

Interview

with

CYNTHIA SYKES COOK

February 19, 1994

by Valerie Pawlewicz

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The Southern Oral History Program
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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

CINDY COOK
FEBRUARY 19, 1994

VALERIE PAWLEWICZ: I am interviewing Cindy Cook at 10:35 on Saturday, February 19, 1994. I wanted to start with some real general questions. I wanted to ask you, are you from Mebane and how long have you lived here?

CINDY COOK: I have lived here all my life.

VP: So you grew up in this neighborhood?

CC: Yes.

VP: Did you grow up near White's or outside of Mebane?

CC: I grew up actually just a couple of blocks from White's on Jackson Street.

VP: Did anyone in your family work for White's?

CC: My grandfather did, my daddy's daddy. He worked in the. . . I think it was in the boiler room. He was a maintenance supervisor or something to that effect. He died when I was young so I never really knew him, but daddy's been real interested in it.

VP: Did your father work for White's?

CC: No, daddy didn't, but through his father working there and he's lived in Mebane all his life. And momma grew up in Cedar Grove.

VP: You said your grandfather worked in the boiler room. Do you have an idea of the dates he might have worked for White's?

CC: No, let's see, he passed away when I was two so that was in '59. It was probably in the 40s and 50s or somewhere along in there.

VP: You didn't know him and couldn't have heard stories from him, but it sounds like your father was very close to your grandfather and might have passed on stories. Are there any stories that your daddy. . . ?

CC: I don't really remember any daddy said, but Margaret White was there when my grandfather worked there. He was fire chief of the fire department and she said that

the fire whistle would go off and everybody would be rushing to go and there Claude would be just slowly walking across the street to the fire department. She told me that and we found some old records of salary and I can't remember exactly what it was but it was like ten cents an hour. It was just unbelievable, but she found his name on the card towards the end. That was interesting to see.

VP: What was his name?

CC: Claude Sykes.

VP: Okay, and he worked in the 40s and the 50s. And it sounds as a supervisor he had some responsibility or some authority. That's impressive.

Had he grown up in Mebane?

CC: I think so, but I'm not for sure positive. He at one time had Sykes Electric which daddy went on to have and his brother. I guess maybe he must have been in the maintenance part having his electrical experience.

VP: Your father didn't go to White's. Did he not work at White's? Was it an option?

CC: I don't think he ever worked at White's. It maybe that when daddy was up in age that it was when his daddy had his electrical business. As far as I know that's all daddy's done when he started out except for working at Delmer's lining up hot dogs.

VP: In high school or something?

CC: No, they used to talk about that. It was actually right beside the Jones Department Store where there used to be a little drug store and he used to work in there. I think that was while he was still young before he had a full-time job.

VP: Right. Just to make this clear, did your grandfather have an electrical business on the side or did he leave White's to start a business?

CC: No, I think it was the other way around. I think he was an electrician first and then went to White's. Then his sons took over the electrical business. I think, I'm not real sure.

VP: Alright. So your father has never worked for White's but had a connection through his father.

CC: Right.

VP: Then you worked for White's. How did you start working for White's Furniture?

CC: I had just had a baby and she was two months old. My next door neighbor, Lou Clark, was a teacher at Eastern High School and she worked with vocational placements. I think Mr. White had spoken to her about needing someone and she called and asked if I was interested. I went and interviewed with Mr. White on January 1, 1980. He gave me the job and I started. I was there until June because I was one of the last ones to go.

VP: June of '93?

CC: Yes.

VP: From '80 to '93. So you got the job right away. He really did need someone right then.

CC: Right.

VP: So you interviewed with him personally. I find that interesting. Did he need someone for his office?

CC: No, I was working as a purchasing assistant with Fletcher Holmes. Yes, Mr. White handled it personally.

VP: What was he like as an interviewer?

