

Interview with Juanita Aiken and Paula Roebke - April 30, 1996

Dorothy Joynes (DJ): This is April the 30th, 1996, Dorothy Joynes talking with Juanita Aiken in Fains Store. And Juanita when I saw that Fains was gonna be going out of business I knew that this was the end of a really important era in the city so I came in and I said, "Hello." (laughter) "Can we talk." And here we are, so tell me about yourself, you said that you were brought up in Asheville and you have a long history here and family and I wanna know all about it.

Juanita Aiken (JA): Well, I was born over in West Asheville and I lived there until I was nine years old with my mother and daddy, and my daddy died when I was nine and there was no social security at that time, and my mother was not working and she had four children to raise so, she always said she wanted us to be somebody. And I don't know how, she wanted to put us in the Baptist Orphanage but there was no Baptist Orphanage close, it was a Presbyterian Home, she could visit that every week. She visited every week and they told her she was making us homesick and she decided well, every other week. And she only missed one time, the whole time I was up there. So, you know...

DJ: Tell me about the orphanage.

JA: Well, we went up there, I think I was in the third grade and my sister was in the second grade and of course the first day, when you go up there, I didn't know it then but they always have somebody your age, maybe that's gonna be in the same room with you, to go with you all that day to show you, take you through the day, the routine. So we had some new toys that my mother had bought us and we filled up the bathtub and put in the little boats (laughter), so we had a pretty good time with some new friends but then it hit

us [unintelligible]. We were taking a nap and we were crying and they got us up and let us go out and go around the merry-go-round. See everybody had to take a nap, but we were crying so they let us two go out and play on the merry-go-round. But, you get used to it, I mean you think, they tell you that you're gonna live here, but you still think that they're coming back, so...

DJ: You had the sister with you, what about the other two children?

JA: Umm, my brother was put in a little school, it was out there in Emma somewhere and my sister was up at Montreat College, I mean, she wasn't in college she was in high school, Presbyterian, so then mother worked.

DJ: You said your mother worked, what did she do?

JA: She worked in the cotton mill down there on the—

DJ: Did she ever tell you anything about the cotton mill, what it was like working there?

JA: We went down there and she took us down there and she just took us around and let everybody see, she was trying to show us off I guess. But yes, she took us down there and showed us around and then one lady she couldn't talk or hear and she did like this....and my mother said, "Yes, these are my babies." (laughter)

DJ: What was your mother's job at the cotton mill?

JA: I think she was a spinner, I think that was what she was, then when WWII came along she got her a job up at [unintelligible], you know, so it was more time, she was only working three days and she had more time and more pay.

DJ: Did you stay with her then or...

JA: Un-uhh.

DJ: You stayed in the orphanage.

JA: They, in the orphanage they liked to get you when you're very young, they'd rather have the little ones so that they can bring them up in their own way. And they discourage anybody, if they come and want their children, they say, they've already been through one trauma of having to come up here, after a death of a parent or both parents or whoever and it will be a trauma to come back and you know, so they really discouraged that. So we—

DJ: So you and your sister stayed together there. Tell me about the daily routine at the orphanage, was it—

JA: Well, we had a, well the cooks got up I'll say an hour early. They probably got up at five o'clock, and then at six o'clock they rang a big bell and I know because [unintelligible] could hear it and I guess they went by, but anyway that was for the boys to get up and go down and milk the cows and bring the milk up and then in thirty minutes inside the house we had a bell and that was for everybody to get up and get their beds made and you know straighten up. And then in thirty minutes another bell was rung and we got in line to go into the dining room. We just didn't walk into the dining room, they wanted us quiet, so the boys lined up on this side and we lined up on the other side and the matron standing there, we had one cute little girl and she had curls all over her head, snaggle-tooth, big brown eyes, and every morning she'd look at the matron and say, "Miss Roberts you have on a pretty dress, Miss Roberts I love you." You know, she'd say that every morning (laughter), she was cute, she was only four years old, she hadn't even gotten in school yet, but that tickled most of us. But anyway, we'd go in and then we'd stand, you know before we sat. In the morning we always had the one table, we had nine

tables and there were seven people at each table and each table took a turn and everybody said a Bible verse and then we had you know blessing, that was devotion, that was morning devotion. So we all sat down and ate. And then lunch time we just had the blessing, we didn't have to—but at night we had the blessing and then in thirty minutes that bell rang and we all went in that big living room and the boys sat way in the back and the girls in the front. Children, the little ones, over there. And we have a, well we sang songs, we had the Bible read to us and maybe a little talk, maybe a poem by Edgar Poe or somebody like that, you know and then we'd end it with a prayer. And then we had night, the boys had the gym at night to do their basketball, everybody in school had to go to study hall, the little ones went to bed cause they studied in the afternoons. But we studied and the ones that went to practice basketball got out early and went to practice basketball. And the boys had it so many nights and the girls had it so many nights.

DJ: You mentioned cows...the boys milked the cows...

JA: Oh, yeah, the boys always milked the cows, took care of that and they brought the milk up and we had a girl that she made all the bread and she'd bring the milk and she scalded the milk buckets out and ...

DJ: You used the milk there, you didn't sell the milk?

JA: Unh-uh, oh no, we raised our own food their and had our own milk.

DJ: Tell me about raising the food, did the girls work in...in the—

JA: No, no, the boys did all the farm work.

DJ: What did the girls do?

JA: They did the housework, they did the laundry, you know, they did the boys' laundry. We did our laundry and the boys' and the little ones' laundry. See, everyone was

assigned to a duty and we had two cooks each meal and they'd cook three meals and then two more cooks went on, then we had a table girl that waited on, I think we had three table girls, that was all they did and then we had people that cleaned the halls and people cleaned the play-room (laughter) and then we had people on laundry, everybody had a duty and it was changed once a month or every six weeks and they put it on the bulletin board in the hallway and you could always fuss and say I've already done that, I should be on something else (laughter). Everybody wanted something else!

DJ: And the buildings still there, do you know anything about how they run it now?

JA: No, it's quite different, the little children there now I think have... I think that they've been in trouble, I don't know, I don't know too much about it. The children when I went there were just orphaned, there was no Social Security and if they had a mother or a father they had no jobs, they had no way to feed those children, so...

DJ: Did your mother ever talk to you about the process of getting you involved in going there...

JA: I don't know how she learned about that orphanage or who told her or who helped her. That's one thing I regretted, not knowing who it was, where she found out, but umm, I know my uncle he always brought my mother up there to see us and he took us up there and left us, but he was with us from the beginning when my daddy died, they were good friends, opposite from each other as could be, but they were good friends and he told my mother's brother, he said, "Now you're orphans." I think he wanted to adopt [unintelligible] and I cause they had no children, well mother would suffer and work for anything as long as [unintelligible] and he did, he took us up there and he brought my mother up there, he went through life with us. And there's not a whole lot of people in

this world that do that, some of those children only got to see their parent or living relative maybe twice a year, maybe some a little more. There was another two little girls that saw their mothers as much as us but the others they lived way out and they had no way to get there. They just couldn't get there, that's all there was to it...

