



# Oral History Program

## Interview with Preston Swofford by Billy Higgins 6/04/2011

Billy Higgins: (Interview took place in the Pebley Center in Boreham Library) Sir would you introduce yourself today to the interview audience?

Preston Swofford: Ok. You ready?

BH: Yes sir.

PS: My name is Preston Swofford. I'm a native Fort Smithian. I was born here in September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1920 and lived here all my life except during my war experiences and five years in Mississippi. I worked for the Ward Furniture Manufacturing Company and De Soto Furniture in several positions.

BH: You went to high school and to Fort Smith Junior College?

PS: Yes.

BH: Can you tell me the results of that education?

PS: Well (laughs) it was a...I only went to college one year and times were pretty tough then, hard to find a job and twelve dollars a week was the going rate. So I worked around for about a year then I joined the Air Force, February 1941. We's in a...assigned to a fighter squadron, P 38's we had and I worked for a while and became armament chief of the squadron; went to the Aleutian Islands.

BH: Ah, the Williwaw War.

PS: Yeah. It was a...then I came back nineteen forty... late '43 was assigned to an air base in Gainesville, Texas. It had 15 people on it and no air planes. Then I was transferred to Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City; had a great job there, I was in charge of the top floor of a barracks; it was my job. Then I went from there I went to school at the Muskogee, Oklahoma Air Base, very few people there. All we did was sit down line and wait for anybody to come by wanting gasoline in their plane. While I was there I went to school in Cleveland, Ohio for starters and generators, which I had nothing to do with; artificial horizon and directional dry roads, which I had nothing to do with. They called me while I was up there and wanted me to stay another, take something else I had nothing to do with. Then I came back to Muskogee and got transferred back to Oklahoma City. And VJ day I was down town as an MP watchin' the drunks.

BH: In Oklahoma City huh?

PS: Yeah.

BH: How did you make it back to Fort Smith then?

PS: Well I was discharged at Will Rogers Field and I came back to Fort Smith. And I went to work for a printing company for five years. Sole Printing, then I in December 1951 I went to work for Ward Furniture Company in the sales department. And over the years I've had all different kinds of jobs. I was in charge of the customer service department, traffic department, billing department. I...

BH: What was your first job at Wards?

PS: In the sales department.

BH: And so you went on the road?

PS: No. This was inside, a sales office.

BH: I see.

PS: And I was also, became in charge of customer service.

BH: What was Ward manufacturing?

PS: Bedroom furniture. At that time, it was an old-fashioned called waterfall furniture where the front edge of it would roll over and the beds would roll and the tops would roll. It was plywood that had been sawn in the back and it could bend over. They called it waterfall, very inexpensive bedroom furniture.

BH: So that was the furniture you were selling to the Baby Boomers.

PS: Well you might say that. At that time when they was first in there, the Midwest and the southwest wasn't part of my territory. But in about three years we changed production superintendants. The new fella had been with another plant over in around Little Rock someplace. Well he, after the furniture was put together to finish it, very archaic thing, they had to drag each piece, a man would drag it over to each finishing booth and another guy would drag it to another finishing booth which limited production quite bad.

BH: So how many people were you, was involved there with that?

PS: Oh I'd say there's, we had a veneer plant, rough mill, dry kiln, and I'd say there was probably 500 people working there by time you take all those mills and the rough mill and making all the parts.

BH: Were these workers you had at Wards like you, returning veterans?

PS: No, no most of them was just old hillbillies coming in everyday and working from the hills, very low pay.

BH: They'd commuted in from the...

PS: Yes sir. Around the surrounding areas and the...after about three years this new production man, we had an archaic finishing process which limited production. Well we put a new conveyor belt in with pans, they called 'em pans that you could set a dresser on or a bed or two night stands such as that chest and they went by the finishing booth and stop, a guy would put the finishing on them, go to the next booth there and get stained, the next one the finish, the next one all on this conveyor. Then...

BH: Mr. Swofford what drove that conveyor belt?

PS: It was a chain conveyor.

BH: What kind of engine? Was it a gasoline engine?

PS: No it was electric.

BH: Electric ok.