CC: I went to Appalachian and had graduated. He asked me about my grades because I think he was real concerned with that since he had had the scholarship program that he gave to students at Eastern High School. He was very pleasant. Of course, he lost his horses and I don't remember exactly but it seems like that may have worked in there some way.

Mr. White was my daddy's boy scout leader. I think Mr. White was one of the beginning boy scouts of the Mebane troops. Daddy told me he could remember going on some camping trip with Mr. White as the leader. Daddy always respected Mr. White and thought a lot of him as do most people in Mebane I think.

VP: Did you work in his vicinity or after that time did you see much of Mr. White as a purchasing agent?

CC: It was a small place and we saw him everyday. Our office was right up here and his was right down there. Yes, we saw him daily.

VP: How many people were in your office?

CC: At that time it was Fletcher, myself, and Carol Perry. Carol was the insurance clerk in accounts payable. So it was the three of us in one office.

They have knocked out walls since then, but when I first came there was more walls in there. Now it is just an open area.

VP: Why did they open the area?

CC: I'm not sure. I guess less walking around. I don't know what their reason was, but they knocked out walls. Let's see, bookkeeping was in the back and the payroll clerk had a little space where she actually did the payroll and they just made that one open room.

VP: So there was not so many individual areas.

CC: Right, no walls or partitions or anything, just desks.

VP: When did this happen, the wall changes?

CC: I had already moved upstairs. I worked in purchasing for four years and then I moved up to the sales department. It was probably about 1986 or somewhere along in there.

VP: After the sale to Hickory?

CC: It may have been after the sale to Hickory. It may have been. That would be about right, wouldn't it?

VP: Yes. That microsoft was needed, there was a difference. . .

CC: That was probably when it happened because very little change happened until that point.

VP: Did you notice a radical change or was it a gradual change?

CC: It was gradual. Before we would get excited if we got a new coffee pot.
[laughter] Things just didn't change that much.

VP: Did you like working for White's?

CC: I enjoyed it. I liked working in Mebane. It was very convenient. The people were real nice. It was fun and I enjoyed it.

VP: You had gone away to college and had come back.

CC: Right.

VP: Why did you come back?

CC: To get married. My husband was born and raised here in Mebane also. I graduated in December of '78, and we got married December 30, 1978.

When I was in high school I worked at A & M Grill which is just right down the road from White's. I worked there and then we got pregnant shortly after we got married. Amanda was born in November.

I had looked and applied. I had filled out application after application. When Ms. Clark called me about this job I thought, "well, that would be nice." They had pretty good benefits and were known for their good bonus checks at the end of the year. They were into profit-sharing at that time, but that stopped when Hickory bought it.

At the time we just lived on the other side of Clay Street which is probably about four blocks from White's. It was just really nice.

I'm working in Burlington now. I really don't want to leave Mebane. I would rather work in Mebane. You get used to driving and I never thought I would.

VP: Did you walk to work?

CC: On snow days or something like that, yes. Whenever it snowed Mr. White always bought us barbecue for lunch. If we saw the first flake we would call down there and we'd say, "Chopped or sliced, chopped or sliced."

VP: [laughter]

CC: He would always go to the A & M and get barbecue and everybody would eat together so nobody would have to go out. We did a lot of fun things.

VP: Wow, a great place!

CC: I think they actually made up a little song some of them that would call down there and sing. It was a lot of fun, we had a lot of fun.

VP: That's great. It sounds like White's was a centrally located job and also it was central in the lives of many people. You could get to it, you could walk to it, and most other businesses were around it.

CC: Right. I grew up here and the whistle blew all my life. You knew what time it was. It was your town clock too, at seven and twelve.

VP: That was a natural move for you to work for them.

CC: Although when I went down there I really didn't know any of the people that were working in the office. I knew Janet Norris just because she had some children about my age, but I didn't know her personally.

VP: You got to know people though.

CC: Right, and most of them were from the Mebane area or Paw River or Efland. It was fun.