DJ: The first day you were there you had somebody show you around, did you do that with other children?

JA: Yes, I had to take them when the bells rang, I had to tell them what it was for, we had to take them and line them up, and we had to take them to the table. We had to...well, really what it was was to keep their minds off home and you'd talk to them, let them talk a little bit and you could tell them yours but then they wanted you to change, you know, if they began to cry then they wanted you to change what you were doing, play another game, go out on the playground, anything to get their mind off it. They didn't tell you not to talk to them but, you know, to let them talk and you tell them your situation, but they wanted you to keep their mind, you know as much as possible, off, so they'd get over it. Mr. Gruber was a Presbyterian minister, he was there the day I went and he was there the day I left and his thing was, there's no sickness in the world worse than homesickness, homesickness is the worst sickness in the world, so that, you know that's just the way they ran it, they tried to put a little child that was coming in with a child that was the same age, maybe is gonna be in the same room to, you know, be buddies with them until they got, you know, to know everybody.

DJ: You had classes all winter...

JA: We went to public school.

DJ: You went out to school?

JA: Um-hmm, Swannanoa.

DJ: So that you had the difference between being in with your people that you got to know well and then the group outside, so you had to regular school—

JA: Yeah, we just lived as a family at home, but we used to have to go down to the bottom of the hill and catch the bus, but then we had so many up there, you know, we had sixty kids and they brought the buses up there and the kids way on [unintelligible] road, they got to come and stay inside the house with us in the cold winter, and that was good because for all of us to be standing down there in the freezing weather was not good. The State Test Farm, Mr. Clap, he used to let us come over there and stand in that little tiny building but they got them so that the bus would just come on up there and pick us all up and the people that had children that were above us, they came down to where we were and they just came on in the hall and waited.

DJ: What is the State Test Farm? What did they do there?

JA: Now it's where the Moore General is, see Moore General was...it's a state test farm, where they state experimental, I suppose vegetables and trees. They had apple trees, apple orchards; they just had cattle and everything. I think it's just some kind of a, like a cultural, you know, and the families that worked there lived in houses on that road and around. The girl that lived down there on the State Test Farm, she was in my class, and she graduated the same year I did. You know, we knew everybody.

DJ: Is the school you went to, is that still standing?

JA: Yes, and I forget what they're using Swannanoa, it was two buildings, the elementary and the high school, but they have Owen High School now and it's behind the

orphanage but where we went it was more or less down in Swannanoa, you know where Bee Tree Road and the old highway goes, it was right there.

DJ: Was that the one that's now Williams School?

JA: Probably, I don't know what it is.

DJ: There was on the map, I was looking there's, off of Old 70 there is , looks like a...it's Hospital Road. Do you know what that...?

JA: Hospital? I only know about Bee Tree.

DJ: Before you get to—

JA: Was Hull Creek, maybe that's it, Hull Creek School.

DJ: This was before you got into the road that your orphanage is on, you have a road that you come off of Old 70 on... I wondered what else was around there.

JA: Well, they had a road up through there and just an orchard, [unintelligible] a forest, you know, a mountain of trees. Umm, there was no hospital until they built that orchard and then they built that Moore General and that's where my mother went to work. Where I went to school, it was down there at Bee Tree Road, see they put that super highway through, we didn't know about that (laughter) while I was in school, I mean it was after I left.

DJ: What did you do at Christmas time?

JA: Oh, at Christmas time, Mrs. Terry of Black Mountain, she was a millionaire, and they lived up north somewhere, but anyway she owns a lot of property in Black Mountain and I'm sure she's given the Episcopal Church...but she, every Christmas, each child was allowed to ask for three presents, three presents! And we had her Christmas tree down in the gym, we had put a big Christmas tree and then put our Christmas presents from her

down there, 'course we had our own up in the living room and then our parents or whoever, you know, our families if they could come they'd send and we'd get em. But, you know, we had really two Christmases, Mrs. Terry's where she gave every child roller skates, a doll, whatever you wanted, you could ask for three things. When you got up into high school you could ask for one thing, I forget what you could ask for...oh, a suitcase or something like that, you know, if you were going to graduate, I think we all asked for suitcases. Of course we had candy and nuts, you know, and then we a Christmas tree in what we called the big living room. And that's where everybody assembled every night for prayers and you know we got presents in there, in I'd say we were loaded down with presents, yep they were good.

DJ: And you said you had reunions too.

JA: We had what?

DJ: Reunions, where you got together.

JA: Oh, yes, every year.

DJ: Tell me about it

JA: Umm, the first Saturday after the Fourth of July all the old ones, you know, we'd go up there and even the teachers, you know, [unintelligible] Mrs. Griffin and Mr. Griffin, he died, of Montreat, the dietician and the farmer manager and they were at the last one and Mr. Gruber's daughter she also married a...her daddy was a Presbyterian minister and he was there but she married a Presbyterian minister, but he's dead now, but she was there, she lives up in Montreat now and they, her daddy owned a cottage up in Montreat and every year we always spent, each of us, there was about six or seven, you know with a chaperone and we'd go up there and spend a week up in their cottage and

then on weekends we would go out there like on a Saturday night, we'd have a marshmallow roast or a wiener roast and supper and you know just sit around up there and tell ghost stories (laughter). So it wasn't his it was *our* cottage, you know, we called it Tree Top.

DJ: What did you do in the summertime when there weren't any classes?

JA: Well, the girls went swimming three times a week and the boys went swimming three times a week, we had tennis courts and I can see the things now, I can see the tennis courts. They had two tennis courts up there when I was there and we played at night, we played "auntie-over," you know, ball over the house (laughter) and the boys would practice throwing footballs back and forth and the girls would play tennis or just walk around and sit out there on the lawn and the kids were always jumping rope and playing games, you know after supper and before dark in the summer we had prayers, you know, after dark and we always played outside together and we had a baseball field and the boys played baseball and the boys and girls had a basketball team, so they took us to play different people, like we went to Montreat and played there, course we didn't play their best teams because, you know, we didn't have that many—

DJ: So, did you have a gym teacher?

JA: No.

DJ: Somebody that—

JA: We had a man, the Alexanders, you know they were the early pioneers in Swannanoa, and one Mr. Alexander [unintelligible] president but Spec Alexander he was on the state highway patrol, he would come up and teach us, be our gym, our coach, he was our basketball coach, so we had people, you know, to do things like that.

DJ: Did churches come up and do things with you?

