

**WORKING A DOUBLE SHIFT:**

**Factory Women at Ball Band Combine Job and Family, 1940-1980**

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Master of Liberal Studies  
in the Division of Arts and Sciences  
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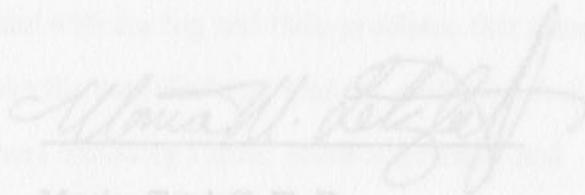
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**May 1997**

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University at South Bend, in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Liberal Studies.



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Date of Oral Examination: 23 May 1997

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Linda Chen

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(Project Advisor)

My advisor, Linda Chen, helped me with the big and little problems that came up along the way. She encouraged me to finish the project on time and on schedule. Thanks to my committee member, Keith Knauss, and Keith Knauss for taking the time to meet with me and offer very specific, helpful suggestions that improved the project tremendously. I also want to thank the librarians and friends who assisted with the research, particularly Patricia Coleman, Dave Eisen, Ben Hoewel, and Wanda Trautman-Poole and Sushmita Hodges, and Patrick Purkay and Shirley Carlson of the Master of Liberal Studies program.

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I would also like to thank my husband, Bill, for listening to me talk about this project and for helping me with the paper in final form. My children should also be thanked for putting up with me.

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## Introduction

In the summer of 1944, when Alma and her cousin got off the bus outside the Ball Band Factory looking for a job, Alma never imagined she would still be working there 34 years later. She thought the job would be temporary because of the war. But when the war ended, like many other women at the plant, she decided to stay on and remained there for most of her working life. Whether the 54-acre massive brick complex on the St. Joseph River in Mishawaka, Indiana, is called Ball Band or Uniroyal, for Alma and others it also became a home away from home -- a place where babies were celebrated with showers; anniversaries and holidays were shared, and friends mourned the loss of a relative. Despite the changes that took place at the factory in recent years -- the selling off of product lines, massive layoffs and buyouts -- many of these women think back to the early years of their employment with fond memories of a job they liked and did well and a place where lifelong friendships were formed.

The original concept of this paper was to undertake an oral history project examining the lives of the European immigrant women who toiled at the factory and made such a contribution to the city's history. But it soon became apparent that the lives of the immigrants and their daughters were only a part of the story of Ball Band. The stories of the black women, the first female foreman, and the woman who initiated a sexual discrimination lawsuit against the company could not be ignored. For while these women worked in traditional jobs and for the most part toed the company line without much complaint, their hard work forged a path for the women who would come after them looking for work not only in the factory but

in the boardroom. Most of these women would vehemently deny any characterization of themselves as feminists, yet in many ways their stories are ones of courage and perseverance. They did what they had to do and did not question it. They did not agonize about the decision to work; that decision was made for them by an economy that dictated that young girls -- and eventually wives -- help support their families. But some of the reasons they chose factory work and remained in factory work reflect contemporary concerns about merging work and family. For example, some of these women opted for factory work, as opposed to office work, for example, because they preferred to work the night shift so they could spend the day time hours with their children -- and forego much sleep. The factory shift work offered flexibility unheard of in other types of employment. Some wives chose the night shift as a decision made in tandem with their husbands so he could pick up with caretaking duties where she had left off. Armed with perhaps less than a high school education, factory work offered better money and benefits than were available in the office. And a few simply chose the factory because they were bored with being a housewife.

