

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

Betty Vaughn Oral History Interview

Phil Schneider, Interviewer

July 10, 2018

Editor's Note: The original oral history interview contained a racial slur, which has been removed from the transcript. The audio file remains unedited.

Phil Schneider (PS): I'm Phil Schneider and I'm here on July 10, 2018, to conduct an oral history interview uh with Betty Vaughn. Betty can you go ahead and give us your full name and your birth date?

Betty Vaughn (BV): Betty Jeanette Vaughn and I was born May the 10th, 1929, on Thomas Avenue in Alton, Illinois.

PS: Okay. So have you lived your whole life in Madison County?

BV: Yes

PS: Wow. Okay.

BV: My whole life

PS: The whole, a very, it's a long life.

BV: Yes

PS: Okay. Alright, well let's talk [inaudible] a few things. So you were born in Alton. Um, how long did you live in Alton?

BV: We lived there possibly about three years. My dad got sick with malaria, and the doctor told him he needed to get out in the country and the fresh air. So we moved to Bethalto from there, over on Prairie Street.

PS: Okay

BV: That big two-story brick house, and we lived there... possibly... maybe... four or five years. My oldest sister started school in Bethalto and from there we moved over to Edwardsville. When you go around that big long curve going into Edwardsville. On 159, there was a big two-story white house, and that's where we lived there and we only lived there probably four, five years, and then we moved to Midway.

PS: Okay, yeah

BV: And that's where we built, my dad built a house there and we lived there and that's where I attended

school from there The only school I went to was Yorkville Country School.

PS: Oh was it?

BV: Yes.

PS: Okay. So you've been all over the county?

BV: Yes

PS: Okay.

BV: I've been all over the county.

PS: Okay. Um so let's talk a little bit about your family in a little more in detail here.

BV: Okay.

PS: So you were born in Alton, your parents live in Alton, you followed them around. Where's your family from? Like your grandparents, your parent's parents.

BV: Well, my grandparents, my great-grandfather was born in France.

PS: Oh, really?

BV: Yes and he came. They got an opportunity to come to America. I do not know what his wife's name was. And I couldn't find the information. Uh and so when they started, they got as far as Canary Islands. And that's as far as they would let them go.

PS: Okay.

BV: And that's where my grandfather was born at. And they lived there for a period of time and then they got the opportunity to come to America. So they came to America and they landed in Hannibal, Missouri.

PS: Oh, really?

BV: Yes and there they my grandfather married and her-his wife's name was Rosetta. And they lived there. Grandpa worked in a coal mine. And he had eight children.

PS: Oh, really? Wow.

BV: And his wife died when my dad was eighteen months old. And he never he did remarry. My dad's oldest sisters really raised him. That was the only mother that he really had. And they lived there for oh quite some time and then they moved to Springfield, Illinois. And there's where grandpa worked in what you called Shanklins. It was a company that made and I don't know they might still be there. They made heavy equipment.

PS: Okay.

BV: Like graters and things that roads [inaudible]

PS: Mm-hmm. Gotcha.

BV: Grandpa worked there all the time until he retired.

PS: Hm.

BV: In fact they made him retire twice before he ever finally give it up. He kept going back.

PS: Really?

BV: He said he didn't have nothing to do, he wanted to go back. So they let him be janitor for a while and finally he got so old they told him you have to leave we can't let you work here anymore.

PS: Yea, wow.

BV: Now during that time my dad left Springfield and came to Alton. And uh there's where he met my mother. At Springfield at Spring Street and they married there and lived in Alton. Dad worked at Olin, at that time it was called Western Cartridge Company

PS: Okay.

BV: And my mother worked there for just a short time. And after they got married by she said she got married to have a home so she quit. And she never did work anywhere else. Just a home, she was always a home wife.

PS: And what were your parent's names?

BV: My parent's names was James Arthur and Nancy May. Her maiden name was Long.

PS: Okay, okay.

BV: And their, their, their folks was up around Carrolton, Illinois, and up in there.

PS: Okay.

BV: But my dad uh worked at Western Cartridge and he worked there twenty-five years. And uh in the meantime, we had moved to Bethalto and there we lived in that house there before we moved to Edwardsville. From there we moved over by Midway. We got acquainted with some people that had a farm over there and it was a homestead place. Well at that time dad didn't feel like he wanted to go to farming right then, so he built a blockhouse. And then so we lived at Midway and I went all through school, went seven years to school. I graduated from the eighth grade. Uh my teacher said that she thought we could take two years in one, so we I took the third and the fourth grade both in one year and graduated from the eighth grade.

PS: That's pretty impressive.

BV: Yes, seven... seven years I went to school. I was twelve years old when I graduated from grade school

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: Well, my dad got the opportunity to buy this farm. That was homesteaded and so those folks we traded houses. They traded their farm. A hundred and ten acres

PS: Oh, wow

BV: For their, for our farm, we had thirteen acres and a blockhouse but they were getting too old, they couldn't farm anymore.

PS: I see.

BV: That farm was on the way to Moro about two miles off of 159

PS: So

BV: Back in the country

PS: Okay, so how old were you and they when you guys traded houses?

BV: When we traded houses there let's see I was out of school I was probably about twelve, thirteen.

PS: Okay.

BV: And uh then uh I farmed, I helped Dad farm. Until I was seventeen.

PS: Okay

BV: And then at seventeen my dad thought I wanted maybe to get out in public. I didn't really want to but he thought I did. I liked farming pretty well, so I went to work at the red and white grocery store here in Bethalto.

PS: Okay, now where would that be at today?

BV: That was right where um uh let's see that's where, right there, I'm trying to think what the name of the store is right now it's uh, it was down from Augustine. Well, right beside of the expressway coming through.

PS: Okay, okay

BV: That first building on the corner

PS: Okay

BV: It was a red and white store

PS: So where the uh Augustine Insurance is?

BV: And Augustine was down on the other corner

PS: Oh, okay

BV: It's been there since then

PS: Okay

BV: He, well he had a grocery store. At that time it was a grocery store

PS: Okay

BV: And that's uh Andy Augustine

PS: Hm

BV: Always wore his ballcap backwards. He always known for that

PS: Yeah

BV: So I worked there for year. Then I uh went to work at Olin and I worked there for forty-six years and three months. I worked twenty-five years as a production worker. And this is in the loading room...

PS: Yeah

BV: ...for shotgun shells. And then they asked me to be to take on as a supervisor.

PS: Really?

BV: And I was the first lady salaried supervisor that Olin Corporation had

PS: Wow

BV: And uh so I was at twenty-one years before I retired and I retired in uh October the thirtieth in nineteen-ninety-three.

PS: Hmm

BV: And uh I really, I really enjoyed working there but I just really felt like the lord moved on me to retire.