VP: Would you describe a typical day? You mentioned the whistle blowing, would you have been driving to work or would you have already been at work? What happened during the day?

CC: Towards the end?

VP: Well, you had different jobs at different times, how about when you first got your job in 1980 in purchasing?

CC: Okay, I worked 8 to 5. We would get there and get the invoices. I didn't really spend much time out in the plant, it was more just in the office with the purchasing end of it. We would have lunch and were closed from 12 to 1. Everyone would go to lunch at that time. That changed later too. We would get off at 5. You would hear the whistle blow for the employees to leave at 4.

VP: Everyone would leave at the same time and come at the same time and eat at the same time?

CC: The employees worked 7 until 4. They would have lunch from 12 to 1. The office worked 8 to 5, but we also had lunch from 12 to 1.

VP: By "employees" you mean people who worked in the factory?

CC: Right.

VP: I was just curious. You said it changed so then people ate at different times or came at different times?

CC: They split the lunch hour. We didn't have a commissary and after Hickory bought it they fixed up an area with picnic tables inside and outside too. They provided a commissary type thing where a lady worked the area. It was like two different time periods. They also started getting off at 3:30. Took a half-hour lunch instead of an hour.

When I first went I was 8 to 5 and then when I went to the sales department, which may have been about the time when Hickory bought it, I worked from 7 to 4 so I could do the printing early in the morning before everybody got there so the computer wouldn't be tied up.

When I had my third job there, which was production control, it was more plant oriented. So after working eight years on one side of the spectrum it was really enlightening to work more closely to the plant and the actual production of the furniture.

The engineers would create route sheets for different processes for making up the furniture and I would key all that information into the computer. We would have cuttings and I would print a route sheet for everything that was going to be cut. It would have

quantities on there and so it was just amazing how one piece of furniture could have twenty-some of them a hundred-different parts that actually made up that one piece of furniture. Each part had like five to ten operations to make that one part. I had been dealing with finished products and not with the raw materials. It took a while to get used to that, but I feel fortunate that I had that experience to know that end. I really felt like I knew more about White furniture once that happened.

VP: Yes.

CC: You would hear 'veneer' and all these things. Even in purchasing when I first got there. Fletcher took Carol and I on a plant tour. She had been there a year or so and she had never been on a plant tour. If anybody tries to walk with Fletcher Holmes you are almost running. He has such long legs you have to hussle right behind him.

Then I went on another plant tour when I went into production control and Ken was my boss then. He took me a little slower. I was learning new terms like, (?), electronic clamp, and all these different kinds of machines. I had no idea what they even looked like so that helped to be able to go through and see the beginning to end process.

VP: It gives you a better idea of the product and what your company is about than just the paperwork. It's a different perspective.

CC: Right. It was very educational.

VP: When did you work with the production?

CC: It was when they moved the sales department. They took it out of White's and moved it up to High Point as part of the corporate office.

VP: High Point, North Carolina?

CC: Yes. First they moved Shirley Stout. She was in accounts receivable. They moved her up in like October. I switched jobs before they moved Shirley up. Then they told us that they were going to move the people in the sales department. There was about five more ladies that did customer service and order entry and invoicing. Actually I think they left the invoicing in Mebane, but they took the order entry and customer service.

I had started working in August when Debbie was pregnant. She was diabetic and she had to leave work a couple of months before her baby was actually born. That was when I had a kind of crash course in her job. I was still trying to help out in sales to get them done. Then the sales department left in January of that year.

VP: January of?

CC: Let's see. It's been about four years ago so maybe '89 or '90.

VP: Why would they split the sales department to another part of North Carolina?

CC: Well, with the Hickory manufacturing and Kay Lin and those businesses that were all sister companies of ours they were just going to consolidate and have just one customer service and order entry for all four divisions.

I will never forget when they came down and one of the girls told me that they had just been told they were going to be moving. It was almost like a death in the family or something. You just felt like you were seeing it dissolve so it was hard.