The fifteen women interviewed for this project are as varied as our American landscape, yet many of their comments are oddly similar. The majority look back on the people at Ball Band as "one happy family." That comment was repeated over and over; while not universal -- some were unhappy there -- it indicates more than a passivity to accept whatever comes along, although some of that might have existed, too. It demonstrates the importance of work in the survival of the family; an extreme loyalty to the family; a great pride in their work, and the determination perhaps born out of the Depression, to make the best of their situation. While it would be impossible to assert that such a small number represents the thousands of women who worked at Ball Band since it opened its doors in the late 19th Century, their voices are important because each one of them

has something to say about the value of women's blue-collar work in shaping our society and our beliefs. While they were not, on the whole, involved in union leadership, they dutifully attended meetings, walked the picket line, and made coffee for the strikers. During the war, they entered the work force not just for the money needed by their families, but because of a genuine desire to be a part of the war effort. More than one woman proudly held up a "zero defect" pin she earned for her fastidious work during the war years. These women also displayed a great deal of pride in the products that they made, pulling out a rubber boot or form they once produced. Their participation in the *process* of making something of quality meant a lot to them then and still means a lot to them now, despite a societal tendency to devalue women's factory work as merely robotic and mindless (Gabin 11). They enjoyed understanding how something was made and knowing that they were doing the best possible job they could to make that product. And even though some of them would have made excellent engineers, teachers, or scientists, they do not appear bitter or resentful, but have a quality in older age that can only be described as "spunkiness." On the whole, they are extremely active in retirement and can be found in the backyard wearing a tool belt or in the park playing with their grandchildren. Their spirit for life certainly was not smothered by factory work.

The actual names of the women interviewed have not been used so that each could speak freely about her experiences at Ball Band. The discrimination lawsuit to be discussed in chapter five divided many of the women and divides them still. Some of the original plaintiffs in the lawsuit clearly remember threats made against them and remain suspicious of the company and some of the former workers despite the passage of time. Others don't feel any more intimidated now than they did then and would gladly use their names, in fact would like to see their own names because they are proud of the part they played in their own war against discrimination. The

decision not to use real names is intended to ensure the privacy of those who were so generous with their time and their memories.

While their memories are not as clear as they once were, their thoughts about work and family, for example, give us much insight into their own histories and our history as a nation. Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu write in *East to America: Korean American Life Stories*: "Ordinary people's lives are so often effaced, transmuted, or covered up by history and sociology books" (xii). Part of the purpose of this project is the attempt to remove some of the inaccurate images of factory women as something less than human -- a robot in a line mass producing a product in a capitalistic society. The interviews revealed women with lots of humor, intelligence, charm, and patience -- patience to explain something of their lives to someone who didn't really know much about their pasts. Their comments are recorded here in bits and pieces to fit within the context of the various subjects discussed. Unfortunately, this does not capture the unique personalities of the women interviewed.

Since immigrant labor did play an important part at the plant, Chapter One will delve into what is known of the immigrant women and their daughters who worked at Ball Band. Like many other regions of the country, immigrants got off the train in Mishawaka in the early part of the 20th Century because of rumors of jobs at The Mishawaka Woolen Company, later to be called Ball Band, and much later, Uniroyal. Immigrants traveled here from the east coast, originally mainly from Italy and Belgium, in hopes of finding a job. Some of the women interviewed had fathers who came to this country and worked at the factory. While their mothers might have stayed home with boarders, daughters got work as soon as they were old enough and the logical place to go was Ball Band. How were the immigrants and their descendants treated? What kind of work did they do? What kind of social life made their work situation more bearable? This chapter will also

look at the issue of assimilation -- did second-generation immigrants find a strong pull to become Americanized and what kinds of prejudices and stereotypes did they encounter.

Chapter Two looks at a group of women who were not immigrants but migrants: black and white women who came to Northern Indiana from the South in the period during and after World War II. Manufacturing jobs drew them to this area and once they found a job they chose to stay at the factory. This chapter examines racial attitudes at the plant, possible explanations for the small numbers of blacks hired at Uniroyal, and the prejudice that seemed to permeate the brick walls. It also takes a look at the racial attitudes of the southern women, who some of the black women claimed were more open-minded than the immigrants, for example.

