him, I mean the business wouldn't be able, there would be nothing we would still be able to do cause we didn't know enough and be able to do enough. So, I thought it was a good time for me to go, learn all the aspects of the business and be that person to be able to take it over, eventually, and also you know, more of a stable income and stable you know, job, you know, it's been a very stable business over the last seven years. So, we really like that in our family, a little more flexible for us too.

JR: What would you say, you kind of been off and on there for the last, well since you were a little kid?

DK: Yeah.

JR: What do you think has been able to make it run 30 years when so many other places are leaving, and closing shop?

DK: Well I mean, the glass bottle industry is not going to go away. Just it won't you know, and I you know, over the years it's, it's just been increasing. I mean you think of you know, maybe there's more plastic and aluminum but there's also a lot more bottles. You know, beer bottles especially I mean, you got craft breweries popping up like it's their job. You know, in all these places have different types of bottles that are being made now, and it's just a lot a lot of bottles out there. It's just something that's not gonna, not going away, and even if it dies out in the United States, it's national. I mean, it's you know, global. It's uh, we do business in Dubai, we do business in South Africa, Mexico, all over the world. So, it's just not something that's just gonna, just gonna go away. It's very stable industry, now granted, there might be some companies switch hands like they have. You know, we got Anheuser-Busch which is In-Bev, there it just changed names a lot, you know, companies come and go. But those businesses don't just usually die; somebody else buys them. You know, cause, it's, they're not, not need bottles you know, unless we went to full plastic which would be a bad choice you know, glass is recyclable, it's reusable. I mean, glass is made from recycled glass you know, so, it's made from natural resources. So, I think it would be stupid to get rid of it.

JR: You mentioned doing a lot of business internationally. Is that where most your business? Do you still do some in the Metro East?

DK: Well we never really did business here locally. I mean we, we do business like Park Hills, Missouri, Pevely, Missouri. But, I mean it's where the glass factories are, and we send, you know, parts all over the U.S. But I mean, one of our biggest customers right now is Mexico. They buy a lot, a lot 'cause it's one customer, one guy we have over there that buys for us and supplies a lot of factories. So, that is a big majority. I mean you get an order from them it's going to keep you busy for a while.

JR: So, what are some challenges like having this business in Alton when you are doing a lot of business with Mexico?

DK: I don't know if there's, I mean, all that challenges. You know, I mean it's regardless it doesn't matter where we're located. I mean you know you got Mexico's whose gonna buy from us regardless of where we are at. You know they pay freight, they do all that, so it's, I don't think it really matters that we're here we're able to get you know our material. I mean that would be the biggest thing. If we couldn't get our raw material, then that would be a big issue, but we have a local company that we buy all of our steel from. Graphite is a different story. That's something a little harder to get, but we have, you know, we have a place that we get that from that's not a problem. So, I mean as long as we're able to ship from where we're at, it's, there's just no issue. And being here, and being able to ship anywhere in the world. I mean FedEx, UPS, they will pick up from wherever, so, that's a beautiful thing.

JR: Who are your suppliers, where do you get your steel and graphite?

DK: Graphite, the company that we did get our graphite from is actually no longer in business. We bought about five years worth of supply from them. So, we have graphite upon graphite upon graphite at our shop. We are already working with another Graphite company, actually that company was called Graph Tech and they no longer do this side. They just got out of that, that side of the business altogether and we took advantage of it. You know, we bought it all and we already before that were talking to other suppliers. We already have a new supply that could make what we need. Steel, I mean steel is easy. I mean the place that we used to get steel from did close, but someone else bought them and they are just running them, just, they're really local. We're talking five minutes from our shop, we can call them up any time and deliver immediately. Being the fact I worked with Dow, I got good relationships with other big steel manufacturers that are huge manufacturers. The one in Alton really small I'm talking Alro Steel which could supply us with millions of pounds if we wanted them to, when we only get a couple hundred pounds you know. So, that's nice to have them if they ever were to happen. A local supply of, we could easily get through them.

JR: So, where do you see the business going moving forward, where do you see it?

DK: Well I would, I would like to get out there and grow; just grow and grow. So, we have lost business over the years. I mean we have, we can't say that we haven't. You know, there's, in the beginning there weren't that many companies doing what we do. There still isn't. But, there was a point when we had, we got some bad material from one of our suppliers and we manufactured it. And there's no way of us telling the way we manufacture, we just can't tell how the material is. Graphite it's, it's a different substance to use. You know, our tools still cut through it the same way. You can't really tell until it's actually in production being used and it was, it wasn't holding up as well as it had been and we lost some customers for it, and you know my dad has just been way too busy to be able to go back, go out and do that. It's just

such a, you don't have that many employees. So, that's, that's been definitely, and I guess something that we're going to be looking forward to change here soon. We are getting to the point where we're pretty much caught up. We're going to be doing some things that increase our efficiencies, which is overall increase our margin, which always helps being able to do more with less staff and you know once we get all caught up we're going to get out there and hit it hard and go get back all that business we lost at one point.

JR: How many people do you employ?

DK: We, it's just me, my dad and two other the guys. I mean its small, small, small little business but we do pretty good. So, and we're able to do everything we need with what we have. One of the guys is going to be retiring soon and we don't think it will be a problem, still doing with you know, just going on normal just what we are doing with one less person.

JR: So, the shops in Godfrey, why do you live in Maryville?

DK: Well I moved to Maryville before I was working there. We really like Maryville a lot, we really like the area, we could get Godfreys a little out of the way you know it's we like going to St. Louis. We like having a lot of the amenities that Edwardsville provides, which we're right there. I mean we love it. We like the school districts out here a lot. Not that Alton's bad or anything, but we like our area a lot, and at the time we had to find a house pretty quickly too. And this was the one we like the most. That was on the market at the time too so, we could very well see ourselves moving closer once I take it over.

JR: If you had your choice where to move, where would you want to?

DK: We have actually, me and my wife have been talking about that, a lot actually, lately. I would like to be out, out like in the country if it was me. I would like to be probably 15 minutes closer to the shop. You know we're not far, we are like 25 minutes so it would be about 10, 15 minutes away from the shop so it would be like kinda out on the outskirts a little bit, kind of outside of Edwardsville. I would say maybe, maybe even Godfrey, I don't know. We'd still like to be able to get to Saint Louis quickly though, other than that, I mean we would move little, little closer that way, even its five, 10 minutes closer. It's still closer. You know my wife works over in that area too, not in the city but closer. So, it would help her commute also.

JR: What does your wife do for a living?

DK: She's actually a middle school math teacher. She teaches sixth grade math.

JR: What school?

DK: East Alton Middle School. So, its, she's got a little bit of a drive too but not as far as I do. So, I wouldn't mind getting closer to that area.