PS: Electric motor. Then they would go through kiln, drying ovens then after they go there, they go pack and we didn't have very much warehouse space in this thing. We had a warehouse on out on 11<sup>th</sup> street right off 11<sup>th</sup> called an old hangar, it was made; Ward Furniture had that during World War II. Built it, they made gliders. I think they made one glider but didn't find anything for it. Then the glider program went to the pot when they had all the trouble and invasion of Italy and whatnot with gliders it didn't pan out very well at all, use of gliders. But we was using this for a warehouse and shipping location back in the early 50's. But this new conveyor belt allowed us to increase our production three fold. We got up to making we was making up to 500-600 bedroom suits a day. Most of our bed suits at that time were low of medium priced furniture.

BH: And where were your customers?

PS: In the Midwest and southwest primarily.

BH: Sold them to furniture stores?

PS: Furniture stores. We had salesmen in these different locations and these two furniture stores. Once in a while we'd sale a wholesaler. But not, the biggest thing was directly furniture stores; with this increased production though we expanded our selling areas all the way to the west coast all the way to New York, all the way to the east coast and Florida. We had salesmen in every state in the union.

BH: You did?

PS: Yep. That was the first plant then...

BH: Let me ask you one other question. How did you get your product to these markets, by railroad?

PS: Mostly railroad. We tried to sell quantity to where they could ship by rail but not necessarily there was some went by truck. Some truck lines would haul furniture. And then we also had a local that delivered furniture for that purpose. And then we as I say expanded our production. The next step there was a plant right across the street from us not doing anything and about to go broke. And we bought this plant and in that plant we put a new finishing conveyor that would take bigger, longer cases. We were limited to about 54 inches I think in our current plant down there. This one we could get up to 65 inches on dressers and stuff on that conveyor. Well that, everything was going great we had all this expanded territories and had showrooms in Chicago, New York, Dallas, Atlanta, Los Angeles and San Francisco, permanent showroom where we had furniture market twice a year.

BH: And your tags would sell this under what brand name?

PS: Just Ward Furniture.

BH: Ward Furniture, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

PS: Yeah.

BH: It wasn't like, you didn't have a product line where...

PS: We had different styles.

BH: Its different styles and you had a name for those like...

PS: No. Well you had early American, Spanish, Italian, you know something like that or modern. That type, we didn't have specific names for each brand so we had these showrooms that we had markets twice a year in. And all the salesmen in that particular area would come in and so he'd be there when his customers came in. Also had showrooms in Highpoint, North Carolina that we had showed twice a year. That was a big furniture market at that time was Highpoint. And but we were covered and this plant we had bought across the street and had put this new conveyor in caught fire and burned down. So consequently what we did we decided to build a new plant. About this time...

BH: The plant you're talking about that burned is down there on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street or so?

PS: Fort Smith Bed and Folding Table Company it was called, Fort Smith Bed and Table Company. And so we bought this and but it burned down to the ground; caught fire in one of the spray booths. So we decided, about that time Mr. Ward died.

BH: Mr.?

PS: The owner of Ward furniture.

BH: What's was his first name?

PS: James A. Ward III.

BH: James A. Ward the third?

PS: Yeah.

PS: He was living in Florida at that time. And we had decided to build a new plant but he had died before we hardly got it started. That's the plant out on Zero that Baldor has it now. We had a manufacture plant and a distribution warehouse; did all our shipping from there. We transferred the product down on 1<sup>st</sup> Street to this warehouse by car.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Railcar.

BH: Can you give me approximately the year of that?

PS: It was 1969...

BH: '69.

PS: Built that plant.

BH: Would you say that that was one of the peaks of Wards Furniture Manufacturing?

PS: Well at the time. We'd also built another plant across the railroad track from it on State Line Road; a brand new plant to make occasional tables. The plant we had out there by Baldor was, had bigger pallets too and more equipment to make fancier furniture, higher price furniture.

BH: By that time who is president of the company?

PS: Who was president?

BH: Yes.

PS: Well that...in 1969 we sold out to Desoto Furniture or Desoto Incorporated. It wadn't furniture until they bought it. They bought that plant in Fort Smith; they bought a plant in Jackson, Mississippi and a plant over in North Carolina.

BH: So the headquarters moved out of Fort Smith.

PS: They were in Chicago was the owner's place. We still had a sales department and everything in Fort Smith.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: And we had a more very extensive line of price points of furniture and occasional tables. Then...

BH: But the core of the company was still beds, bedding?

PS: Bedroom furniture...

BH: Bedroom furniture.