Chapter Three covers the area the women were most likely to want to discuss -- their work life at the factory, from the types of jobs they held to the friendships they made standing on the assembly line. These relationships grew over time and these women co-workers became as close as sisters and some of them remain close even in retirement. This chapter also looks at the prospects for promotions among women workers at Uniroyal. While women made up quite a large percentage of the work population at different times in the plant's history, few women were promoted to management positions. The woman who said she became the first female foreman discusses her rise in the ranks, which occurred in spite of her own protestations. Sexual harassment also was quite common, although those words were not used in the 1950s and 1960s. The women interviewed talk about what they call "hanky panky" and some of the situations that made their work life difficult.

The struggle to combine work and family is not just a problem of the 1990s. Although it didn't have a name back during the war years and during ensuing decades when women entered the job force in great numbers, the problem was just

as real. The women interviewed in Chapter Four discuss how they survived raising a family and working full time. Many of them chose to work different shifts so that they could split child-rearing duties with their husbands. Just like today, the combination of work and family resulted in an exhausted mother who didn't have much time for leisure activities for herself. Yet, the economic forces that necessitated their working, in many cases, motivated them to continue for the sake of the family's survival. A look at the history of housework and women's predominant role within that history also will be included.

The most divisive issue brought up was the sexual discrimination lawsuit filed by a group of women at the plant in the 1970s. Chapter Five analyzes the motivation behind the filing of the suit, the struggles of the original plaintiffs, including an extensive interview with the woman who was the main character in the saga, and the harsh criticism aimed at these women by many other women and men working at the plant. Some of the women blame the lawsuit for changing the very nature of their employment -- and affecting their happiness by making them more of a number rather than a person. The issue of the differences in male and female workers' physical capabilities -- something the courts still struggle with today -- is examined. The \$5 million settlement was one of the largest at the time.

Chapter Six looks at the sometimes rocky relationship between the women factory workers and the local union. While many of them remain strong believers in the union system, the majority of those interviewed did not choose to become active in union leadership. Only one woman interviewed was an officer, while the remainder paid their dues and attended meetings, but did not pursue a union career, mainly because of the demands of home and children. But the discrimination lawsuit also indicates that the union was not always looking out for the rights of the women, either, and appeared to work hand in hand with the company to keep women mired in separate, low-paying jobs. The chapter will examine these women's feelings

about the union and analyze their reasons for opting for a traditional, more behind-the-scenes role.

## CHAPTER I

### The Belgian Shoe College

Joyce, who was born in Mishawaka, remembers immigrants coming to this area speaking hardly a word of English. "They didn't know anything about Mishawaka, but when they heard the words, 'Ball Band,' everybody got off the train" (Interview 17 September 1996). Immigrants such as the ones Joyce referred to and the ones who came before them near the turn of the century answered the prayers of factory owners across the country who were in tremendous need of cheap, unskilled labor. One such company was The Mishawaka Woolen Co. opened in 1838 in northern Indiana as a woolen mill and purchased by the Beiger family in 1874. The Beigers came up with the idea of producing a woolen boot with a black band around the top and a red ball on the band -- thus the informal name of the company "Ball Band" (Smith 110, Eisen 59-60). The woolen boot gave way to a rubber one about 1898 and it soon became apparent that more factory workers were needed to meet the demands of the marketplace. While less than ten Italians were reported to have been living in Mishawaka in 1900, by 1930 that number had grown to 1,000 -- half born in Italy (Eisen 117).

The editors of *Peopling Indiana*, a new text that examines the much-overlooked area of Indiana's ethnic heritage, assert that Italian immigrants came to Indiana and stayed because some of the factories, such as U.S. Steel and Standard Oil, were located along the railroad lines. As jobs became less available because of depleted resources in other parts of the country, workers stopped in Mishawaka (277). The Pennsylvania Railroad strike of 1922 brought some Italian railroad

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workers from Logansport to Mishawaka. (279). A few of the women interviewed remembered immigrants coming here from Logansport and Iowa, where they had recently worked on the railroad (Eisen 118). Mary's parents were both born in Italy and her father came to Mishawaka to work at Ball Band. He sent for her mother later and she was able to get on the last ship to America after the start of World War I. Although one child died in Italy, Mary's other brothers and sisters were born in this country. In those early days, Mishawaka was divided into two areas: the side north of the St. Joseph River was settled by those from the southern part of Italy while the area south of the river was occupied by northern Italians (*Peopling* 284, Eisen 117). "I don't think the two groups got along when they first came over here," Mary said. "But we all get along real well now...we all married each other...everything is mixed now" (Interview 1 October 1996).