VP: You didn't go, you took on a different job.

CC: Yes. See they gave me that job before we knew any of this. It wasn't, "Do you want to do this job?" It was, "We'd like for you to do this job."

VP: Which is different.

CC: It wasn't really a decision to make on my part. I felt kind of left out for awhile, but then it really was best for me, I think, to stay because I don't I could handle riding to High Point everyday. Of course, they managed.

VP: I was worried for you: can you imagine having to get up at . . . ?

CC: They do that and they are still doing that. They say it isn't all that bad, it's just what you get used to I guess. I really enjoyed doing that, but it just felt like that part of your family had moved away. We still get together. We got together this past Christmas, all the ladies that had worked together and it was fun. We try to keep in touch.

VP: Did you meet in Mebane?

CC: Well, we did when we started doing it several years ago, and we kept on doing it even when the ladies moved to High Point. We went out to Western Steer this year and then we play a little game where you can draw presents and take somebody else's presents. We just had fun.

VP: That's good. I was wondering since you mentioned it was like a family being broken up. People you work with aren't necessarily your family members so it's harder to come back together.

CC: Yes, unless you put forth that extra effort.

VP: I wanted to know if people really did--even if it's once a year--come back together, and it sounds like people do.

CC: It's like not much time has elapsed. Time goes by quicker the older you get. I was just talking to one of the girl's last night that I worked with and she had left like in September or October before we found out in November that the plant was closing. We don't talk that often, but when you do, I was telling her--it's like no time has elapsed. It's important to keep up with old friends. You may not see them every month or maybe not even every year, but if something were to happen you'd want to know.

VP: Let's talk a little bit about the plant closing. When did you first know that something wasn't right?

CC: We always said we wouldn't be surprised if something happened. They had closed the Hillsborough plant about a year before they announced our closing. Deep down you think, well, White's been here forever and there's no way they are going to close White's down. When they told us they had all the supervisors in the office--personnel--met in the conference room. They handed out a letter and I thought 'for once I'm not going to read ahead I'm just going to wait and let him talk.' I was sitting there and the first thing that Mr. Austin said was about the plant being closed. I looked down at my letter and there it was. I got really upset. I got up and left. I didn't stay in there.

We were in the process of buying this house and we were getting ready to close the next week. It was just something that I never thought would happen so when it did I just couldn't believe it.

VP: Now, how come Mr. White didn't announce it?

CC: When White Furniture was sold to Hickory Mr. White was no longer president. He was no longer involved. His son worked there for a short while afterwards but not even a year I don't think.

VP: Okay, so he wasn't even involved in the process of the sale.

CC: Margaret, his wife, was still there. I will never forget when she told us they were getting married either. She had all of us ladies in the office and she said, "Mr. White has made me a proposal." I thought she was going to quit working down here and go to work for him full-time. And when she said that they were getting married I couldn't believe it. I almost fell flat on the floor. [laughter] I thought she was kidding. But we were real happy for her. This was after he had left the company too.

VP: So, you didn't see that one coming?

CC: What, the wedding?

VP: Margaret.

CC: Well, no. He had been sick that summer and she was at the hospital with him. She was just real devoted to him. We'd say, "Margaret, you ought to get married." But we were just kidding. I think it is the best thing that ever happened to Mr. White. She's really good with him. Margaret had never married before so I think it was good for both of them.

VP: She continued on which I find really interesting. She stayed. What kind of presence was she? Did you feel like she was a White and somehow was part of that connection to the real White Furniture? Or was she just someone else who had kind of . .

CC: We felt all of us were the real connection to the real White Furniture because we--the majority of the office personnel--were there when Mr. White hired us. The supervisors and plant managers and stuff changed pretty much after Hickory bought, but the office staff pretty much stayed the same. So we all felt like we were White Furniture and White of Mebane.

Margaret had been there since she was eighteen. She pretty much was a permanent fixture at White. And Fletcher.