PS: And occasional tables. Then we, I was transferred to the Jackson, Mississippi plant in 1977. And all the sales department moved to Jackson, Mississippi that's why I was gone. And we were pretty extensive. They'd been making in Jackson, Mississippi, a lot of TV cabinets, mainly for Sears, sewing machine cabinets, and some dining room furniture. But they quit making sewing machine and TV cabinets and just mostly, exclusively dining room furniture. The plant...

BH: When you got to Jackson was it about the same size as the one over here? Or was it...

PS: It was a good size plant; it wadn't quite as big as the new plant by Baldor.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: But it was a good size plant.

BH: And what was its work force like?

PS: It was I think right around 900. And originally called Mississippi Wood Products, MPI is what it was when Desoto bought it. The plant in North Carolina made family room furniture and some occasional tables to go with the family room but...and here again we were a big customer of Sears and Roebuck. Sears actually had a lot of money in Desoto. They made, their primary job was making all the paints for Sears, washing powders and all that stuff for Sears. They made all that for Sears.

BH: So you stayed over there for about five years?

PS: I stayed five years in Jackson, Mississippi. And all of a sudden Desoto decided to go out of the furniture business and they closed every plant up.

BH: In...they had some other kinds of manufacturing?

PS: Oh yes. This was just a sideline.

BH: I see. So when they closed up they closed the plant in Fort Smith?

PS: In Fort Smith, Jackson, all the plants, closed them all, August 1982.

BH: '82 yeah. So that's when that space was then sold to Baldor?

PS: No, no Baldor didn't buy that. That may be eight or nine years ago.

BH: Um.

PS: That just sit, nothing, was sitting there, just sitting there.

BH: What happened to the tools and the machines?

PS: I think they auctioned it all off.

BH: I see. And what happened to the work force?

PS: Just all gone. They all tried to get jobs. The only other furniture plant...Riverside was still in production.

BH: Was Ward a larger employer than Riverside at that time?

PS: Oh yeah. We had 1700 employees.

BH: Oh.

PS: Because we had three plants.

BH: Unh huh. In Fort Smith what would that number be?

PS: That's what I'm talkin' about in Fort Smith.

BH: Oh in Fort Smith.

PS: Yeah with three plants.

BH: Did these plants ever unionize?

PS: Well...such as you might say but really...

BH: But the union came?

PS: Yeah eventually.

BH: I think Bill Kropp told me that he himself had to join the union.

PS: Yeah. It's a little slow coming but the furniture industry is known for low pay in factory workers.

BH: All across the country not just here.

PS: Yeah. And then as far as the whole furniture industry has gone to pot 'cause it's all in the Far East now.

BH: Yeah.

PS: Everything except sales and assembly.

BH: Mr. Swofford speaking about assembly did you make your furniture from scratch from ground up?

PS: Yes.

BH: You didn't have any parts sent into you?

PS: No. Well we did. We had some drawer sides that were called out of luahan that was kinda like a mahogany type.

BH: Yeah.

PS: From the East and it was very good for that.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Where before was, all plywood drawer sides or oak drawer sides. And but we had a veneer plant here in Fort Smith that was down on 1st Street, we had kilns, we dried our lumber there and had a full scale mill room where we made all the parts.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: That's the only thing we bought was drawer sides. We made everything else. We had a plant in Russellville that was a rough mill.

BH: Supplied your lumber from Russellville.

PS: Russellville and rough sawn stuff.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: From you know.

BH: A lot of that lumber you were using then did come from Arkansas?

PS: Oh yes. That's originally why the furniture industry came to Fort Smith was the availability of hardwood.

BH: Unh huh. And I know there was two or three lumber companies or mills in Russellville, pretty good size ones.

PS: Well this one was in Russellville but I don't know where it was. Riverside bought it. I don't know if they still have it or not.

BH: Was there ever a mill in Fort Smith that went with the furniture industry?

PS: No, just mill? Everyone had their own.

BH: Oh...well.

PS: I think we're the only one that had a veneer plant here though.

BH: So almost your entire career was with Ward Furniture or one of its...

PS: Thirty-one years.

BH: Successors? Right, thirty-one years.

PS: Well I had another almost two years with another furniture company, Hyundai Furniture Company.

BH: Can you tell us a little bit about that one?

PS: Well I...

BH: It's the automobile...