While immigration data at times is conflicting and at other times vague, there is no question that Italian migration was a huge movement. Author Jerre Mangione writes that "By 1910 Italians could be found in almost every nook and cranny of America..." (xvi). In the decade from 1900 to 1910, an estimated 2 million Italians entered the U.S., while another 2.5 million arrived between 1910 and 1930. (Mangione 131). Some of these immigrants did return home, but the numbers repatriating (of all immigrants to the U.S.) vary greatly and range anywhere from 25 to 60 percent (Yans-McLaughlin 1990, 7).

The other main ethnic group settling in Mishawaka to work at Ball Band was the Belgians, who came to this country, in many cases, prior to the Italians. Like the Italians, they faced economic hardships in their own country and hoped for a better life in America. While Indiana in 1920 had the largest native-born population of any state in the nation, it also had the highest percentage of Belgians in the state coming to live in the Mishawaka-South Bend area (*Peopling* 5, 360). In fact, one quarter of all Indiana Belgians lived in this area. By 1912, Mishawaka had 1,355

Belgian residents and by 1926 the number had increased to 2,000 -- at 12 percent of the population, there were more Belgians in Mishawaka than in any other city in the United States. By 1909, most of Ball Band's 1,600 workers were Belgian (361).

Like the Italians, the Belgians formed their own Flemish enclave in Mishawaka and settled on the southwest side of town in an area called "Belgian Town" near the northern Italian residents. Alice grew up two blocks from where she now lives. Her father worked at Ball Band, so it seemed perfectly natural that she would work there too. Her mother was born in this country, but her father was from Belgium. Now 75 years old, she remembers lots of girls lying about their age, claiming to be 18 in order to get hired at Ball Band when in fact they were 15 or 16 (Interview 13 November 1996). She remembered one Italian woman who started working there at age 13 and stayed there into her 80s or 90s.

While the Italians and the Belgians settled in Mishawaka in the greatest numbers, people of other nationalities ended up working at Ball Band. Sylvia's parents emigrated from Poland and both worked at Ball Band. While her mother only worked there a short time, her father worked there 47 years. She began working on the "victory shift" during World War II while a junior in high school, although she didn't think her father's employment there influenced her decision to help out during the war (Interview 4 September 1996). Hungarians and Germans also worked at the plant, but not in as great numbers. Several women mentioned white "southerners" as the equivalent of an ethnic group, referring to the large numbers of people who migrated from the South in order to find employment in factory jobs. Their perception of this group as "outsiders" is ironic, but predictable since the southerners were the "newest" group to arrive.

The subject of immigrants in general has received a lot of attention from scholars, but only recently have women immigrants and their descendants been singled out as a group that should be studied separately from the homogenous

category of "immigrants." Author Donna Gabaccia is careful not to lump all immigrant women into the same category, noting the differences between various groups of people, such as differences in class and race, but also recognizing the similarities that, at times, are striking. One of the purposes of her book *From the Other Side* is to "...highlight how the lives of women from the other side resembled, intertwined with, and departed from both the lives of immigrant men and the lives of other groups of American women --especially middle-class women and women of the 'racial' minorities of the United States" (xii).

The comments made by native-born factory women about their immigrant women co-workers are telling: while most believed everyone got along well together, working side by side on the line, they simultaneously single the immigrant women out and unconsciously have made them "outsiders." Jean, who started working at Ball Band during the war, remembers that some of the Italians and Belgians couldn't speak English very well. "The Belgians and Italians, they fought all the time," she said. When pressed about what they fought about, she said job openings, about "who wanted it and who would get it." Referring to the Italians as "dagos," she was the only woman interviewed who mentioned outright hostility between the two ethnic groups at the plant (Interview 29 October 1996).