PS: Yeah

BV: And so I did. And they asked me why, if everything's alright, I said everything's great uh but I just feel like this is when I need to go.

PS: Yeah

BV: And so I retired and I've been - I've been glad I did ever since.

PS: Yeah. [laughter] Okay

BV: But my dad retired when he was, uh he had been there twenty-five years.

PS: Yeah

BV: But he wanted to farm.

PS: Yeah

BV: And that's what he did, but when we were on the farm then he went into construction work. Building houses and things and that's when he built the church at Meadow Brook. And uh well we got started at the Bethalto Church because a man that worked with him by the name of Dan Hanby. He invited us to church and we got started to Bethalto Church from there and that's where went to church all the time till we came over to cornerstone.

PS: Mokay

BV: And my dad built the church at Meadow Brook. And they moved, they started out the school, then he built the-the Church and worked there - pastored there till he passed away, and then his wife pastored it until she passed away. But it was, it grew and he felt like that uh Meadow Brook needed a church. Some of the people had gone to Bethalto, but

PS: Yeah.

BV: they needed a church out there.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And so that's why he did that.

PS: So he uh he retired from Olin after, was it twenty-one years?

BV: He he worked twenty-five years.

PS: Twenty-five years? Okay.

BV: Mm-hmm, yes.

PS: Then he started farming.

BV: Yea mm-hmm

PS: How long did he farm before he moved into the ministry?

BV: Well he farmed up till let's see I guess in '55 I would say probably a good thirty years maybe because my mom passed away in '55.

PS: Okay

BV: And that's when he moved to Bethalto, he moved over on Sheridan Street.

PS: Okay

BV: And his father moved with him

PS: Hm.

BV: And he stayed with him until he passed away. And then my dad, well he moved to country air

PS: Mm.

BV: While he was pastor. But he was very healthy. Uh, he just really - it just seemed like he could never do enough for anybody. So he passed a good, that's a good challenge.

PS: Yeah.

BV: To go.

PS: Yeah

BV: [Laughter]

PS: So you spent uh a lot of your childhood bouncing around the county and then you um ended up on the farm. Um, what was it like, ya know, growing up in that, in that time period? What did you do as a kid?

BV: As a kid, we just, we made our own entertainment... on the farm. Uh, at that time, uh, neighbors visited a lot. And a lot of times they would come over of an evening and everybody'd walk to one another's house. Just visit in the evening and us kids played games, tag...

PS: Yeah.

BV: and hide and seek... and things like that we did for our own entertainment.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And we had a creek that run through there. We'd go down play in the creek, you know. Things like that and kids would do back then.

PS: Yeah.

BV: [Laughter] And uh, then in the wintertime, we did a lot of games and we put models together and

stuff like that, it was inside... the house. Of course, we farmed and we was outside a lot anyway.

PS: Yeah. Right.

BV: We played out and uh, I went to the country school called Yorkville. And it was three miles from where we lived. And, of course, most of the time we had to walk.

PS: Right.

BV: Everybody gathered together, all the kids did... and walked. But then the teacher would get permission from the parents and we'd play outside in the afternoon. Kind of get different you know in the snow.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And stuff for that. And that, as kids growing up that's just about all we did, we made our own entertainment.

PS: Yeah.

BV: We visited with other kids.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And we had a lot of friends because it seemed like everybody was interested in helping if you had anything to do. All the neighbors would help one another. We moved on the farm and when we did threshing, at that time we did threshing. And we had, went from one farm to another with the threshing machine. And they brought in meals like you wouldn't believe. They brought in a lunch that was bigger than a meal and then you had dinner.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And then you had lunch in the afternoon.

PS: Uh huh.

BV: And then everyone went home for supper. [Laughter]

PS: Yeah. What would you uh what would they bring?

BV: What did they bring? Everything, I mean there was, they had fried chicken, they would have all kinds of roast, they had all kind of vegetables. Of course, everyone had a garden.

PS: Right.

BV: And but their, their lunches was like meals.

PS: Yeah.

BV: We would think it's a meal now.

PS: Mm-hmm, so do you think, well we can get back to this question a little bit later, I guess, I'll come back to that later. So at the, at the school you did, you did first grade through eighth grade.

BV: Eighth grade.

PS: And um, what kind of subjects did you, did you, how did you, how did school operate?

BV: Well we-we did reading, writing, arithmetic, history. We had what they call morals and manners.

PS: Okay

BV: And we had when you got into the seventh grade and eighth grade for spelling you had what they called orthography.

PS: Oh, what's that?

BV: And that is you had like two or three words at each lesson and you had to define those words.

PS: Oh, okay.

BV: You separate and broke them up into syllables. And then you and then you usually had to make up something that you would know what that word meant.

PS: Oh, okay.

BV: For that, in the seventh and eighth grade.

PS: Sounds like kind of a challenging like uh critical thinking subject.

BV: Yes, yes it was. Uh huh, I really liked it. After I got used to it you know. Different from spelling and I loved arithmetic, I liked that. Now history when you got up to ancient history. I never did care about much ancient history. [Laughter]

PS: Right.

BV: But I liked American History. Something that was happening right then.

PS: Makes sense.

BV: I remember that.

PS: Yeah.

BV: But all our studies were just like that. I had I only had one teacher. All the time I went to school. We had a substitute teacher one time, whenever she was sick.

PS: Yeah.

BV: But otherwise I had the same teacher all the way through school.

PS: So was it a one room school?

BV: It was a one room school.

PS: Okay.

BV: We had the, we had the biggest school, country school around in the area.

PS: Oh

BV: And at sometimes we had eighty pupils. We had

PS: Oh goodness.

BV: all in one, all in one big room.

PS: Let me ask you as a, as a teacher, I get nervous when I have thirty students in a room. So I can't imagine eighty students and all grade levels.

BV: We had this was all and you-you could've any time you walked into school you could have heard a pen drop.

PS: Sure.

BV: But our teacher was, she was a very nice teacher, but she was very strict. And she just got you started off, the first day of school. And explained to you what she expected of you and that was the end of it, and from then on, all the kids respected her for that. She treated everybody the same. She didn't have no pets. She just...

PS: That's good.

BV: Everybody was the same. And I think that's why she did so good in that school. We had what we called, they had directors. There was about four men that was like on the board of directors.

PS: Okay.

BV: And they would come every once in a while and have a meeting with her and... And let her find out if everything was going okay or what the school needed. And they had what they called a district superintendent at that time. He was a Mr. Wetzels was his name. In Edwardsville.

PS: Okay.

BV: And he came usually about once every two or three months. And visited the school and would talk to the kids, let us know you know what he expected of us. And things like that.

PS: Do you think uh students valued education very highly?