JA: Oh yes, every year the First Presbyterian church all the people, you know they have...uhh, I don't know what they call it, a Presbytery, all that's in the Asheville Presbytery they would come up and we would, we, you know farmed so we would really fix a big banquet for them, show off how we could do. And then the little ones would take the people around and show them and they always gave the little ones, you know, a nickel or a dime for showing them around and they'd show you their little garden, everybody had a garden space, a little flower garden, you'd show them your flower garden or you'd show them the [unintelligible] and the gym and you'd take them to the laundry building, you'd just take them all over the place and show them and just mostly you'd talk to them and they'd ask you questions, but they always came up and we always had to be there and greet them and show them around, they wanted to go walk around, you know, which they all did...

DJ: You had a big graduating class too didn't you?

JA: We did, we had one boy and six girls and the boy was the twin to my roommate, Margaret and Schubert were twins and he's a druggist and she married a fellow, he was in Swannanoa, [unintelligible] but they moved off, but anyway, there were six girls and one boy in my class and about the same in my sister's class, there were maybe seven in hers.

DJ: Now was your mother working at Moore General at that time?

JA: Umm, no not at that time.

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DJ: When you graduated from High School what did you do?

JA: Well, I went to work in a little dry cleaner office it was owned by a Presbyterian and then I met my ex-husband and—

DJ: Tell me about where you—

JA: I worked up in West Asheville, they had a little dry cleaning office up in West Asheville and they would come and pick, you know, people bring their stuff in and then pick it up and bring it back and people would—

DJ: Was it cleaned there or was it taken to another—?

JA: No, no it was taken over here, I forget just where it was , but it was just a little office where people would bring it in and they'd pick it up in the truck and take it over there and dry clean it and launder it and bring it back.

DJ: What was the name of it?

JA: Mr. Posy and he went with, that's where my mother got her job with Moore General.

DJ: Through Mr. Posy?

JA: Uh-huh. What was...I forget what Mr. Posy's name was. But see he had all that experience and then when Moore General opened he took over their laundry and everything up there and he knew me and my mother and my sister and he gave mother a job up there, that's how she got her job.

DJ: And that's after—

JA: Horace! ... no, no his name was not Horace, uhh...but his last name was Posy anyway.

DJ: Did you mother leave the cotton mill then and go and work for him, is that it?

JA: Umm-hmm, umm-hmm, right, when Moore General came, see it was during war time and I graduated in '39 and the war did not start until '40 or '41, seemed like it was '41 wasn't it? And she left then—

DJ: What did she do at Moore General?

JA: She worked in the laundry. I think she was a seamstress.

DJ: Did she ever tell you anything about it?

JA: Uh-hh...she just mended things, that's all I know.

DJ: You said she only got three days a week?

JA: Oh, no that was in [unintelligible] down there, she had full time up there at the hospital.

DJ: That was because the war was coming on and the development—

JA: Oh, no, because of the Depression, there was a depression on, that depression did not go off until the war started.

DJ: But she was still able to get a full time job then?

JA: Well when the war started and Moore General opened up, she saw Mr. Posy and he gave her a full time job up there.

DJ: Did that affect the other people at the cotton mill? Did she ever say anything about that, cause people would be leaving if they couldn't— maybe the cotton mill had more work—

JA: —some of them went up there, I don't know, but I know she did, because the...when I graduated they, Mr. Gruber knew this Mr. Posy and—

DJ: The cotton mill probably had demands for more help too, so that they would have had more than three days a week.

JA: Probably they did open up more, you know, after it started, after the war started and they probably had war orders, I'm not sure, but I would imagine they did, but we never...none of the children worked there. My brother he spent his last year with my daddy's brother, out in Candler and they played basketball [unintelligible] and then he went with the TVA down in Tennessee and my sister and I worked for Mr. Posy and we got married and Mr. Posy gave my mother a job, a full-time job.

DJ: And then you got married.

JA: Yeah, got married [unintelligible] I had a little girl, [unintelligible] nine years, but it just didn't work out so it's over with and forgotten.

DJ: Did you remarry?

JA: No. I had a little girl and, you know, I was always afraid to remarry, you know, you always think well he may not be good to her or something. He remarried though.

DJ: Tell me about your daughter. She lives close by?

JA: She lives out at Candler and she's married, he used to teach school and he went into business and now he's manager of this little store up here on Haywood Street, it's a dollar store, Family Dollar or something like that and she's working over at Calvary Baptist in the nursery. She had three years college and she always— she did not work as long as her children were— she went to work last year, the last half of the year her youngest child was graduating, that's when she went to work, she did not work at all and so, she's very fortunate because a lot of people and myself included had to work.

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DJ: —been joined by Paula Roebke and I am delighted to have you with us, you are the store manager and you've been store manager for sometime at Fains.

Paula Roebke (PR): For four years.

DJ: For four years, and where'd you come from?

PR: North Wilksborough, Wilkes County.

DJ: And what brought you to Asheville.

PR: I transferred with Belk.

DJ: Belk is a big name all through here and I wanted to ask you if you could tell me Juanita about how you discovered Belk and how Belk discovered you, because when I saw that they were going out of business I thought this is a real loss to this community and I wanna go in and have it on record because it's an important store.

JA: I don't think a person has entered that door that hasn't said that or something to that affect, how sad they are and how sorry. The employment commission, the state employment commission sent me here and I put my application in right here and Mr. Carver called me up (telephone ring)— Do you want me to get somebody to answer the phone for you?

PR: They know to, they'll get it.

DJ: And so what was your first job here?

JA: It was sitting, we had a table here and we had a long table over there and they had these, uhh, what do you call them, they had little square bases with a spindle and the cups would come up and you would open the cup, take out the money and the ticket, you'd put ticket on, everybody had their own little spindle and you'd make the change and you'd send it back with their copy of it, their copy of the sale.

DJ: But most people don't know about that. Can you explain how it worked, like a little cage and wires, have you ever seen that?

JA: They had on both sides of the, this one here, you know, they had and you would put it in a cup, we don't have any cups here do we?

PR: You're talking about the [unintelligible] the vacuum tubes.

JA: But we called them cups and they had felt on the end and you twisted them and they opened and just a little way and you'd put the money in and everything and twisted it and then you'd go and—

PR: It was a vacuum system.

JA: In the basement they had it, even through the basement, and you could probably— are those things down there now?

PR: No. The tubes are still showing here in the office and there are some in the basement that you can still see but they tore most of those out when they did away with the system, I grew up in a store that used those.

DJ: Do you still have one of the little containers?

PR: No, I sure don't.

DJ: It'd be collectors item wouldn't it?

PR: It would be, it would be, it was interesting cause you could hit, one end was open that you would send back, it'd just suck the air through that they used up here in the office to send it back through and of course the end at the register or down on the floor had a lid on it so you'd open the lid, put the little cup in and close the little lid and that created the suction, that close the tube for the vacuum.