On the other hand, many women reminisced about the early years during the war when workers were "one great big happy family" with all ethnic groups working together in harmony. Sue, originally from the South, said she worked closely with lots of Polish, Hungarians and Italians. "We never had any problems," she said. "In fact, I had very, very good friends who were Italian and Polish" (Interview 17 October 1996).

Joyce, an outspoken Mishawaka native who appeared to remember a great deal about the early years at the plant, recalled that the immigrant women often worked together and stayed together during breaks. "The Belgians sort of stuck with

the Belgians and the Italians sort of stuck with the Italians" (Interview 17 September 1996). Kinship between immigrant women is regarded as one of the survival methods used to adjust to a difficult life in a new country. While a more traditional life in the old country may have prohibited wives from working, it was a whole new situation in the United States, where a different kind of economic hardship forced more and more women into the workplace. "...the immigrant family was never totally insensitive to economic reality and even married women could be forced into the labor market," commented author John Bodnar (78). "For the first time she (the wife) may have been expected to contribute to the financial as well as the physical well being of her family" (Mangione 335).

Ball Band was one of only two major factories in Mishawaka during World War II. An Italian immigrant man who would not allow his wife to work as a domestic might have considered it safe for her to work in the same factory where he worked (Bodnar 80). Some have "...suggested that Italian-American women only took jobs that they perceived to be compatible with the family value system" (Mindel and Habenstein 71). This was even more the case for second-generation women who found themselves ready for employment during World War II. Their mothers might not have worked in the factory, but their fathers did and any taboo that might have existed about women working outside the house had to take a back seat to a world war and family economies in which each nuclear family pooled its money, with the woman of the household serving as banker. These second-generation women, although still tied to traditional families and neighborhoods, considered themselves more American than Italian-American. Mary went to work there before the war when she was only eighteen years old. For the first two months on the job, she worked in the factory where her sister-in-law was a supervisor. But her mother did not like the shift work of factories and pushed her to apply for an office job within the factory, even though the money was less. "My shorthand and

typing teacher from high school found out where I was working (in the factory) and got hold of the manager of steno at Ball Band" (Interview 1 October 1996). Mary said she was not crazy about the hours because while doing office work she had to get to work by 6 a.m. while it was still dark. "I had been going to dances and sometimes I had barely laid down (when I had to get up and go to work). But my teacher in school kept harping on me that I had the ability." She ended up loving her job doing office work at the plant and was promoted several times and only retired because her husband was ill.

Mary's friend, Anna, went to work at Ball Band at the age of seventeen in 1944 as a part of the "victory shift." Both her parents were born in Italy and she was born just three blocks from where she now lives. Her father was a bricklayer during the war and her mother never worked outside the home. "It was the place to work," she said of Ball Band. "I tried to help out the family. After the Depression, the war helped people get back on their feet, really." (Interview 21 October 1996). She said her father spoke better English than her mother, who did not have as much opportunity to speak the language. "I never thought about being Italian," she said. "I grew up with Italian girls and ran around with Italian girls, but after I went to high school and I went to work, I just never thought about it that much. Even today, I do what I want to do, whether it is Italian or not. I've never been to Italy and I have no desire to go. My husband is of German descent" (Interview 21 October 1996). Her statement underscores the ambivalence that many second-generation daughters felt as they tried to get by in both cultures. "Cut off from the culture of her parents but not integrated into mainstream Anglo-American culture, the daughter of immigrants was often ill at ease in both worlds" (Sellers 297-8). Overall, though, history proves that these daughters, although they retain a sense of ethnic pride, tended to become more and more Americanized (Sellers 301).