VP: So she wasn't any more White's Furniture than she was before?

CC: No. Of course we would hear about Mr. White through Margaret and asked about him through her. Margaret's office and my office were near each other. It's not that big a place anyways, but there towards the end when everybody was leaving it got down to--one time it was fifteen women there--six. There was a comraderie there and it was fun.

VP: Go back to the closing. You mentioned when you all were assembled and you got a letter and Mr. Austin started to speak, you got upset and left. Did other people leave?

CC: Yes, they came after me to check on me. We went to the bathroom and cried and all that kind of fun stuff. It was very emotional for everybody.

VP: What did you do that day? Did you continue working or did you kind of...

CC: Everybody was pretty much in a daze. We about and did whatever if something had to be done. There was just a lot of, "I can't believe it."

VP: What did the letter actually say? Was it just an announcement of it being sold? Did it say, "We'll be closed on this date"? Did it say "We'll be closed in the future"? What did they tell you?

CC: I think maybe it might have said through the end of January or something like that because we knew. I think it was pretty descriptive as to the reasonings and things like that. They moved our product line to Hickory. We knew times had been a

little slow because they had had some down weeks--four day weeks. Like I said, we always said we wouldn't be surprised, but in actuality it did surprise us. I think mainly because it had been an institution in Mebane forever, definitely all of my lifetime and daddy's too. I hated to see it happen for Mebane.

VP: What has happened to Mebane since White's has closed?

CC: I know that a lot of the employees would walk up to the area businesses for lunch or during break-time to like Byrds or the drug stores. I'm sure they miss that. Not being in Mebane during the day now I'm not as aware of it. I'm sure they miss it, they would have too. There were two hundred people there and I know a majority of them would go pick up something during lunch time, pay bills, etc. It was really convenient working in Mebane. I liked working in Mebane.

VP: [laughter] You could always go home for lunch I guess. You lived pretty close.

CC: Yes. Like I said, where I grew up was just a couple of blocks from White's. A lot of times I would just go to mama's house because we did live two more miles down this road.

I was excited when we were buying this house, "Well, that will be really close and I will back and forth in no time." I did get to work until the end of May, first of June. I did get to enjoy that a little bit. It was nice and very convenient.

VP: So you were kept on as you mentioned until the end of May or June. You were kept on really until the very end.

CC: Yes. My job description kept changing. By the time they announced the closing, being in production control, we're usually like two or three months ahead of the cutting process. Our job starts before it ever gets out the plant, so we basically were almost through, I guess, as far as new work. There was some files and stuff that had to be sent on up to corporate and things like that.

As people were leaving I would start learning what they were doing. Of course, it was on a smaller scale as things dwindled. I went back to invoicing that I had done during my middle part there and bills of lading, and I became a "Girl Friday" I guess towards the end.

VP: In some ways I could see that being very difficult because when you described the other job that you had been given when a woman had left to have a child or someone left to get a different job, but when you are taking over someone's job who's being fired it would be difficult to learn their skills because you knew that maybe you wouldn't have it very long and they were giving up something that maybe they wanted.

CC: But, a lot of I had done previously so it wasn't that much. It was almost like saying good-bye everyday. It got a little easier as time went on, but it still was hard.

VP: How long did you have to say good-bye? Did it gone on for . . .

CC: From the end of January - well some of them left shortly after the notice. One of the girl's in the office found a job. Everybody was like mass hunting for a job. She found a job with the school system and they wanted her immediately so she left right before Christmas. Her job got pushed to another girl.

My boss left at the end of June. Fletcher was there until the end. It was a different, it was hard, and there was a lot of hugging going on.

VP: It's almost too much. In some ways it can be exciting if someone in the office leaving is sad you might take them out to lunch.

CC: Yes, we would do that.

VP: It would be hard if a lot of people were doing it at once.

CC: Toward the end because there were so few of us left I would go down and work in personnel in their little three room office down there. You would see the employees coming in and hearing their insurance bit and everything; more or less their little farewell speech.