BV: Yes, I think they did. I think they really did and I think they worked extremely hard. And I think anyone who went through school at that time, there was, I guess that was why a lot of them didn't want to go to high school. I didn't want to go to high school, so they didn't make me so. [Both Laugh]

PS: Why not, is it too much work?

BV: I just didn't like, I just didn't care that much about school.

PS: Oh.

BV: I wanted to be outside.

PS: Oh that makes sense.

BV: I didn't really want to be

PS: Yeah.

BV: In a building all the time.

PS: And you were already enjoying farming anyway.

BV: Yeah, right I was enjoying farming anyway so.

PS: Okay.

BV: I didn't, I didn't want to go. And, and at that time when the war was on. My dad worked at Olin and he was froze to his job, what they call froze to their job.

PS: Yeah.

BV: They couldn't quit, because of ammunition. And the military. Well the government took over Olin at that time for the military. And so they couldn't uh-uh leave their jobs, so, but they and you couldn't hire anybody because it was all the men was in service.

PS: Right, right.

BV: So that's why I went to help them, with Dad serving, we did our own farming and everything. And at that time down at Powder Mill Road that was blocked off. And they had soldiers that stood there.

PS: Oh yes.

BV: Twenty-four hours a day, you could not go down Powder Mill Road, because of that. That was all blocked off for government.

PS: This and this was during, during World War II?

BV: The war. Mm-hmm.

PS: Okay,

BV: Yeah.

PS: Okay. So you, so your dad was working there?

BV: Yes

PS: And you were still in school or you were, uh no, no, you were...

BV: I was at farm.

PS: Farm. Okay, okay. Uh, so did he have to work longer hours to keep up with the demand?

BV: No, they only worked eight hours, but uh, they didn't have much overtime back then. They just had more people, I think at one time there was like six thousand employees at Olin.

PS: Okay. Wow.

BV: So that's why you know at that time it was a big thing for.

PS: Yeah.

BV: He worked in the brass mill.

PS: Okay.

BV: Yeah.

PS: Okay. So as a kid um did your, did school go to the extra? You know like sometimes nowadays kids have field trips or school plays, kind of things.

BV: We had school plays.

PS: Okay.

BV: Yes, we did. We had always had a big Christmas program. And uh usually on the last day of school we had a big picnic.

PS: Oh okay.

BV: They would get all, all the parents and everybody came. That was our last day of school. That's the way we separated.

PS: Okay.

BV: Or celebrated that day.

PS: That's a nice, that's a nice way of doing it, you know.

BV: Yes, uh-huh.

PS: And so did school run the, it ran nine months, like...

BV: Yeah. Nine months. We started on the first day of September and we went through April the thirtieth.

PS: Oh wow.

BV: That was just the way it was.

PS: So you had all of May.

BV: All of May.

PS: Whereas now some schools go...

BV: Yes.

PS: Almost into June.

BV: Yes. Yeah.

PS: Okay.

BV: We was out May, June, July, August, and then we was back to school in September. That's just the way it was right after Labor Day.

PS: Hm. Um so as a kid did you any-any-any have hobbies? As you mentioned doing models during winter.

BV: I, yes. Yes, I liked to build model airplanes or something like that. I always liked to do that. And at that time, most of the models were wooden frames.

PS: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

BV: And you glued them together. That's what I liked to do when it was...

PS: That's neat.

BV: Yeah.

PS: Did have, did you, ever play any-any sports? I don't know how they, I'm sure the school didn't probably have sports team.

BV: Softball.

PS: Do you... softball.

BV: Oh, I loved softball. I played on uh as catcher and played on our softball team. We had, on our country schools, we would play one another.

PS: Okay.

BV: The schools would go, like would pick maybe on a Friday afternoon. We would go from one school to another and play that school in their game. And softball and I loved to play it.

PS: So was it a coed team? Boys and girls?

BV: Yes.

PS: Okay.

BV: It was combined.

PS: Okay

BV: Because we didn't have enough for boys and girls.

PS: Oh, makes sense. Okay.

BV: So we had the mixed team and any school we did.

PS: And you said you played, you played catcher?

BV: I played catcher.

PS: Okay, how was your, how good was your team?

BV: Oh our team, was, we thought we was the best team. [Both Laugh]

BV: Everybody'd say "Oh! that Yorkville team." Yup. Yeah, but I loved to play and...

PS: Yeah.

BV: I never got tired of playing. One school we played, we played a doubleheader one time. And I know I was so tired I could hardly make it home, but boy I wouldn't a give up for nothing in the world.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: [Inaudible]

PS: So uh so after, after school, you didn't go to high school.

BV: No

PS: You went right, right to farming.

BV: Yes.

PS: And then around seventeen, you got your job at the grocery store.

BV: Yes, uh-huh.

PS: And from there you went into Olin.

BV: Yeah, went to Olin.

PS: Okay.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So you mention at Olin, you were, you worked in uh the production.

BV: Yes, I was production. In production I ran loading machine, I ran the box making machine. I did different jobs. I learned I loved machinery so I learned how to run the machines. And work on them myself. Which at that time you had adjusters and they did that.

PS: Yeah.

BV: But I loved to do that. And I learned that I trained a lot of supervisors just while I was working. And then I was uh I was an operator instructor. And that you took care of all the ordering the supplies, for what the loading machines would need, and the different loads, you took care of the making sure that the girls had the right material to work on their machines and I liked to do that. I did that for several years before they, I went on as a supervisor.

PS: So uh working at Olin, you would've have been there during Vietnam. Would you have been there during Korea or is that before you got there?

BV: Well, I went there in forty-seven.

PS: Okay, okay, so yeah okay. So did, do you feel like um working for Olin, working for an munitions company, did those moments of war, military engagement, did it make the work seem more intense of more purposeful?

BV: It seemed, it seemed like so important. And I think they kind uh, your supervisors, they kind of made you feel that way. You were really doing this for your family of boys who was overseas and working. But I think people took interest in their jobs. Wanted everything to be perfect. You know, cause, 'cause their boys was over there. You know.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Their family was there, you wanted it to be right. And I think they did they took a lot of interest in their jobs.

PS: [Silence] That's I think it's uh it's important to see that it's not only you know you're not just only working for a paycheck, but you're working there it's patriotic service.

BV: Right, right.

PS: Do you think that, they helped, kind of, you mentioned your dad was frozen to his job during the war. Did that happen again during Korea or Vietnam?

BV: No, no that was that was only time at that time. And I think it was such a huge war, and so intense that that's why they, they didn't want new people coming in. Well, in fact, that's why they had guards all around everything.

PS: Right, right.

BV: And they didn't want nobody. You couldn't get, where you couldn't get down where you go on East Alton, you couldn't come down close to that place... At all. I mean they just really. And they had, they had, for the airport they had a flyover range where they weren't allowed to fly. So close. And we had a person one time that decided they wanted to fly over to find out just exactly what was going. And they didn't very close till they got shot at.