By the onset of World War II, second-generation Italian-Americans like Mary and Anna felt a strong pull towards assimilation, despite close-knit family relationships. While immigration officials at the turn of the century regarded northern Italians and southern Italians as two different races, by the time of the second world war, that had changed. "Italians had become as indisputably white as the Irish before them" (Gabaccia 9). The ethnic hatred spewed out by Hitler possibly lessened discrimination against European immigrants in the United States, but perhaps negative feelings were only transferred to new "undesirables" such as Mexicans and Asian immigrants, according to Gabaccia, who states that immigration laws and quotas reflect changing attitudes towards various immigrant groups. Yet, there were instances when the war broke out where Italian-Americans were rounded up and arrested, although they did not suffer the same fate as the Japanese-Americans (*Peopling* 291). The government reportedly questioned a member of the Maria SS. DiLoreto Society in Mishawaka about what the "SS" represented, insinuating it had something to do with Hitler's guard service. Members responded that it stood for Santissima or "Mary Most Holy of Loreto" (*Peopling* 291).

Although these second-generation women may have begun to feel a strong pull towards Americanization, their family ties were still quite strong. Mary may have disagreed with her mother, but she still took the factory office job that her mother wanted her to take rather than working late shifts. According to Mindel and Habenstein, for Italians, the desire to remain close to family roots was more important than independence and achievement (72). And for all that has been written about the conflicts between first-generation mothers and second-generation daughters, the tie that binds them is stronger for Italians than for any other ethnic group, with the exception of African-Americans. This strong mother-daughter tie remains in effect even though daughters had begun to reject the traditional roles of

the mother (80). "My mother was a worker," Mary said with obvious pride. "We grew everything in our yard. She didn't know about cholesterol. She canned vegetables that she had grown in the garden or gotten at the market and she took in wash" (Interview 1 October 1996). Countering the ethnic stereotype that all Italians are good cooks obsessed with pasta, Mary said she didn't know how to make coffee when she got married. "When I'd ask my mother for a recipe, she'd go like that (gesture with fingers) and never had a recipe. She was a very good cook."

Many of the women interviewed began working as teenagers in order to help support their families, which in many instances were having difficulty making ends meet and needed all the help that they could get. It goes without saying that these same girls did lots of chores around the house. "I remember if I had a free day, my mom would say, 'you can wash the windows or clean the wallpaper,' or something like that," said Alice (Interview 13 November 1996). "Immigrant mothers spent little 'quality time' with their children, yet fostered emotionally close ties to them," according to Gabaccia (68), noting that mothers may not have had the time to play with their children, yet made strong connections nevertheless. A 1978 study by Corinne Azen Krause in which 225 second and third-generation immigrant women were interviewed confirmed extremely close ties between elderly immigrant women and their middle-aged American-born daughters (Sellers 300). Sociologist Andrew Greeley notes how significant a factor kinship and family ties were to Italians in America. "...of all the ethnic groups, Italians most often live in the same neighborhood as their parents and siblings and visit them every week" (Mindel and Habenstein 77).

While the family bond was strong in this country, bringing relatives to various ethnic neighborhoods across the country in Chicago or Detroit, for example, it was not the same extended family as might have existed in Europe. Rather, the nuclear family so cherished by American culture predominated even

among the immigrant families (Bodnar 82). "When most working-class families had their choice, they preferred a private household consisting of parents and children" (Bodnar 83). Mary's family confirms this assertion. While her mother took in occasional boarders, it was never a long-term arrangement, but rather something temporary until that person got a job and found a place of his own (Interview 1 October 1996).

Nevertheless, "the neighborhood" was almost as important to the ethnic family as the family itself. That holds true in Mishawaka where Italian and Belgian neighborhoods were established and remain, to a lesser degree, today. In the early years, boundaries were formed and remained intact for a long time. The Polish immigrants, for the most part, settled on the west side of South Bend and did not settle in Mishawaka, but some traveled to the city to work at Ball Band. Nothing was more important to an ethnic neighborhood, such as the ones formed in Mishawaka, as the social clubs where newly-arrived immigrants and their families went for fellowship, friendship and a little bit of the culture they had left behind. The Edmondo DeAmicis Mutual Aid Society was formed in 1917 to provide sickness and death benefits to its 63 charter members. It was named after a famous Italian author and humanitarian Edmondo DeAmicis. (Eisen 119). In the 1930s a meeting hall, which still exists today, was constructed at Spring and 11th streets. The club was well known for its Saturday night dances and football games with the Belgian clubs (*Peopling* 288 and Eisen 119). Mary remembers going to the DiAmici Club as a little girl and falling asleep on the stack of coats on top of the pool table while her parents were at the Saturday night dances (Interview 1 October 1996). Anna remembers the children dancing off in the corner while their parents were on the dance floor (Interview 21 October 1996). Another Italian Club, the Liberty Club, was formed in 1921 and was more political in nature. In 1953, it merged with the DiAmici Society (*Peopling* 288-289). The Italians living north of the St. Joseph