DJ: Was it air that was being pushed through?

PR: Sucked through, yeah. It was a vacuum tube, literally.

DJ: And in the basement there would be something that would create the vacuum itself I imagine.

PR: Somewhere in the store was the compressor that would do the vacuum.

DJ: I did an interview in Carmel where they used this for doctors and it means that they can get material back and forth without having people have to carry it and so it's still in use but not in stores anymore. Was it confusing when you first started?

JA: No, not really, I had worked for CPA nine years.

DJ: After you worked for the dry cleaning?

JA: Uh-huh. Nine years before I came here I worked for Mr. Douglass CPA. That was a little more complicated, accounting and everything but I always [unintelligible] people's books, but at the end of the day we took each spindle and added up everybody's total, you know, and that's the way it was done.

DJ: So you were upstairs, you weren't—

JA: Yeah, I've never been on the floor, but, I worked more on the floor this last several weeks than ever.

DJ: But the people got to know you well, you said that they...

JA: Well, yeah, because we had our layaway. Now this right here was like our room back there, it had places and shelves all over to pack layaway articles and they would come up here and make their payments, their layaway payments, and we'd give them as soon as it was paid out, so you got to know practically everybody that came in the store cause everybody put something back on layaway once in a while, you know, so you really get to know the customer and then if they say, do you have some i.d. and they'd

say she knows me and they'd say do you know him and I'd say yes and then they'd put my initial J.A. and P.I. for personal identification cause we'd have to take the checks up here [unintelligible] you know, you have to know the customer.

DJ: And with layaway you had a system where they would put money down, and how did that work?

JA: Whatever they wanted on layaway they'd pay twenty percent down and the balance was divided into three equal monthly payments and then the third month, you know they'd get [unintelligible]. But now we don't have that, we have the 30, 60, 90 days, you get your package when you buy and you do not make a down payment, you are not even charged a service charge either, we would charge one dollar for, you know, for putting it away. But now you just, they divide the balance into three equal monthly payments, you pay, a 1/3 the first thirty and then you pay up and if you don't they'll charge you a little interest, you are not charged interest until that 91st day.

DJ: And then if people are not able to pick it up or pay you after the time that they say they will—

JA: You mean in the olden times...now they take it with them, it's just like a charge card, they take it with them. In the olden days the auditors would bear down on us about debts, but if you would promise to make a good payment pay-day, you know, like ten dollars, fifteen dollars, you know, we'll let it go. And we wouldn't make them get it either, which means the manager shouldn't hear us (laughter).

PR: They worked with them, it was...I'm sure it was like where I was from and we have continued it until we discontinued the layaway, working with the people because we've had plants that closed and people were, you know, having hard times and you'd try

to be lenient with them and if they could make payments on them then you'd keep it longer, you know, then you were supposed to because we were supposed to put it back out after so many days and that sort of thing, but Belk and Fanes has tried to work with the community and with the people because it's very people orientated.

JA: I used to say we'd bend over backwards to help them.

DJ: The new system though of taking the merchandise right now puts you at a greater risk though doesn't it?

PR: Well, what it does is it actually assigns you a credit card number and so the layaway has been done away with totally and most Belk stores, including Fanes, did away with the layaway and so they've just gone to this, which is actually a charge card and if the payment is not made, you know the amount that they say to make then they do start charging interest.

DJ: It's a different system.

PR: It's a totally different system.

JA: It's better than layaway cause you get to take your layaway with you and you don't pay a service charge at all and the only thing that's not...I think it's better because you get your package and then you just pay like you used to a third each month.

PR: You don't have to pay an upfront percentage of the purchase either.

DJ: But you can get stuck with merchandise can't you?

PR: No cause they take it with them, we don't get stuck with it, they when the purchase is made, it goes with them. We used to get stuck, with the old system with the layaway cause if we had been lenient with someone and continued to be lenient they may

have laid it away in the winter and now it's the middle of the summer and we still have winter merchandise in layaway, that way we used to get stuck merchandise.

JA: We shouldn't have let it go that far (laughter), but we'd put it back into stock and probably it was reduced, you know, the next fall. You just worked with people.

DJ: Well you had an unusual background, having worked with an accountant. You didn't tell me about that, can you back up and tell me about that.

JA: Yes, I worked nine years with Mr. J. Douglas Robinson, he was the treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church over there. He did all their auditing.

DJ: Where did you learn how to do this?

JA: I went to night business school at [unintelligible], well Cecil's and then I took some courses over at Glanton too.

DJ: That's always good to have...did you have business experience before you started here.

JA: She went to college!

PR: Umm, I graduated with a BSBA in marketing and management double major and I had worked for Belk while I was going to high school a little bit, during the holidays and then while I was going to community college before I transferred to Appalachian I worked with Belk and then after I graduated from college I started with Belk in their management training program and then transferred here.

DJ: Is it unusual for a store such as Belk's such to have a store like Fanes for a spin-off. You had a definite way of not selling below Belk's merchandise.

JA: We're not allowed, we were not allowed to undersell Belk's with their quality like products, now this, before she came, they would go out and like in Greer, South Carolina

they would get those [unintelligible] they were [unintelligible] but you couldn't tell the [unintelligible] you know and they had people that would come in here with their regular material, but [unintelligible] and I think [unintelligible] it closed, didn't that place close? It really drained off our business because that's why, it wasn't because we, Belk's didn't send us anything until lately, but anything that we bought that Belk was selling we could not undersell them , we had to sell at the same price.

DJ: So you have a different purchasing procedure.

PR: It started out, a lot of the stores, most of the Belk stores, or a lot of the larger ones had bargain basements and so you had the Belk store and then you had then you had the bargain basement, well then they went to budget stores that would buy irregulars which this store was the budget store, was a budget type store, would sell irregulars and get clothes out and would buy, like Juanita was saying, the Beautknits and get clothes out and irregulars from those. And this store and the leader in Spartanburg were in the same group at one time, so those two stores had the buying power of two, so they could buy Beautknits in quantity and split it between the two, those type things, buy irregulars, go to Rich Loom Manufacturer, get draperies, that type of thing.

JA: Didn't Belk sell Beautknits but they'd sell the first quality and we sell the irregulars.

PR: Yes, Belk's does not sell irregulars, they don't sell seconds of any kind, where as this store could, that was one way that it would keep it's price below the regular Belk stores, that was the agreement, if you carried the exact same merchandise you could not be below, well irregulars made it different so that's how they worked. Then there was another evolution of going to outlets and having a Belk outlet and so now the budget

store is evolving into something different, so there's just an evolution in retail and we're just going into another phase now.

DJ: So, you're anticipating another stage for Belk's with this...