PS: Oh wow.

BV: Yeah. The pilot got hit in the tail end. And he was in after they got him down and I don't who they, he had been a former employee. Of Olin. He didn't have no reason or anything, he didn't, he just wanted to see what was going on in there.

PS: So he had took off from Bethalto, from the airport hangar.

BV: Yes, yes.

PS: And flew over towards Olin.

BV: Yes.

PS: And they shot him down.

BV: Yes they did. They got him right through his tail end when he was sitting there.

PS: Wow.

BV: And they told him "didn't you realize that's that was bad?" And he said well he never thought they would ever shoot, he didn't think he was that close. But they said that was a flying range and they was not allowed to be around that so.

PS: So how did the community respond to that?

BV: The community said he got what he deserved.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: He wasn't supposed to be there.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And he knew that. That place was protected. And he should have stayed away.

PS: How did you think that made the community feel to have such you know a high, like Bethalto, Alton, East Alton is a pretty small area compared you know...

BV: Yes.

PS: Even to St. Louis or

BV: Yes.

PS: Or to Springfield. So to have such a highly guarded factory how do you think that made the community feel?

BV: I think the community felt extremely safe. Because of the presence of all the military that was here. And I think they were particular about what they did, where they went, and the way they acted. Because of the government being so prominent in the area. Because this place was small then to what it.

PS: Yeah sure.

BV: What it is now. You know. And yet everybody felt like that and everybody was concerned about the other person. They was really a family-oriented area. Around this way in Madison County.

PS: Okay. So you manage getting promoted, at Olin. To... What was it again?

BV: It was, I was a production supervisor.

PS: Okay

BV: A salaried [inaudible].

PS: Okay so you were hourly before now you are salaried.

BV: Right.

PS: That's pretty impressive of you. It's a real testament to your work ethic.

BV: Yeah.

PS: You finished, you went to eighth grade and started working farm. Then at Olin. How did that come about? What is the process there?

BV: Well I guess and I don't like to talk about it but I guess it seems like I'm bragging but I was taught to work that when I went inside the plant I belonged to that plant. And my dad always told me that. He said now when you go through that gate you belong to that company... You give them a good eight hours work. And that was the way I did it. And I always did and they could depend on me and I worked hard. I earned my money and I trained a lot of people that came in on jobs.

PS: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

BV: When they asked me to do that I said well you know I don't know I'd have to pray about it. That's what I told them when they asked me about it.

PS: Mm-hmm Yeah.

BV: And they said we knew you'd say that. And I said that's my, what I, and they said we know that. We know that. So that's what I did. I felt like it's, to me it's really amazing. And like I said I don't want to brag about it but when I think how good the Lord did this. When they asked me that I had no idea what the salaries were or what they made or anything. But at this time they were allowing women to work on men's jobs and if they had anybody that was absent, powder man, or adjuster or whatever was absent. And nobody wanted to work. I would work. 'Cause I could do all the jobs so I just worked. Well, when I went out for them to interview me for the job they said now we have to tell you first there is no way we can start you off at what the wages you're making now. And I said I understand that. But he said to me what do you think is what you would be a fair amount to start you at? And I said well I would like to ask you to tell me first. I know what I feel like. But I would like for you to tell me. I wanted to know how the Lord directed me.

PS: Right.

BV: So he told me and I said just like that, that's exactly what the Lord told me you'd offer me. He said you what?

PS: [Laughter]

BV: I said yes, I asked the Lord what should I accept? Because I knew you told me you couldn't give me what they would.

PS: Yeah.

BV: That I had made and want you to start me off at. And that's exactly what it was and it was right to the dollar.

PS: That's amazing

BV: Yea to me it was, but and the amazing thing was that they only they did their increases and no

salaried person was supposed to tell anybody else what they made. Because they do that by merit.

PS: Right.

BV: Within like, I had two supervisors that was higher up than I am that had passed away and going to their funeral the first one I went to one of the big wheels at Olin had motioned for me like that when I went in and I thought you know this scared me because I wasn't used to going anywhere like that.

PS: Right.

BV: And so I went over to him and I called him by name and he said I got something to tell you. I said okay. He said you'll like your paycheck. That's all he said to me and they took me up to the top, Phil, within three months.

PS: Really?

BV: I was making the top supervisor.

PS: So that's a real validation of your work ethic and your.

BV: Right and that made me that really made me feel good to know that they had that much confidence in me.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And I had made an impression which I was backward I never you know never visit with anybody in the high up or anything.

PS: Right.

BV: That's just what the Lord did for me by my work.

PS: So you're the first woman to reach that position.

BV: Yes.

PS: Okay were there any women after you?

BV: Yes I think they have several of them after me but and they told me they said now

Betty you're going to be really somebody that is going to be scrutinized. [inaudible] I just do my job just like I always have. But one thing that I did require of them I told them I said now there is one thing I want you to promise me this I know that no other woman has been doing this and I want you to tell me if I don't want to do anything different than if it would be a man on that job. What you require of him I need to be required of too and I want you to be the one to tell me. If I am not doing that job because I don't want someone else to tell me well you're not doing this or you're not doing that. If it was a man. I said I don't want to hear that. I said I want you to tell me if I am not doing the job I don't want to be on it

because I don't believe that's right. That wouldn't be right.

PS: Mm-hmm. So that was you talking to your boss?

BV: My boss. He was what they called a general foreman.

PS: Okay.

BV: Then there was a supervisor over him a superintendent. Over him before it went up into the president and the vice president.

PS: Right. So how do you think I guess going into that position right so you're now a supervisor over men. How did they react to that?

BV: I could not have been treated better. There was a couple that at first, they didn't want to say anything but. You could tell by their actions it was hard for them.

PS: Right.

BV: And I did my best. Not be showing of authority over them that would make them feel uncomfortable because of being a woman. And I tried to work like if I was to if they'd of told me the next day you're going to work on the floor I could have went out there and worked with those people. Just like I had never been a supervisor. And that's I treated them like I like to be treated. I said, I'll tell you your job. My job is to see that you do it.

PS: Hm.

BV: If you don't do it I am going to be right there behind you to see that you do. Otherwise, that's all I just want you to do what I ask you to. And I never had a problem. I really, I really had to admire the men and the way they treated me. And if they had you know their pictures and things they had up in their lockers and if I had to go up there they made sure they covered them up.

PS: Oh okay.

BV: So they really did have respect for me.

PS: Yeah, because I was going to ask not only are you a woman, but you're also a very committed Christian. So I know that sometimes working in a factory setting is not always the most polite atmosphere.

BV: Yeah, that's true

PS: Even among the men, so how did you handle that?