River had their own club, Our Lady of Loreto Italiana Mutual Aid Society, formed in 1933. The Belgian equivalent was the BK Club (Broederenkrin), which also is still in existence today. Formed in 1925, the BK Club was known for archery, bowling and darts (*Peopling* 361-362). The establishment and maintenance of such neighborhoods and social clubs served an important function in retaining ethnic solidarity and pride.

Women could be called the glue that held this ethnic identity together; the group that had the ability to blend the old and the new to form something that is neither strictly American or assimilated nor strictly ethnic or European. Because most of these women immigrants did not come to America feeling as if they were "Italian" or "Belgian," because they did not identify themselves in that manner in their homelands, in America they created something new. "To become American, these women invented 'ethnic female identities,'" asserts Gabaccia (xi). "Associated symbolically with cultural identity -- indeed with the very 'heart' of culture -- immigrant women and their daughters became markers of the line dividing Americans from outsiders" (xi). And, as daughters made their own way in America, perhaps this line became a little blurred as more and more marriages occurred outside the group and work outside the home became commonplace. Gabaccia, who also writes about today's immigrants, notes that while the descendants of immigrants can hardly be distinguished from others, they still believe in the importance of ethnicity. While Anna, Mary and Alice do not boast of their Italian or Belgian heritage, neither would they ever consider moving out of the old neighborhood where they grew up.

These second-generation women do not fit neatly into any category, perhaps because only recently have scholars begun paying attention to them. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, editor of a 1990 text *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology and Politics* writes in her introduction: "The reader of almost any scholarly work on

labor migration will leave it assuming that all immigrants were, and are, men" (15). She adds that feminist scholars are frustrated by models that place women solely in the middle of the family -- to be studied only within the confines of that family. Another group of scholars prefers to study immigrant women as individuals -- union leaders, writers, etc. -- ignoring their connections to family (15). It is interesting to note that Mary does not know much about her family's decision to come to the United States and does not know how long her mother stayed behind while her father saved money for the family to come here. While it could be argued that her mother might have fit into the family model mentioned above -- well within the traditional patriarchal unit -- not enough is known about her role to make such an assumption. Mary herself, as a second-generation Italian woman, does not fit within the family model since she chose to go out into the workplace, yet her work was inextricably tied with her family's survival and she saw her employment as a part of a partnership with her husband as they tried to improve their lives and their children's lives.

Yans-McLaughlin also discusses the inherent and outdated notion of the classic assimilation model that assumes that the longer a person stays in this country the more likely it is he or she will resemble a true-blue American and lose more and more of his or her ethnic identity. She and other contemporary scholars of immigration dispute Oscar Handlin's notion that "the premise of the United States is the story of many people becoming one people" (11). Rather than concentrating on the story of one lonely immigrant walking down the streets of New York City and ending up a millionaire, she and others have begun to recognize the importance of the group, the power of a collection of people acting together. "Immigrant groups seem capable of creating new advantages for themselves" (12) and the result of this ethnic pluralism is group unity either "despite or because of exclusion" by the main group. Mary, Anna, and Alice's families fit more comfortably into a group model

that fostered shared experiences in a strange and at times puzzling country. Dances and football games and concerts in the park all provided a place where they could come together with other people of similar backgrounds. Henry Grunwald, an immigrant from Vienna who went on to become editor-in-chief of *Time* magazine, writes in his autobiography that "Every immigrant leads a double life. Every immigrant has a new identity and a double vision, suspended between an old and a new home, an old and a new self" (43). Any kind of shared social experiences with other immigrants would have lessened the difficulty and insecurity of leading such a double life.