PR: Not necessarily in this area but Belk's is already, there are Belk outlets that go by a Belk outlet name, they're even involving a little more now, as an outlet they would take transfers from the regular Belk stores, which we have recently, Fanes did not get transfers prior to say five years ago, somewhere in that vicinity.

DJ: So you'd switch them between your various stores, you'd swap back and forth.

PR: Right, right, whichever group the store happened to be in and now there's another evolution of the spin-off from the outlets going into, changing the name from Belk outlet to, they're changing the name to Tag—

END OF SIDE A

BEGINNING OF SIDE B

DJ: And Paula you were talking about the difference in merchandising!

PR: Umm, with the onslaught it's really changed because with the different companies having their own outlet stores, it's become increasingly difficult to merchandise for, like the irregulars for a Fanes or a budget store or a Belk outlet because the manufacturers are taking advantage of it themselves, they're instead of getting rid of those items, their close-outs, their return merchandise, their irregulars and just only getting a portion of the return on that sale, their opening their own outlets and getting the full benefit of it, so a lot of people think that outlet, anything that has the name outlet on it, they're getting a better buy, which if you actually look at it the prices in most cases are almost as high as a regular department store, just because it has the word outlet, in say an outlet mall or a Liz

Claiborne Outlet as an example, the price is not necessarily a bargain price, so you have to really know your merchandise.

DJ: Is this an unusual place for outlets? Because when we first came here I was struck by the number of outlets, I didn't know what it meant and then I discovered Blue Ridge.

PR: Blue Ridge outlet mall has opened with, in this area, Pigeon Forge is huge, in Tennessee, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, that area, it is just a huge business, from that other people have seen the light so to speak and want to get in on that. Umm, with I-40 and I-26 here intersecting in Asheville we have a major opportunity to capitalize on people going to Tennessee or, you know, coming from wherever. And so that's why Blue Ridge Outlet, there's another outlet that is being built as we speak, in the...down past the Asheville Mall, in that area, they are building another outlet mall.

DJ: That's opposite the Lowe's?

PR: That's down below Lowe's yes. And it's changing retail as we know it. I've been full time with Belk since 1982 and in that time I've spent all of my time with Belk it's changed so much, just in that short amount of time and Juanita has seen just the retail totally change from the pneumatic tubes to other registers to now these registers. When they did get registers on the floor they were an older, you had to push in so many buttons, you had a whole panel of buttons on the register, we've got one downstairs actually, and then it went to another type of electronic to the registers that we have now.

DJ: When I go to the supermarket, somehow they know that I've gotten one bunch of celery and it's typed out. How do you do that?

PR: Umm, with those they have the bar-coding, bar-coding has saved a lot of people because each item has a specific code and with the computers it knows that this code is registered for this item.

DJ: I'm glad I asked.

PR: That's why the bar-coding. At Belk's they have the scanners and they can do that, at this location at Fanes we do a lot of punching because we don't have the scanners.

DJ: What brought this about? Is it the high cost of wages? Because I know that you go into a big store and sometimes you can't find anybody to help you.

PR: Uhh, one of the major costs for any company is their personnel, that's one of the major expenditures and when, if sales are slow then you have to start cutting hours because you don't have the incoming to pay for the personnel and that sort of thing, so sometimes that could be a reason for that.

DJ: And there's been a lot of change in compensation so that you have not just the hourly wage but you have the health and social security and the book keeping. Were you involved in the book keeping, that kind of book keeping?

JA: Well I did the pension, the profit sharing and the medical insurance and the pay roll.

DJ: Can you tell me about those?

JA: Well, we all have the medical, you know, most of us that need it, some of their husbands have it so they can take the supplementary but some of them their husbands work and they don't have it so they can insure here, you know, the whole family and we...if you work five years you still get a little pension don't you?

PR: I believe so.

JA: I'm sure, Odella, she didn't work here anytime it didn't seem but she's getting pension and you get a pension and we get profit sharing and paid up life insurance. I've got paid up life insurance, I have a pension, check coming in every month and they're giving me my profit sharing in 17 years, if you have less than 3500 they give you that 3500 in one lump sum and the government gets most of it for income tax.

DJ: Is this for full-time help or would this also apply to a part time job?

PR: Umm, prior to this year part time that were working x hours would also be considered for medical and other benefits, would not be considered for vacation and that sort of thing but the medical insurance they would. They have changed our insurance as well as everything else in life changes; our insurance has changed so now only full time employees are eligible for those benefits.

DJ: And what about the stores that don't give any benefits at all.

PR: Ok, that I'm unfamiliar with because Belk has always been pro-employee so they have always had vacation benefits, profit sharing, that sort of thing, sick days, personal days, paid holidays, that sort of thing, they have been very pro-employee, so I don't know about the stores that don't.

JA: And now you can, on the 401K, you can have so much, you know taken out of your check and they invest it for you and their investment's a lot better than what you could make personally at the bank or anything. And out profit sharing, what they're investing is greater than what I could get in a cd.

DJ: So your people when they're employed really have invested a great deal of their time and you've invested a lot of money in them.

PR: It's a two way street. The company invests through training, through a lot of people, I don't think in this location the ladies have all been sent off for training, but certainly with their management training with middle management training, supervisory training, that sort of thing, they do invest time and money into the employees.

DJ: You go into a school situation to learn—

PR: Yes, corporately they have schools set up, classes set up and the corporate structure is changing somewhat at the moment.

DJ: Are you talking specifically about Belk's corporate structure?

PR: Specifically about Belk's, yes.

DJ: And how many stores are there? And can you give me a little background?

PR: Umm, there are I wanna say 240 some odd stores, I don't know exactly how many Belk stores there are because that would include the new stores and closing and that sort of thing, so roughly around 240. Belk is the largest privately owned retailer in the south east, they go from Virginia, there's a store in Maryland, to Arkansas, there's a store or two in Texarkana, into Florida, Mississippi, the southeastern region. It was started by William Henry Belk, over one hundred years ago, we had our hundredth anniversary a few years ago, which was major. And our corporate offices are in Charlotte and they have buying offices in New York and in Charlotte.

DJ: They've done a great deal for the community too.

PR: Yes they have. They are entrepreneurs, they have also donated—

JA: To the orphanage, you know, they're Presbyterians, you'll find out and I'm sure that they were big contributors to the orphanage.

PR: That's very possible. They, they've opened libraries and civic buildings and that sort of things and they've donated a lot too.

JA: They gave a building over there on UNCA didn't they?

DJ: Uh-huh, the theater...Now this is very difficult in a tight economic time, particularly when you have your Wal-Marts and K-Marts. Can you talk about that?