BV: Well I just, I was just myself and anything if I heard them saying something I didn't like I just walked off. You know? They did their best not to say anything in front of me.

PS: Right.

BV: But if they happened, if I happened to walk up and they were talking, they real quickly. They did that thing. They really did. I really had to admire the men. And I had blacks. I had all kinds worked for me. They had one time when I was down there and my birthday was... All of a sudden we shut down for lunch and all of a sudden over this intercom and in this entire building this black man... Started singing happy birthday.

PS: Ah.

BV: Talk about shocked.

PS: Yeah.

BV: I had just started out of my office and I stopped like, and of course everyone is watching for me.

PS: Yeah. Yeah.

BV: It was really good. And he was really a nice, nice young man. And I worked all kinds. I had people that was resentful to one another before. And I tried hard to work a relationship between them. So that they could work together and... I had a black lady and a white man. He didn't like black people and they just seemed like they, when I first went into this other department and they didn't like one another. So one night I just called them both down to the office. With a union steward. I took them into the inner office where nobody else could see but them. And it seemed odd, that they said, why are we down here? And I said you are down here, because of the way you have been treating one another.

PS: Hm.

BV: Now I want you to say whatever you got to say to her. She was a black lady. And I said and I want you to tell him whatever you got to say to him. Right now in front of this union steward and me. And then when we leave this room I never want to hear another remark ill-natured about one another. You both got a name and that's what I want you to call one another and I want you to work together. Just peaceful. Just forget everything that's happened in the past because it ain't going to be that way no more.

PS: How'd that work out?

BV: It tell you, you couldn't have believed it was the same two people. Nobody could have believed it. And I always told them when you leave this office if anybody out there on the floor knows about this it'll be because you told them. Because I don't tell stuff. It's up to you. If you want them to know it that's up to you. Otherwise, oh I won't say it. I said okay. Then this is the end of it and I'll tell you what you would have never known they were the same two people. In fact, the black lady. She was really hard to get along with people. From that time on if she thought I was going to be on vacation she took vacation.

PS: [Laughter.]

BV: She didn't want to work for nobody else. That made me feel good.

PS: Yeah. I was actually going to ask this question. You worked at Olin for the late forties into the nineties.

BV: Yes.

PS: So you worked through some pretty turbulent racial times.

BV: Yes.

PS: How did that go?

BV: The racial down there they were pretty good in the department. Now I don't know how they did outside of the department, but inside the department, they were pretty good. You would see them once in a while kind of get two or three together. If I noticed that especially on my shift, I always went up and just started talking to them or something like that I broke up the conversation.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Whatever they were talking about. So that it wouldn't lead to more than to what it was supposed to. And I, they did good. I did have no problems with them at all.

PS: With just the tension and what not you mean?

BV: I think it was a lot of tension because of what was going on outside.

PS: Yeah.

BV: In fact. The once I would have them call in sometimes and I had a lot of black people work for me. They would call in and they'd say "Betty we are going to be late." Because this is their expression "the East St. Louis [blacks] are over here, and and we won't go outside our house while they're here." These were from Alton. And so they were afraid of them. And sometimes they would be late and sometimes they would make it in time. But that was their expression to me.

PS: So why were they afraid?

BV: They were afraid of them because the black people over there would come over to Alton and they'd just fight.

PS: To antagonize?

BV: Yeah. Yeah. And that's what they were afraid of. Not that they even knew all of them but they would just go in gangs like that. And they were bad about that.

PS: Hm.

BV: So that was the only kind of problems that would have but they would call and tell me "I'll be in but I'm going to be late." So they know that they were going to be late.

PS: Any issues among whites and black in the actual company itself.

BV: That was the only ones. Once in a while it would. But as far as working together you would have never known they treated everyone. Like I said I worked hard to try to make sure they didn't have any reason.

PS: Right.

BV: To get to one another. You wouldn't. We would have the ladies sometimes you would get the ladies. Of course I had at first, I had probably fifty people that worked for me on my shift. And sometimes you would get the ladies that would get jealous of one another. You know? And they would want to not work next to one another. And I had a lady come up to me when I first went over to the department. I had worked in loading all the years, so I knew everybody there. And in the end the department where I was going to be supervisor for a period of time in the empty shell department. I didn't know all of them. This one lady she came up to me and she said Betty you can't work that girl next to that one on that machine. And I looked at her and I said I can't?

PS: [Laughter]

BV: She said oh no they don't get along. I said pardon me, but I am the supervisor and they're assigned to that machine and that's where they will work. So she turned around and walked off.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: They worked next to one another. Never had no problem. See they'd cater to them before.

PS: Right.

BV: And this time nobody, they're all the same to me. You work where you're assigned. Do your job and you would have them once in a while I didn't want to work with that one. Well that's too bad, that's what you're going to do this week. That stopped it.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Didn't let it go no farther, so.

PS: Sounds like for the most part your job was really enjoyable.

BV: It was and I give the lord credit for that. Because I prayed about it many times I'd have to make a decision I'd walk through the department. I had two floors to cover. And I would walk through the department and talk to the lord about it. And he always came through for me. Always give me the right answer and things settle down. And that's why. And when I retired, the day that they had the dinner for me, my vice president came to me and he said you know Betty I got to tell you this. He returned thanks over the food for me. And prayed for me.

PS: Oh.

BV: [Inaudible]

PS: Really?

BV: And he said there is one thing I got to know and I want to tell you I always believed that we were protected, even when we were on black powder, because of you being here. He said when you were here I knew I didn't have to worry about anything. That really made me feel good. Knowing that I was leaving the department and that's the way they felt. While I was working.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And I've always been grateful that the Lord helped that. That's why I don't talk a lot about it because it sounds like I'm bragging but I'm really bragging for the Lord.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Because it really it was an exciting time in my life those forty-six years. That I worked. I have no regrets. Lord helped me to witness and win people for the Lord. That went to other churches and things. And I really feel that like he blessed me by giving me that opportunity.

PS: Yeah. That's great.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So let's, we'll wrap up talking about your work but let's I'll transition with this, I know that for a long time a lot of companies like this when it's a large company in a small town with a lot of social activities around it. How did Olin handle that back in the time period?

BV: With the back in with the other companies around?

PS: Yeah. Those or...

BV: They had different companies that would try. They had what you call a Smith and Wesson company. Like that. And it never hindered Olin at all. In fact, they tried to be of help to them.

PS: Oh okay.

BV: Because they were just moving in with the weapons and things like that. And eventually they cooperated with them a lot. They did take, Olin did take a lot of work probably from a lot of other companies. Because of that. But as far as the glassworks were there, it was a big company. And it just seemed like they just blended in. They had to, Olin, each one had their own occupations for what they did.

PS: Hm.

BV: And it seemed like they cooperated a lot.

PS: Did they ever do anything like company baseball teams or that kind of stuff?