PS: I retired in 1982 for two months. A man used to work for us as a regional sales manager was now running this Hyundai Furniture Company. He called me and wanted me to go to work for him. We got together and I did and he paid my moving expenses and everything out to Los Angeles. The furniture was made parts and finishing was done in Korea. They were shipped over here and we had a plant in California and a plant in Dallas. Where we assembled 'em and shipped them out to the factories. We had salesmen in most of the country. And it was pretty successful. We made dining room furniture and occasional tables.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: That and it was satisfactory. I mean my job there was to figure out what to send 'em, to tell 'em what to make of each piece and everything what such as that.

BH: What would be in your judgment or your estimation on the quality of furniture over a period of years coming out of Fort Smith not just Ward.

PS: Oh it was when I went to work for it just known for medium priced furniture but pretty good quality and everything. Yeah other factories around here, or most of them were they had an association here in Fort Smith. And they had this salesman that worked for the association in almost every state. But it was pretty well known as good quality but medium price. Then the next thing was Riverside started, then Don Flanders started running and Okla Smith was making stuff here at that time. He was makin' baby furniture. So it was pretty well known for making furniture, Fort Smith was. Only thing left now is Riverside and there's a few upholstery things in garages around I think but that's it as far as plants are concerned.

BH: Did Ward ever make any upholstery furniture?

PS: No.

BH: Nope.

PS: No. That's the kind of...you can buy frames from people that do mill work and buy covers and a guy can upholster 'em in his garage and go out and sell 'em.

BH: Those factories that, ones out on 1<sup>st</sup> Street and the other factories around there...

PS: Well there used to be like Fort Smith Chair Company, which mentioned was Ayres and Fort Smith Couch and Bedding, pretty good sized upholstery output and so was Ayres.

BH: How was your company and the other companies heated and cooled? Or were they cooled?

PS: Well we didn't have cooling in the factory at all except the plant that we made the occasional tables in was air conditioned.

BH: Unh huh. And heated by boiler?

PS: Gas or boilers.

BH: Gas boilers. Back to the workforce there, you had a chance to compare maybe furniture workers in at least three different states. How were our workers?

PS: Well I'd say they were good. Lot of 'em been there a long time doin' their job.

BH: When you put in a new line or a new conveyor belt or something they would learn that pretty quickly?

PS: Well yeah they actually like when they put in the new finishing conveyor they were doin' the same thing except it was moving by 'em and everything, somebody wadn't dragging it around and what not. That was the darndest thing I ever saw man when I went to work there. This guy would drag it from this finishing booth and the other guy drag it to that one then another guy drag it over to dry. Then they drag it down to pack the pack. I mean archaic stuff!

BH: Yeah.

PS: Then put that new finishing line in and kept movin' and never stop right on down to be packed and into a boxcar.

BH: So that's...

PS: And that's when our production went like that.

BH: Went way up huh?

PS: 'Cause they were limited to what room they stored the stuff in while they were finishing. They didn't have a big enough area to the guys on the assembly line would cover up the finishing line.

BH: So the company was usually very profitable? BREAK So I'm back and I'm Billy Higgins and I've been involved in an interview with Mr. Preston Swofford and Bob Worley, the chair of the Hardwood Tree Museum Association is in the room too so you may hear his voice on this interview. Mr. Swofford we were talking about the increased production with the new conveyor belts and so on. That resulted in increased profits no doubt.

PS: Well yeah it had to.

BH: How did the company, how did the company, how was it organized as to ownership and...

PS: Family owned.

BH: Was never a public corporation, there was never dividends on stocks?

PS: Well I don't much hear that, there was probably went to the family. There was James A. Ward III, his father and before him his grandfather started the company. And they moved here because of availability of hardwoods which is why all the furniture factories really come to Fort Smith because of the availability of hardwoods. And they made bedroom furniture is what they were making on it but the...his sister married Ken Booth so he worked there for quite a few years in sales, manager and such. And then he had couple three kids. One of 'em, a daughter was killed in an airplane crash though coming back from one of the schools down in Dallas. And then he had a boy killed in a car wreck. He had one daughter married Bob Gillespie. You remember Bob Gillespie?

Bob Worley: Yes.

PS: He was from North Carolina and they moved over there and he started a factory over there. But that was all the family. And he married his...his first wife died and he married again. And she had one son named Bob Long but he never did get into business.

BW: No.

PS: Then that's...then Desoto bought the plant and after that was a big corporation.

BH: Bought the Ward family out?

PS: They were out.

BH: There were some other Ward industries or business in Fort Smith.

PS: Ward Ice Company.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Ward Ice Cream Company.

BH: Were they related?

PS: No. No relation.

BH: I see.