You would look forward to them coming back to get their severance pay so you could see them. You still would see them for two weeks or four weeks more whatever the case may be with their amount of severance pay. It was like a little reunion too.

VP: In some way that might have eased their good-bye.

CC: Yes, because you knew you were going to see them again next week as long as they were coming back to get a check.

VP: What was your last day like?

CC: A couple of the girls at corporate sent me some flowers that had been at White's and had moved up there. It was O.K.

VP: I remember when I left a job. I used to work for the Smithsonian and I remember the last day you always had to wear this ugly badge with a long chain. Everyone hated wearing it because of the chain.

CC: You had to wear it on your last day?

VP: I had to wear it everyday.

CC: Oh, everyday. [laughter]

VP: Absolutely complaining with this really nice dress then you'd have this chain around your neck. You'd feel like a dog or something. But, I remember that horrible feeling on the last day you have to give it back. I did not want to give it back. It was an ugly thing that I complained about for two and a half years, but it was that sad feeling like there was some sort of honor with that chain. Even though it was ugly it was my connection to a place that I enjoyed working at. Did you have any . . . ?

CC: There were so few left when I left. I went around and hugged them good-bye and left. [crying] You would think that after eight months I wouldn't still get upset.

VP: Well, it was an important place. [tape paused . . . restarted] Let's talk about something else.

CC: Yes.

VP: We talked about your first day and that was good, your different responsibilities and friends.

I know what I wanted to ask you. You mentioned Fletcher Holmes a number of times and you mentioned Margaret. Are there other people that stood out in your mind that you respected or admired or that were especially funny--they might not have been the best worker but they kept morale up?

CC: Becky Poe, she was something. She worked in the sales department. There were six of us up there. Mildred Trips, Sue Isley, Shirley Stout, Becky Poe, Patricia Jarret, and myself. Becky, Patricia, and I were kind of like in an open area. Becky was doing customer service and she was just crazy. We laughed at her more than we laughed at anybody. She works at the outlet store now. She moved to corporate office. She was part of the transition up to corporate. We used to laugh at her. She'd talk on the phone and she would say, "We'd just tell them anything to get rid of them." Of course, she was kidding.

Patricia and I knew exactly how you were suppose to take care of the furniture from listening to Becky on the phone. She was fun and hilarious. We would pick on her about giving her husband a hummingbird feeder for Christmas. [laughter] She was funny. We admired and respected her but she was a piece of work.

Of course, all of us got along well and that makes a difference. Once in a while we would plan a menu and everybody would bring something and we would have lunch up there. Sometimes we would go out.

When I turned thirty they sent me balloons, you know, over the hill balloons. Patricia and I took a cake decorating class together. For about six weeks we had plenty of cake up there to eat. We would always take turns on birthdays bringing cakes and decorating. We probably had more fun than is allowed in a workplace. All of them were special.

The guy that was in the shipping department his name was Harvey Durham. He retired before the closing. He had nicknames for us all. Patricia's name was chigger. Becky was O.D. for Off Drunk. Of course, she wasn't a drunk at all, but he would call her O.D. I was Mama because I think I was pregnant with my second child at that time. Shirley Mae, I think he called her something else like Blondie or something like that. It was a lot of fun.

When he left all of us in the sales department took him out for supper one night. We didn't have to have much of an occasion to celebrate.

Of course, we would all have our little gripe sessions together and we would get through it alright and things would be O.K.

Now I'm working with younger people which is fun too, but Shirley and all of the them were older. I was the young one, of . . . Patricia was actually younger than I was. For a long time I was the youngest one there. You learn a lot from their experiences. They are fun people and I called Becky last week and talked to her for just a few minutes. It's nice to talk to them.

VP: Yes it is. People that keep that connection are probably still learning from them about what we need to do and how to get by.