BV: Oh yes.

PS: Compete against each other?

BV: Oh well. Olin had their trap and skeet team.

PS: Oh okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BV: They did a lot of that. They did have, they competed with other companies, but there was no other ones here with that. Now they did have softball teams. They used to have what they call a westerner club and that's

PS: Oh yes.

BV: where they had the softball teams, baseball teams, and they did cooperate with others. We had a pretty good softball team, a men's softball team. And they would go with other companies and that. For competition and they used to have what they called beauty contests.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: They did have different ones in the plant run against one another.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And then do that.

PS: Yeah.

BV: [Inaudible] things like that. Activities for the employees.

PS: Uh-huh. Company picnics that kind of stuff.

BV: Yes we always had a yearly picnic at the westerner club.

PS: Was that like...

BV: One year they had it for the ammunition division.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And then the next year they would be first.

PS: Okay.

BV: And then the second one would be brass mill group.

PS: Oh okay.

BV: And then the next year it would switch around and the brass mill would be first and ammunition would be second, they did that, why, they just didn't want to show, it was just too big a group to have them all together.

PS: Right.

BV: And they wanted them to not feel like one was treated better than the other.

PS: Okay.

BV: So they just switched.

PS: Like morning and afternoon or different days?

BV: It was a whole day.

PS: Oh wow.

BV: They spent the whole day there. Yeah.

PS: So what would they do at those picnics?

BV: Well, they had all kinds of games for the kids to play. And they had the most of the eating was all kind eating of things.

PS: Yeah.

BV: That you had like that. And a lot of people just sat around and visited. You know because they didn't get to visit that much at work.

PS: Right.

BV: But they knew each other so they'd visit there at that time like that.

PS: Do you feel like the company fostered a good community among the workers? It seems like you tried...

BV: Yes.

PS: [inaudible]

BV: Yes. They were good about that too. I think that's why they liked the picnics like they did. Open like that for them. And they supplied a lot of the drinks and stuff like that for them.

PS: Mm-hmm. Well good.

BV: They'd have an ice cream. They always any amount that you wanted to eat. You know? [inaudible]

PS: That sounds like a good time.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So you retired was it ninety-three you said?

BV: Yes. Uh-huh.

PS: Okay.

BV: October the thirtieth ninety-three.

PS: Okay and you already mentioned before that you were really a big... You were very involved in your church and stuff.

BV: Yes.

PS: Right. So let's talk about your church life. Okay?

BV: Okay.

PS: How have you, what have you done as part of a local church?

BV: Well I got saved when I was sixteen the family invited us and we got to Church at Bethalto. And brother Clyde Bailey well he eventually went to the Stone Church in Chicago. But at that time he was pastor in Spring street. And he came out and held a six-week's revival. And during that time there must have been thirty or forty that got saved and filled with the spirit and we had a baptismal service. In the Spring Street baptistery because Bethalto didn't have one and as it was a Sunday school was in class and then they voted us in as I was a treasurer for the Sunday school for a period of time. And then they needed a teacher for the junior boys. So I went in teaching for the junior boys.

PS: How old were you then?

BV: I was probably eighteen.

PS: Okay.

BV: And so then I went in teaching for the junior boys and after that they had a primary girls. So they wanted me to teach primary girls so I went from the boys to the primary girls and I taught them and I'd always accuse my dad every time I'd get a big group you split them.

PS: [laughter]

BV: He said well that makes you work harder.

PS: Yeah.

BV: So then I went from teaching the primary girls I went in I taught the intermediate but at the same time then I started teaching the adults. They wanted me to teach the adults. So I started teaching the adults and I also had a shift workers' class on Sunday at evening.

PS: Oh.

BV: Before church. A lot of, we worked shift work back then. Everybody did and we had our pins that, we didn't want to lose our pins.

PS: Yeah.

BV: So if we had to work that morning then I had a class in the evening before church for if they wanted to win their pin they came there and that was their Sunday school.

PS: Explain the pins because I have seen those before.

BV: Yes.

PS: And I didn't grow up with those. Explain those pins.

BV: Those were started, my dad started that at Bethalto. That you were allowed two Sundays for sickness and the reason he did that when he started it out he wanted to get kids to come all the time. And bring their parents. So some of the little kids when they would go on vacation with their parents their parents didn't go to church. Well then they'd lose their pin.

PS: Right.

BV: So my dad said you know we got to be fair with this so you were allowed two Sundays in the year to miss. And then or you'd get a pin. And that's, that's how the pin started. And that's how I've what got my pins.

PS: So how many pins do you have now?

BV: I have right now I've got sixty-three years but I'm short seven. I can't find nobody that makes them.

PS: Huh.

BV: No they said they quit making them. David [inaudible] quit making them. There was a sunshine bookstore in Pontoon Beach. And she always ordered them for me and that company quit making them.

PS: Huh.

BV: So I'm stopped at sixty-three. This year in September. If I have the good Lord bless me with good health.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: I don't have to miss I'll have seventy years.

PS: Seventy years?

BV: Yes

PS: Consecutive?

BV: Seventy years.

PS: That's pretty impressive.

BV: Yeah. Oh, I am proud of the fact that the Lord blessed me.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And when I was sick and in the hospital well your dad came. He was faithful when I had surgery and that. Before them, Brother Copeland came over when I was in St. Louis. He came over. And he'd teach me the lesson and preach the sermon to me.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: So I was outpatient for him he said.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And that's how I've got kept my attendance.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Like that.

PS: So seventy years of Sunday school and you taught a shift worker's class.

BV: Yes.

PS: So like.

BV: Plus the Sunday school mhm.

PS: So you.

BV: And I taught adults.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Oh I guess I've taught adults for the last probably the last forty years. I've taught. Brother Bell, he came to me one time and he said Betty I would like, I was teaching teenagers, and he said I would like

for you to think about teaching the adults I believe you're missing something. I said I sure am happy where I am at. He said I'm not saying you're not but I just feel like the Lord would like for you to graduate.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: I said well pray about this will you? And he said I have been.

PS: Yeah.

BV: I said okay I will. And so then in a couple weeks, I told him I said I'll teach the adults so I've been teaching the adults ever since.

PS: Yeah. So how old were you when you transitioned from kids to adults?

BV: Uh, probably maybe in the twenties.

PS: Oh okay.

BV: And all that time I was with, I was CA president. President of the youth group.

PS: Right.

BV: Clear up till I was thirty-six. And then they wouldn't let you be...

PS: Yeah.

BV: President anymore.

PS: Right.

BV: You [inaudible] but you couldn't be president anymore.

PS: Yeah. Yeah. So you, for somebody who, you didn't go past high school because you didn't really want to, you didn't need to.

BV: Yeah.

PS: But or you didn't go past grade school rather.