PS: But here again I don't know why Desoto only had the plant thirteen years. At that time when they, several family owned furniture factories were selling. I think the only reason I know why. Everybody thought they were gold mines because the families all lived well and what not. I mean very well; had butlers, maids and all this kind of stuff you know. I mean it was big livin' big houses. Evidently thought it was gold mines. One reason Desoto did though because we were sellin' Sears and Roebuck quite a bit. One year we sold Sears 32 million dollars worth. And Sears had a lot of interest in Desoto Furniture or Desoto Incorporated not Desoto Furniture. Because they sold so much to Sears and I think that might have been why they decided to buy Ward Furniture Company because of the association with Sears. But there's some plants over in the east too some family owned sold and then people weren't happy with though. So and they just all of sudden in 1982 they didn't try to sell it, they just closed it up and auctioned all the machinery off and closed 'em up. And I don't know if they ever sold. And I don't know what happened to the plant on 1<sup>st</sup> Street. I think that's still sittin' there empty.

BH: Might be. When you were on 1<sup>st</sup> Street back there in those early days when you got there, can you give a description of the workforce as to men and women?

PS: Mostly men. We had some women but mostly men.

BH: Did that begin to change in your time there?

PS: No not really. No.

BH: And what about the African American part of the population?

PS: Well we had some of those but not a great deal though.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: I mean those guys had to work. I mean it wadn't easy work either and low pay.

BH: When you say it wasn't easy work...

PS: I mean it was.

BH: Was it eight hours?

PS: And it wasn't air conditioned and see you out there just a sweatin' up a storm.

BH: Eight hours a day?

PS: Eight hours.

BH: Nine hours?

PS: Eight hours a day, five days a week, we close up about two weeks in summertime for vacation for 'em.

BH: Unh huh. And on...but you didn't operate on Saturdays and Sundays?

PS: Oh no.

BH: Five days a week.

PS: No. Five days a week.

BH: And that was pretty consistent...

PS: Pretty standard all the furniture industry.

BH: Standard all through the district there. Did you ever run did you ever run split shifts to keep the factory open after five o'clock?

PS: No. We had so much depending on...to do that you'd have the whole plant to. Oh they might have worked something back in the veneer plant making something or other like

that and extra but nothing like that to do with production, because you had to have the whole thing, everybody there to do production.

BH: Well do you remember when the new kind of industries came to Fort Smith and I'm thinking in particular Dixie Cup and then when Norge came?

PS: I know when Dixie Cup come very well.

BH: Unh huh. Did that make a dent in your work force?

PS: Not a lot. It had to have some 'cause they're paying more than we were.

BH: And what about when Norge or Whirlpool came did that change anything for you?

PS: Well I'm trying to think...see they closed the plant up in 1982 and I'm trying to think when Norge come in.

BH: It was '65 or '66 somewhere in there.

PS: Somewhere along in there yeah. Well it had to have some effect on it 'cause still paying more money.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Better working conditions. Probably an air conditioned plant, I wouldn't be surprised. [Transcript note: It is not an air conditioned plant.]

BH: Well you've covered a lot of things for us today here. Do you have some other things that have occurred to you that you'd like to put on this interview?

PS: Oh I don't know what other you'd like to cover.

BW: Did you work for another secondary wood processor Preston, before you went to Ward?

PS: Well when I was...just got out of school in the summertime worked, I worked out of Fort Smith Rim and Bow unloading box cars of lumber and stacking lumber.

BH: So you knew what the labor was like?

PS: Oh yes!

(Laughter)

PS: Get up in that car stacked to the ceiling with lumber and get up there in the hot summertime and unloading that boxcar.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Or stacking. They were still making wagon parts out there then. This was in 1938-9.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: Stacking tongues, wet tongues, you know, wagon tongues.

BH: Yeah. They're heavy.

PS: Twelve to fourteen foot long and this end was this big around rough sawn and this one was this and you had to stack the bloomin' things up. You had to get it over a pivot and get it up to where it's high enough to where the guy was up there puttin' it on a stack!

BH: Lot of hand labor.

PS: Ooh! It was all hand labor.

BH: Well and Ward had its own kiln out there so you mentioned?

PS: Had their own kiln its own veneer plant.

BH: And that was gas fired, those kilns were?

PS: Oh yeah, yeah.

BH: Unh huh. So you could get some green lumber usually from Russellville, dry your own, finish it.

PS: Dry it. That's right, dry it and process it completely.