PR: Umm, it...at the moment retail is...in this area there is tons of retail, there has been millions of square feet of retail opened up in the last five years in Asheville and in Asheville area. It makes it difficult for everybody, for the Ma and Pop operations, the small companies, small stores, as well as the large ones, because...the analogy that people in retail like to use is there's a pie and there's only so much pie and it gets cut into pieces and what used to be big pieces are now small pieces because there's only so much money that people has to spend and it makes it difficult so you have to be the best merchants you can be and just work with it the best way you can and be as competitive as you can, still making a profit.

DJ: But it's a sharper pencil all the time isn't it?

PR: Very much, very much so. You have to, you're continually looking for ways to cut your expenses, umm, everyone tries to get more of the pie or to maintain what you have and so you have to be very sharp on what you're doing and sometimes you can be the sharpest that you can be and do everything right and it's still not gonna be good enough because of other things that are gonna affect it.

DJ: So, if you're starting a store, you have to anticipate a start up time that is rather intense don't you?

PR: You have to...if you're going to start a store you basically have to be prepared to run in the red for anywhere from three to five years and most people are saying five, because of just getting your name out, you're trying to take somebody's piece of the pie or a small sliver of it and it is difficult.

DJ: Are you involved in your advertising? Is that part of your responsibility?

PR: That has been in the past, since we are closing, that is being handled by the general merchandise manager, but as far as items to promote to put in the paper, I have been involved in that, yes.

DJ: So you have to judge your market and you had, coming from another city, you had a city to learn. And Juanita, you know the city well, so what changes have you seen in the city?

JA: Patton Avenue used to, you would go, when you walked the sidewalks you couldn't pass, you had to step off into the street and go around the crowd, now you can almost walk down the middle of the street and not get hit. But see everything's moved out to the suburbs, out to the malls. But it used to be, when it was all downtown, do you remember?

PR: Umm, no, that was before—

JA: Oh, well when it was all here in town the sidewalks would be just jam-packed and if somebody was walking slow you couldn't pass, you'd have to step off and... but now you can even walk down the middle of the street and not get hit (laughter), I mean it's so different.

DJ: Have you noticed any change in the last five years? You had mentioned your being here for five years and more merchants coming in, have you noticed any changes with your clientele or—?

JA: No, they've all...they're all the same people and they're all looking for a bargain. We've had the dot system a year or so haven't we?

PR: A couple of years.

DJ: What is that?

PR: That was a mark-down system that we borrowed from the outlets where a color was assigned a percentage, a different color dot was assigned a percentage and when we got transfer goods from the mall, from the Belk stores at the mall, then we would assign it the first, whatever color was 25% then that merchandise would have a 25% dot color and then say in six weeks when we got new transfers in we would change the percentage of the color so if red was 25, blue was 35, green was 50, purple was 75 then it would move red would be 25, green would be...oh, I forgot what I said the colors were...oh well, it would move up and once it got to 75 percent we would keep changing the color dot on the 75% off merchandise cause it never would go lower, but that was a form of mark-down, it was a gimmick to move merchandise.

DJ: So, if something got all the way down to the bottom and didn't sell, where would you...?

PR: We kept it until it sold, now we may say, ok, all the dots there's an extra 25% off plus what the dot percentage says you get.

DJ: So you're going below cost.

PR: Yes.

DJ: But you do not have a disposal—

PR: No.

DJ: —system here?

PR: No there is not a location that we could send merchandise to after it did not sell at this location.

DJ: And did you find that there would be people that would come in and watch a piece of merchandise over a time and hope that it would, I did it with a hat one time and I'll never forget and I lost it—

JA: We've had people to put it on layaway and then when it went on sale they'd want to take it off layaway and you know get their money back and take it down there and get it. They held it, all that time, you know we could have sold it at top prices and they couldn't understand why they couldn't do that.

DJ: What did you do about that?

JA: We just had to hold it till the next day, we never put it back on the floor, they got their money back, it got to where we had to do that.

PR: Yeah, the policy on the layaways was given to where it didn't make it back onto the floor for three days. Cause it really did take, if someone did take something out of layaway or decide to let it go back, it really did take about three days to do the paper work, to get it out and to put it back, so they could not have it immediately.

JA: We did have several people, one lady especially, when new stuff would come in, that's all they did was choose what they wanted, put it on layaway and just...until it went on sale, you know, so the auditor was [unintelligible] on that, they did not approve of it (laughter).

DJ: Different ways of—

PR: Trying to get away whatever system there is, in anything, somebody's gonna try to find a way to get around any system.

DJ: And that take real people skill, doesn't it? In order to keep that going. But the change in tempo, you were talking about the streets being full and now they're not and you were talking about the stores moving in and the pie slices getting smaller, what do you see in the community? What direction do you see?

PR: I see it coming to be retail having a hard time at the moment because there is so much retail and it's not just clothing retail, there's new tire stores, the big Wal-Mart's are coming in, the more restaurants, it's just everything together. I see anybody that had started within the last year or two, unless they've got something that is extremely unique and the niche has not been filled yet by somebody else, I see them having a hard time in retail.

DJ: With Belks you have to be ready to move to another city if they need your skills someplace else don't you?

PR: Umm, within the group, the way Belk is set up, there are, this is Belk the big umbrella of Belk-Leggett, Leggetts are in Virginia, the...uh, if you are in a group, a particular group, then you may be moved within that group, there's not a lot of moving between groups, as an example, when I first started with Belk there were many groups, there was Berry-Hudson, these were partners, and they had a group of stores that they oversaw and you would not go between the groups unless say I needed to cause my husband was transferred or something and I needed to move to maybe Florida then we would go to our personnel manager in our group, say, Mr. X Y Z I need to move to

Florida and then they would contact the personnel manager in the other group. Within the group, yes, within whatever group you're in they may say we want to promote you or we need you here, would you be willing to go?

JA: We have...that's how Regina, Regina came from South Carolina, from Belk down there [unintelligible] and she came and asked and they were taking application and she filled it out and lo and behold she's down there now.

PR: Yeah, she was able to transfer between groups that way. But yes within a group they can say we need you here.

DJ: And if you are moved and if your husband goes to another city where there isn't a Belk then you have to start over again and find your own.

PR: Or commute if there's a, if you can find a happy medium, if you're close to where there is a Belk store and that sort of thing, between the two, some people have done that.

DJ: So in a sense Belk has invested a great deal of time and money but they also have somebody that is so well qualified for their own area that they are less likely to get off that ship.

PR: Yeah, they invest a lot of time and money and they don't want to lose it.

DJ: What did you do when you came here to learn about the city and the patterns of buying and so forth?

PR: Umm, I tried to listen to the customers, when I transferred here I had already been a buyer in my home town and I was raised there so I knew pretty much what everybody wanted or they didn't wanna shop there they wanted to go to Winston-Salem (laughter) that was our problem! But when I came here I tried to listen to the customers and listen to

the experience of my boss because he was from here and I'd get the information from him as well as from the customers and the sales associates.