BV: Yeah.

PS: Then here you are, you know, in your twenties asked to teach adults.

BV: Yeah.

PS: That's pretty, I don't even want to brag but that's pretty impressive.

BV: [Laughter] Oh, I was blessed by it. I really were.

PS: So do you think, would say like you're a self-taught as a Bible teacher?

BV: That's, I just studied the lessons. And read the bible. And asked the Lord to give me the words he wanted me to say it. I still do today.

PS: Yeah.

BV: You know who is going to be there. You know what they need to hear. And help me to say it. Always help me to say it in a Christ-like manner.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: That they know that I love them and that it's from you. And that's the way I teach. I study it. I study it every morning. Five o'clock I'm up.

PS: Five o'clock?

BV: Five o'clock. First hour I'm studying my lesson.

PS: So how, Five o'clock that's pretty early.

BV: [Laughter]

PS: What time do you go to bed?

BV: Oh ten-thirty, eleven o'clock something like that.

PS: So drink some coffee in the morning, first thing?

BV: Yeah.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: Make my coffee.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Sit there at my table and do my studying.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And reading the word. That's how the lord keeps me going for him.

PS: Yeah. So how else have you served your church?

BV: Well I was, besides a youth leader for so many years and then a Sunday school and then I worked

with any of the missionary groups. Or whatever they needed or any kind of repair work. That I could help with. I've always done that and then I was in the prayer warriors and our Bible studies that we have here. And stuff like that. Anything that they ask me to help to do I've done

PS: Mm-hmm. And you are currently a deacon and you've served as a deacon for how many years?

BV: I guess it's probably been about twenty years. Yeah.

PS: And I feel like, maybe I'm wrong, but I feel like a woman as a deacon is a fairly rare thing in smaller towns.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So here we are again. You were the first female supervisor.

BV: Yeah.

PS: You know, at Olin. And now you're a female deacon on a board where you're the only woman.

BV: Yeah.

PS: And you've been the only woman?

BV: Yes.

PS: Okay.

BV: I always have been.

PS: So how do you feel like you are constantly like you're, I mean, don't take it the wrong way.

BV: [inaudible]

PS: Well, you're kind of a, like a feminist.

BV: Yeah.

PS: You are pushing forward for women.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So how does that make you feel, that you keep kind of pushing these doors open?

BV: Well, you know, I tried to, I tried to think about, you know, and I tried not to show and work like I'm a woman and they're men. They think this way. I think this way. I tried to reason and my dad always taught me God gave you a good common sense and he expects you to use it. And you always think about what is the important thing. Not who you are. Or who they are. What is the important thing that is going on at that time. What is necessary. Not which one what people think or what other, what do you feel

like... Is the important thing and what do you need to do to be that and not show partiality. And that I've always kind of leaned towards that way. I've tried to think about. I'm not quick to speak, sometimes I don't say much, but in my mind, I'm turning it over and over you know? What is the right way to handle this? Should I say something or just keep quiet? You know? And that's just kind of the way I am when I listen and you know and it's like I told your dad when he had said you guys I said don't ever feel like you have to say [inaudible] don't ever do that.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: You say you guys, that's me. I learned that when I was supervisor. I'd tell them. You know, I know I'm the only woman supervisor, but you guys that's good enough for me. I know you include me so don't worry about that. Don't make me feel like I'm out here at the side.

PS: Okay.

BV: I'm right here with everything. So that's why. As a deacon, I feel like whatever goes on that's me. You know? I don't feel out of place or anything like that.

PS: So you kind of like you pushed back against any kind of special treatment. You want to be.

BV: I just want to be whatever, whoever, however, they're treating everybody else. That's me too.

PS: Okay.

BV: I like to be treated like everybody else. [Both Laugh]

PS: Makes sense. So you've lived your entire life in the county.

BV: Uh-huh.

PS: You've lived mostly in Bethalto.

BV: Yes.

PS: Okay so how has things changed?

BV: Well you know when I was a kid you'd noticed I guess they've always been to me they've been a clean county. And of course I've always lived in this area and to me they've always been particular about what they allowed like on the, some people may not pay attention but what they allowed on the roads. If they've always been particular made sure everything was cleaned up like dead animals. They never did leave over that.

PS: Yeah.

BV: They always made sure that somebody was there to pick them up. And they've kept the roadways up really good. And as a kid, I guess I just noticed that if anything was going on it was took care of right then. And the adults. It used to be you were kids and that's the way you were treated. You didn't...

Interfere with adult problems or anything like that. But you knew that it would be took care of. Because the adults took care of it and the county did it. And as a child, I never worried about what was going on in the county or things not being right. It always seemed to me like it always run good. You know? And as I've grown up I've seen changes in the county that's gone. Of course politics, I never was in politics. I always had to do as dad said again pray about it. You pray for the person.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Not the party.

PS: Okay.

BV: And he said keep it to yourself.

PS: Right.

BV: The lord don't need you broadcasting that.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: So he fix you and you take care of it.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And that's between you and him. And so that's what I've always done. I've always felt like in voting. I believe everybody ought to vote and I think you need to pray about it. Before you do and vote the way the Lord lays on your heart to do it and I've never felt like that I voted wrong or anything. Not always the party I voted for got in but I still felt like I did what I should. And so in the county as far as clean and I think they treat the people tremendously as far as they are good to the veterans. And all the nursing homes look at all the places they've got for handicapped people. And the homes that they're putting up now is for the people who need help. You know? See I think that is.

PS: Yeah.

BV: They ought to be commended for that. And they've got parks. Recreation of all kinds for all ages. They are not particular about any particular and I noticed that especially the parks for the kids. They try to improve on them.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Anything that's going on. And safety measures I think they do a good job on trying to watch for safety measures. As a town in an area as big as Madison County is to me we don't have that many problems. Yeah we got problems.

PS: Right.

BV: But they're took care of in the right way. And I think that speaks well of our county. As a supervisor

and that.

PS: So living in Bethalto specifically for so long, you've, I mean it's really changed.

BV: Yes it has.

PS: In the past. You moved to Bethalto when you were...

BV: Well let's see I moved to Bethalto well I worked, I lived in Bethalto when I worked at the store. When I was seventeen.

PS: Okay.

BV: I've been pretty close to it ever since then.

PS: Okay. So how has Bethalto changed? I know its gotten bigger.

BV: Oh its gotten bigger. As far as the leadership and I told our mayor about this because I had him as a junior boy in my Sunday school class.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: And I told him one time when we was at a meeting and he was there and I told him I said you know Allen. I said the thing that makes me proud of Bethalto is that the Lord has always seemed to give us a good Christian mayor. He may not belong to our Church.

PS: Right.

BV: But a good Christian mayor. And he looked at me and cause he had just been voted in. And I said he hasn't forgot that. And he reached over and he hugged me and he said neither have I.