CC: Yes, you keep your ears open for everybody. One of the girl's went to school, and I think she is doing really well at ACC. One of the girl's that left in December is expecting a baby in May. I was really excited to hear about that. It was like a family.

The men were real nice. Everybody was fun. Fletcher used to cut-up all the time. When I worked with Fletcher Amanda was just a little infant and he would just "ooh" and "aah" over her. All the children loved Fletcher. They all wanted to go to see "Mr. Fletcher." He would buy them a drink or do something. He would always mark their height on the wall.

VP: In the factory?

CC: In his office. He would put their initials by the mark. I think Amanda asked me the other day--she's fourteen now--"Wonder if my height is still on the wall?" I think they actually painted over it at some point in time along the way.

I can remember his children calling, "Daddy, will you bring me a notebook?" We always like to hear from them.

VP: What did he do?

CC: He's working at a furniture company in Winston-Salem. He lives in Buckhorn so he's got a pretty long drive himself. I think he's liking it from what I hear. I run into him at the grocery store once in awhile. Ronnie wonders why it takes me so long to go to the grocery store [laughter] but you see people that you worked with and you talk to them. He understands now because he has been to the grocery store a few times. You just can't go in and get out, it's just not the way which I guess is nice when you've lived here all your life and know people. I saw one of the guys that worked in the plant at the (Bake 'n). I think he went to (Hooker or Horper) Furniture. You just run into a White employee somewhere along the way.

I'm looking forward to the thing next Saturday. [Employee opening of Mebane Photo Exhibit]

VP: It's a good idea because it will bring people back together. It sounds like there are informal ways you can meet people say at a grocery store or maybe at a church, mabye at a school function, but it sounds like there are few opportunities where you know that the employees will be gathering.

CC: There was a lot of employees that lived in surrounding areas in Mebane. You just don't run into them. I'm looking forward to seeing some of them. I hope they will be there.

I was telling Carol, the girl I was talking to last night, about it. I know Bill [Bamberger] sent out a lot of invitations, but Carol had left before White closed. She

said, "Do you reckon it will be alright if I come?" I said, "I'm sure because it is for all past employees."

VP: Exactly. In fact I brought the letter. I know you would have known about it, but I just wanted to talk about it some more that it is going on.

CC: Bill sent the letter and he personalized mine by putting "Go Heels" down at the bottom because we are avid Duke fans.

VP: [laughter]

CC: When he was taking pictures if we won one game I rode by and blew the horn at him. We had a lot of Duke-Carolina rivalry at work.

VP: I was wondering about that because where you're located you could be either side.

CC: Fletcher was a Carolina fan. He always would talk. . . . We gave Amanda a Duke jacket one year for Christmas--I think Bill actually took a picture of it--and they were always making fun of that kind of thing.

Fletcher was always wearing Carolina jackets. We had a lot of friendly rivalry going on and a lot of conversation.

VP: That sounds good.

CC: People got their jobs done. They could get it done and still carry on and make friendships.

When I moved up to the sales department there was very little turnover at White's up until Hickory took over. We had one lady pass away. She died unexpectedly of a heart attack. She was in her late forties. That was real devastating. I remember getting a call from the hospital. For that they wouldn't tell you what it was, but they were trying to get in touch with the family. She had had a heart attack earlier. She had come into work and was feeling really bad. They finally took her over to the clinic there in Mebane and her heart had stopped. But she was able to recuperate and came back to work.

VP: You got the call?

CC: Yes, I took the call from the hospital. Of course I asked if she was O.K. They said that she was really sick. I connected her to upstairs to somebody that might know how to get in touch with her family. Shirley took the call and she had some numbers.

That's about the only way you ever got to move around. It's terrible, but that's true. You pretty much stayed in a position because people stayed at White's. People liked working there, I guess. They were good to their employees and that makes a difference too. They had pretty good benefits. Now it is kind of hard to find a place with good benefits. You appreciate that.

END OF INTERVIEW