DJ: Did you work on the floor for awhile so you'd get to know...?

PR: Umm, not really as a sales associate but whenever I moved here we had full responsibility, approvals, checks, that sort of thing.

DJ: So you got to know the—

PR: You did get to know the people, yes.

DJ: And the changes that you've seen are in the customers coming in or the...are there fewer customers now that the malls are pulling them out.

JA: Yes and because of our irregular merchandise going down the drain. Mostly we lost our customers because of that. It's tit of tat, we cannot undersell Belk and if you can't get the irregulars that's what our customers really needed and wanted.

DJ: And this is what you were addressing wasn't it? That the next stage is...can you go on with that?

PR: Yeah, we've been in the outlet phase, you know, the outlet stores have cropped up where this store used to be able to get the irregulars and be under Belk now we are having a harder time getting the irregulars, or getting close-outs and being under Belk because now Belk or other regular retailer department stores are promoting, they are able to get better buys sometimes from the vendors initially to where they can offer it at a lower price so they're offering first quality items at our prices and if you had a choice between a first quality item at a say 29.99 dress and it was promoted it was a 49 dollar dress and it was promoted at 29 and it was a first quality and coming here and getting a irregular 29 dollar dress, you would choose the first quality, that's what's happening, the regular

department stores are having to be in a promotional mode so much that they're in our price ranges with first quality and we can't match those prices with the same type goods with it being irregulars.

DJ: Were there a series of stores like Fanes connecting with Belks?

PR: Belks totally had a lot of budget stores and most of them were downtown stores like this one and as downtowns across the south have done they have kinda fallen by the wayside as strip-malls or big enclosed malls or Wal-Mart Centers or Super K-marts or those type things, since those have cropped up and come along a lot of the downtowns in the south are dwindling and as those have dwindled so have the downtown budget stores that Belk had and there are very few budget Belk stores left.

DJ: But this was a general procedure?

PR: Yes, yeah, sometimes what would happen is a Belk store would open a regular, Belks would open a regular store in a mall that they used to have a downtown store, well they might turn the downtown store into a budget store instead of just closing it totally because in a lot of cases the downtown stores had been there for years since Belk has been going since over a hundred years now, they would have had buildings paid for that sort of thing so why lose the investment and go ahead and open a budget store but then as the downtowns have dwindled those stores have also dwindled.

DJ: You mentioned your boss, now this is your office so where is his office?

PR: Ok we're part of Belk of Asheville group and my boss is the senior vice president for this group who is Charles Pine and he reports directly to the family member who oversees us which is Erwin Belk.

DJ: And where is his office?

PR: His office is in Charlotte.

DJ: And are you connected with the Belks store here directly? Or is this...do you have a going back and forth with the managers of Belks?

PR: In our group we would have a connection as far as the general merchandise manager for our group oversees this store also as well as the Belk, the regular Belk stores here in town. Our freight is handled at our service center which is at the Asheville mall, Belk store, that kind of thing, we have those types of connections, operational connections.

DJ: So it would save on your overhead transportation and so forth. Do they send their merchandise in to you from the Asheville...?

PR: Yes they did, that's where we got five to ten percent of our merchandise was transferred; the rest of the merchandise was purchased for the store. Since we have announced closing and are in a closing mode they have transferred more goods to this location for clearance.

DJ: And what do you see next for Belk?

PR: That's hard to say (laughter). Belks is Belks is always in change and they're going through some change at the moment—

DJ: Well, if they don't have this are they going to have something that takes its place?

PR: No, there's nothing planned at the moment that I'm aware of, as in an outlet store or anything like that—

JA: Some people are asking me if they're gonna have like a budget basement or something.

PR: Right now there's no plans to do that. They'll be clearing the merchandise in each location instead of sending it as to a Fanes or to a budget store or an outlet.

DJ: Where did the name Fanes come from?

JA: Mr. Fanes that owned this store, he was, it tells you in your book, if you look up Fanes it'll say 107 and it will tell you that one time Mr. Belk walked into a store and this young salesman came and he says...you should read it...let...read in this book, that book, the big book...

DJ: You find it and read it.

JA: Ok, it's really...it sounds like Mr. Fane too...let's see, I think it's in the back...no it's in the front... I looked, cause I wanted to see what they said about Fanes...Owen Fane 107....this is your book, I don't wanna tear it up...right there in the middle of...right there...just read that little history...

DJ: While a store manager would certainly know Belk on sight sometimes his help would not, when Belk walked into a Spartanburg South Carolina store one day a salesman approached him before the manager could get to the door. "What can I do for you today?" the salesman asked. Belk said he had been thinking about a serge suit but he did not believe the store had his size. The clerk reached for Belk's collar and checked the size and said "Well, you sure need a suit, as this one has faded." The manager of the store knew Belk but did not tell the clerk who proceeded to sell the old man a suit, a shirt, a hat and then he looked at Belk's feet and suggested a pair of new shoes (laughter). While the salesman was fitting the shoes he said, "My name is Red Fane and I'm glad you came to see us." Belk reached for his hand and said, "Well my name is Henry Belk and you keep working like this and you'll be the manager of one of my stores." Oh and Fane did

succeed and manage a store and then was responsible for five stores. That's wonderful, that's wonderful, I'm glad I asked.

JA: And it was just like him, just like him.

DJ: Was there another store here at the time that this was...?

JA: We were here...when I came the Belk was up there on Patton Avenue, you weren't up there were you?

PR: Uhn-uhn.

JA: And so when they went to the mall we got several people that, you know, couldn't work nights and all and we did better when they moved, you know, we got some of their customers like the downtown people that on their lunch hour would come in here and we did better when they moved cause we got some of their customers.

DJ: Well, you've seen a lot of changes haven't you? Now as you look back what was the most important experience that you've had here?

JA: (laughter) Just getting the job I guess, but I'll tell you the first time I got my profit share and I thought, my goodness! I really needed the money, I thought my goodness this is a nice nest egg! But it was so small compared to what I have now.

DJ: Well it was a different attitude because your mother, during the depression with your father's death had nothing...

JA: Right, right. But she worked and she...while we were up there in the orphanage she always came to see us and she always brought us something, whether it was candy, cheap big bags so that we could share. She'd say, "I want you all to share." And we'd look at each other and say, "Well, we do share." (laughter) But we'd eat a lot of it too ourselves (laughter)!

DJ: But a different way of looking at your future... I mean what you have here, as long as the market holds, because of course that's always a question, but you have almost a family relationship with your store whereas your mother's—

JA: Well, yes, we know, all of us know each other's family and if you have any hardship or anything they are there for you, they may not say anything but you can tell by the way they act and treat you that they are there and they're pulling for you...