BH: What about the byproduct, the shavings, the sawdust?

PS: Well all that went into a furnace.

BH: To...for the kiln?

PS: Yeah, unh huh.

BH: Unh huh. And you were right there by the city dump right?

PS: Well a little further on north was the city dump.

BH: Yeah.

PS: See it was...down there the furniture industry was just one place right after another down there.

BH: Yep.

PS: Border Queen Kitchen Cabinet Company was right behind us. Willard Mirror was right behind that. And the Ward plant, Ballman and Cummings was down here, Fort Smith Folding Bed and Table Company here, Garrison Company here.

BH: I've seen the map and we got a copy right there we might be actually looking at it.

PS: And around the corner was Couch and Bedding and Ayres.

BH: Unh huh.

PS: I mean it was just...it's called Furniture Row down there.

BH: And you said everybody got off around five o'clock, was there a traffic jam down there?

PS: Oh! I hope to tell you. They come outta there like fleas.

BH: [Laughs] And there wasn't any four lane was there?

PS: No. It was that old two lane road down there and they all got off at the same time.

BH: I wish we had a picture of that at the time.

BW: That's right. Did the water cause you any problems down by the river?

PS: Well when I went to work down there they still had the line in the office up about oh I guess about five foot around where the flood in 1943 flooded everything down there. I mean the whole works. Everything down there was flooded. I know I got out of the last train out of Fort Smith before the bridge washed off at Van Buren, washed out the next day. I was going to take the train to St. Louis. I just got back in the states from Aleutian Islands.

BH: Were you stationed at Dutch Harbor?

PS: No, Adak and Chitkul in a P38 fighter squadron.

BH: Kept 'em flying did ya?

PS: Yep. I was the armament chief.

BH: I was a classmate of Bill Kropp and he went over to North Carolina State, he got his degree in furniture engineering. Did you have many of those guys?

PS: See...no. See Bill Kropp, Border Queen Kitchen Cabinet was their company, the Kropp's owned that.

BH: Unh huh. But Bill went to work; he told me that he never worked for his dad.

PS: Well no. He wasn't old enough.

BH: He went to work for Ward.

PS: Yeah he, they went out of business before he started. We bought that plant and used it for little storage this and storage that.

BH: Well what I was wondering, who engineered or who designed your furniture line?

PS: We had outside designers...

BH: I see.

PS: Come in and they'd be paid the commission off the sales. And we'd had different ones, some of 'em better in one style of furniture than the other one so...

BH: They'd make you a set of blueprints and that's what you'd go by?

PS: Oh yes. Yeah.

BH: And Willard Mirror furnished all your mirrors?

PS: All of our mirrors yeah. And we used a world of mirrors.

BH: What was Harding Glass doing at the time?

PS: Well they were window glass.

BH: Different kind.

PS: And it had impurity flaws in it. You couldn't have that in mirrors.

BH: And yet Harding Glass was unionized wasn't it?

PS: Oh yes. Oh yeah. Then there was another radiating glass out there that made water bottles and that type of stuff of glass.

BH: Well this has been a very nice interview and what we intend to do next is put this into a transcript form and with your permission we'll let people have access to what you said today.

PS: It's alright with me.

BH: You have any other questions Bob?

BW: I don't believe so Billy, I think Preston has pretty well covered it.

BH: My goodness. So at the same time you were raising your family in Fort Smith and they went through the Fort Smith schools?

PS: All went through the Fort Smith schools.

BH: Children and so on and Fort Smith, your hometown, was a pretty good place then for you to live?

PS: Very well. I was born here and grew up over on the east side of town.

BH: And had Lucille Speakman for one of your teachers.

PS: One of my teachers that's right.

BH: And you said she was what kind of teacher?

PS: She's very good. Very, I mean easy to get along with. No she was good

BH: And now I saw you the other day out at the Hembree Center? You do some...

PS: I volunteer at the hospital and the Hembree Cancer Center five days a week.

BH: What kind of operations do you do there?

PS: I just as a reception desk and as the patients come in and they come back 25, 30, 45 days every day of the week same patients. I've been doing that for 13 years. I worked over in outpatient surgery for about five or six years went to work at four in the morning got off at one o'clock nine hours a day.

BH: Ward Furniture had a pretty good man when they had Preston Swofford don't you think?

BW: They sure did.

BH: And I thank you sir. I appreciate your time.

PS: Well good. If you think of anything why holler.

BH: Ok thanks.