PS: Yeah.

BV: I said now that's good to know.

PS: Yeah.

BV: I want you to remember that. And I said he's still right by your side as long as you'll let him be. But I and I think I really feel like that is why Bethalto has been blessed and took care of. That's what I call taken care of. Because the people have been good Christian people. They've gone to Church. They've respected God's house. Even though a lot don't attend as they should. But, yet, there is a respect... For the Lord and I think that's he's always blessed us with a good Christian mayor. And I think the leadership has a lot to do with that. And that's why I think it is changed, it's growed in numbers and things have changed as far as the growth in the surroundings but as far as a good place to live I wouldn't want to live any place else.

PS: So you think the community its grown well, you think?

BV: Yes. Oh, Yes.

PS: Okay.

BV: I think it's grown well. The population has and they to me they don't have the right amount of population on the signs.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: But cause I think it just grew extremely. Everywhere you look. But they're particular about the way it's kept.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And that's what I like about it. That's why I say the county itself. You go into a lot of other places and boy you can see junk heaps everywhere right in town. Well you don't see that in Madison County and that I like.

PS: Mm-hmm. We are coming down to the end here. What are some of your favorite parts of living in this area? You know, I know that you've, you are a regular attender of the Halloween parade.

BV: Yes. Yes.

PS: And the homecoming. So what are some of your favorite things in this county?

BV: Well. I always liked the fireworks. I've always liked fireworks. I like fireworks. And I like the decorations for Christmas. I always like Christmas time.

PS: So do you go to the spirit walk and stuff?

BV: I've been there but I don't go every year. But I've always thought that was nice that they had that.

PS: Yeah.

BV: It's kind of different towns that had. That I like that. And I think Bethalto does extremely well on decorations and things for Christmas. And they kind of promote it and yet they make sure that they're down after Christmas. So they don't leave them just there.

PS: Right.

BV: They have to be taken down and I think see I think those things are what keeps the county and the town. Looking presentable. And everybody, everybody wants to live in Bethalto. That's why we grewed like we have. Because of the kind of town it is and I think that the people themselves have to be commended for this. Most everybody does tried to do their best about keeping their property up and everything.

PS: Right.

BV: And that speaks well of the crowd. And I like any of the parks that they have. That they've done good about making the new parks. Because they grewed. And then that we used to have just this one up here and you know that homecoming is a big time. You know? For the, that's something that Bethalto has always had. And always look forward to it. In fact, one of the first things I remember about the homecoming is that we lived up there at that big house. We went to the store and of course us kids was sitting in the car right across from there was the homecoming of course. And it used to be right at the street.

PS: Oh really?

BV: Oh yes. It never used to be way back where it's at.

PS: So.

BV: It was right there at the street.

PS: So where city hall is now.

BV: Yeah. All of that was homecoming right there.

PS: Oh wow.

BV: And the big old ferris wheel was right there at the where the on the water offices there. Boy the Ferris wheel was right there. And we were sitting in a car and here come a clown. We used to have a lot of clowns. And I like clowns, funny things.

PS: [Laughter]

BV: And this clown come up to the window.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And he knocked on the window like that. Well, we it scared us.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Because we know we weren't supposed to get out of the car.

PS: Right.

BV: And so he wanted us to roll down the windows. So we rolled down the window and he said he pull out this string of wieners

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: He gave them to us. That's for that he said. For us to ride the Ferris wheel.

PS: Oh, really?

BV: Really it excited us.

PS: Yeah.

BV: When mom and dad come out of the store. They said what are you doing with those wieners? Where did you get them? Said that clown over there gave them to us.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And said we are to ride that with them.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: You mean take, them our tickets.

PS: [Laughter].

BV: So we took the hot dogs.

PS: Uh-huh.

BV: And we rode the Ferris wheel.

PS: Really?

BV: That's the beginning of the homecoming [inaudible]. [Both Laugh]

BV: That I remember. The first thing I remember about the Bethalto homecoming.

PS: That's very funny. So you've gone ever since?

BV: I've gone ever since.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Yup. Yup. And that's a time and it's, it used to be more so than it is now. Of course, I know a lot of people who've passed away. Everybody came to Bethalto.

PS: Right.

BV: It's one of the biggest homecomings around.

PS: Really?

BV: Because everybody comes home.

PS: Mm-hmm. Okay.

BV: That's what they call it a homecoming. They wanted to come to Bethalto. To visit all those that had grown up with.

PS: Yeah.

BV: And it used, it used to be and you do you see a lot of people that you don't see any other time.

PS: Yeah.

BV: Yeah.

PS: So all in all you think that the country you grew up in and the county you're in now.

BV: Yeah.

PS: By in large it's gotten bigger but what major changes have take place.

BV: Well the major changes that I think it has growed with the population. I think it takes good care. Of the growth over the population. And it has maintained the prestige of being a clean county.

PS: Hm.

BV: And a nice place to live. It has a, it has a drawing card I guess you would say. That people want to live here because of the way that it is took care of.

PS: Mm-hmm. So for you the county you grew up in and the county you live in now it's still the place you want to live?

BV: Yes.

PS: Nowhere else you'd rather be?

BV: Nope. Nope. No place else. Right here is where I'm happy with. Yup. Yup.

PS: Well I thank you very much for your time today. I really appreciated the insights you've had. I guess if I asked you one more question. It would be you know other you know and I know you are very much a live in the present kind of person but other than right now what part of your life in the country have enjoyed the most? Was it being a kid playing on a farm? Working at Olin? What is some of your happiest memories?

BV: Well I guess probably the happiest memories is growing up. And just growing up as I grew up as kid. In the county and the people and the things that went on.

PS: Yeah.

BV: That you were involved in. When we lived in Bethalto how we could be in. When I lived in Bethalto there in that big house. There was a nothing clear down to where it was Plageys store. And that's where

the corner of Roosevelt right now.

PS: Yes. Yeah.

BV: That was all vacant that was a ball diamond.

PS: Oh really?

BV: Yes that was a ball diamond there. Mm-hmm. And that and I got pictures of that when there was the big stand there and that's where they would gather to play ball. Just nothing but an open field. And across the road was nothing but a cornfield. That's where my dad he worked at Olin three days a week during the depression. And he cut corn, shucked corn after that.

PS: Oh really?

BV: After that. Mm-hmm. For help make a living. Yeah. And that was nothing but a corn field.

PS: Wow.

BV: Yeah. It has growed and I feel like I've growed with it. [Both Laugh]

BV: I've enjoyed it. I've seen it, seen it grow and I like the growth that I see out of it.

PS: I think that's a good place to stop. Thank you for your time Betty Vaughn.

BV: Well you're quite welcome. I've enjoyed it. Talking about it.