DJ: And now you will have Belk's still behind you but not Fanes underneath you, so you're fazing your job out—

JA: She's already got her assignment and the rest of us haven't (laughter)!

PR: Yeah, they're gonna try to absorb all the employees that they can between the two Belk stores here when Fanes closes.

DJ: Yes, that must be something that worries people, isn't it?

JA: I tell especially the associate sales manager, when you came you were not a sales associate and they may not have an opening, but if they put there you'll have to work there and you'll have, you know, an opportunity, don't quit and go somewhere else, give it a chance, try it at least, you know, there's nothing like trying it and seeing if it will work out.

DJ: What is the job prospect in the city? Have you seen any change since you've been here for five years, is it harder to get a job?

PR: Umm, in retail or just in general getting a job in Asheville?

DJ: Just in general.

PR: Umm, there have...it depends on what you're looking for, since I've been with Belk I haven't really had the need but it seems as though, of course with all the retail

opening up there's been retail positions open but I don't know there's been a lot of manufacturing closed and we've seen a lot of plants close and as a result some of our customers have fallen off and they've had to move to find other jobs so it just kind of depends on what your labor skills are, if it's office or managerial or actual physical labor, it just really depends.

DJ: I was interested in the attitude of the gentleman from AB-Tech that most people expect to have more than one job in their lifetime and they go back and get re-tooled for whatever they want to get into.

JA: (unintelligible)

DJ: Sometimes husbands.

PR: (Laughter).

JA: It's a good idea if, I believe if I was starting out the first thing I would do is go back to school and try to retrain.

DJ: And you did that. You went to two business schools.

JA: Yeah, I went day and then when I got a job I finished up.

DJ: And now you'd better be computer literate.

PR: That's the thing, if you do need to change jobs, that's the one area, cause even in retail it's especially offices but even in retail the computer literacy is needed.

JA: They're teaching it in... even in the grammar schools, aren't they?

PR: Oh, yeah, oh yes.

DJ: They don't know their multiplication tables—

PR: —but they can... yeah, that's true, I don't always agree with what they're doing in school but that's one area where everybody needs to be—

DJ: Do you have children?

PR: I have a four month old.

DJ: This is a change that had take over our country across the board and what do you do with your four-month-old?

PR: He is in daycare, that's not what—

JA: My daughter's in daycare (laughter).

PR: Your daughter's on the other end of daycare though (laughter)! She's on the teaching end.

DJ: That's a tremendous change over the last thirty, forty years...

JA: But boy they are strict in daycare, they have to...oh, you wouldn't believe the things they have to do.

DJ: The legality and the requirement?

JA: They have to have all kinds of teaching games going on all the time and you know it's unbelievable all they do. And I thought I had well educated my daughter (laughter) and she didn't go to nursery school or you know, I put her in nursery school but my sister in law wanted to keep her but I thought, boy , Barbara Ann's missed out on a lot from the way she's having to teach she missed out on a lot, but I don't think they had all those requirements and all those things then...

DJ: The requirement for running a nursery school or requirement to get—?

JA: They have...it's under social services and they come over and inspect every so often and you've got to have all kinds of really learning material, teach them the colors, teach them...she's forever teaching them something, making things at home to teach them. It's unbelievable!

DJ: You come from the transition period where, did your mother work while you were growing up?

PR: My mother worked, I have an eight year old— a sister that is eight years older than I am, she worked prior to my sister going to school and then between my sister and I she didn't work but when I went to kindergarten she went back to work. So she worked and it was nice because she worked at the school, she was a teacher aid, she was one of the first teacher aids in Wilkes County and so she worked from that point on until she retired.

DJ: But she knew that her children were being taken care of, now you have a different situation with a little one, does this bother you? Do you nag, wonder during the day?

JA: They are so strict.

PR: With the daycare that I have him in, they are certified by the state, they have a high certification certificate, and I pop in periodically to check also, I just feel better that way. I would feel better if I had someone that I personally knew that was a family friend or something keeping him, but this is a good situation; this is the better of the alternative choices.

JA: If you had a grandmother or something, but I would have mine in the nursery school, the way things are now, if you just knew what all they have to do, the training and you know...

PR: Well, like the daycare where he is, they are all, all the teachers are all CPA certified in infant toddler, uh, uh, CPR and that sort of thing, so they get training, they have to be re-certified every year, they get additional training, this is part of their state certification to have the rating that they do. And they have to continue the training, so it's

the lesser of the two evils, the thing I'd like to do is stay at home and take care of him myself but since most families can't, it's a two income lifestyle anymore, just to make ends meet, so this is the choice we've had to make.

DJ: It's also the price we have to pay for our refrigerators isn't it? So that when you talk to people who are in their eighties and nineties, they didn't have any electricity and everything was right there and the dad was behind the plow, different world.

PR: Very much. Not necessarily any better either (laughter), in some instances. We, my husband and I were discussing, we feel like every generation the American concept is that every generation is better than the one before but I think the generation we're in is not, I think we're back sliding because we're not going to end up better than our parents as our parents were better than our grandparents were better, I think the generation that I'm in is seeing that and nobody's liking it very much.

JA: Some things are a lot better and some things are a lot worse. I mean if we could have the better of the two worlds we'd be better but there's no way.

DJ: We're almost off tape but I'd like to hear both of you say what you see for tomorrow.

PR: Go ahead.

JA: I don't, I really don't know, I just bear hopeful that things will get better for everyone as far as jobs are concerned...

DJ: In a sense we've doubled our work force with the women going into jobs.

PR: But what kind of a...you know, what kind of jobs are there because of companies laying off, cutting back, streamlining, getting more work, the common phrase is getting blood out of a turnip, a lot of large companies are working longer hours, in just about

everything you're working longer hours, not any more pay or less pay to get more work out with fewer people, it's becoming difficult in a lot of instance, I'm not just talking about Belk but just in general.

DJ: You see this with your friends when you get to—

PR: Umm-hmm, friends and family, yeah it's interesting, you have to be hopeful otherwise what else is there, plus you have to have hope for the little ones coming.

DJ: Oh, yes, that's our future isn't it?

PR: Umm-hmm.

DJ: I've asked a lot of questions are there any things that you'd like to say on the end of the tape.

JA: I hope that some of this stuff can be [unintelligible].

DJ: Having it [unintelligible] is so fascinating I have to write this up when I get home, you know, so that it...sentences and so forth, but it's the voices that are so marvelous and the experience of meeting such wonderful people. Is there anything that you...?

JA: It was nice of you to come by and do this cause I think a lot of our customers are going to appreciate it because they enter that door down there and there's not a one of them that hasn't said to me or someone else, I'm sorry, it's so sad. You know, that's everyone's comment.

PR: It's the end of an era basically.

DJ: Yes, it is. Well, it's been wonderful being with you ladies and I want to thank you very much.