Bodnar speculates that immigrants chose to concentrate their efforts on what he calls "the culture of everyday life" because those were areas where they could understand and interpret what was happening to them, contrasted with larger events in the world, where they had very little influence (210). Those "everyday life" areas included the family, the workplace, and the ethnic community. Immigrants early in the twentieth century were "consumed by everyday issues" and "their fears and hopes revolved around everyday life: getting enough to eat and having a home of one's own" (211). "Because they possessed relatively less material and social influence, they were preoccupied with understanding and constructing life at very immediate levels," according to Bodnar. "They did this in part because they were relatively powerless to affect the sweeping currents of their times, but, ironically, in doing so they actually generated a degree of power and social control of their own and transcended a status as simply victims" (210). This could be said for Mary and Anna's parents, but, once again, their mothers seem to have been subsumed in the story. While the immigrant father toiled at a menial job, for example, what influence did the mother have at home on her husband and family? Several scholars have suggested that it has been inaccurate to relegate the immigrant woman to secondary positions, when her power really was much greater than has previously

been thought. Despite being in the house doing piece work or taking in boarders, as many women did, the very act of getting married and moving to a new country was an act of independence on a woman's part. (Bodnar 81). "No matter what new responsibilities they were incurring, they viewed the creation of a family of their own as a positive, purposeful act which offered intrinsic rewards rather than simply burdensome obligations" (81). Yet, how often do we picture the immigrant woman as a faceless, nameless workhorse, rather than a strong leader of the family. At home, many times she controlled the family's finances as well as managing the household and the children. And while it is assumed that daughters did a significant amount of work around the house, Mary remembers her mother letting her out of some of the work because she thought she was too skinny. Instead, her sister had more household responsibilities (Interview 1 October 1996).

The daughters of these first-generation women chose factory work while perhaps other native-born women were opting to move into clerical or office work. A certain hierarchy of employment apparently took place, according to scholars such as Gabaccia. She writes that as native-born American women left farming, domestic service and factory work to become teachers and clerical workers; foreign women and African-American women took their place on the farms, in the households and in the factories (46-47). Many African-Americans were excluded from factory work until World War II, so black women were concentrated in agricultural work and work as domestic servants. As mentioned earlier, Italians were able to choose factory work rather than working as servants.

Yans-McLaughlin, who studied Italian immigrants in Buffalo between 1880 and 1930, notes that it is often assumed that factory work automatically and inherently destroys the traditional patriarchal structure within the family because women achieve independence. But she did not find this to be the case. Instead, she found that the immigrants were more flexible and adaptable than previously

thought. "In fact, immigrant behavior is much better understood as reciprocal interaction between traditional values and new social contexts. Such reciprocity implies the adaptation of an Old World culture, but certainly not its destruction" (1982, 181). This also is the case with the second-generation women who went to work at Ball Band. While economic necessity forced them to look for work and help support their families, their wages were not enough to foster much independence and instead of breaking down the traditional family, they helped it survive. Some of them moved directly from their mother and father's home into their husband's home, thus further supporting the notion of the continuance of the traditional patriarchal framework.

World War II was also a factor in these women's employment opportunities. Immigrant women, just the same as native-born women, responded to the country's patriotic call, which coincided with their family's increasing economic needs. Sylvia, the daughter of Polish immigrants, worked at Ball Band while attending her junior and senior years in high school. She got on the bus after school about 3:30 p.m. and worked at Ball Band from 4 to 8 p.m. On Saturday, she worked about six hours and made \$12 for the whole week. "That was a lot of money back then," she said (Interview 4 September 1996). Anna also began working while in high school on the "victory shift." She went to school half of one day and worked the rest of the day in the fuel cell office at Ball Band. When she retired, she retired from the same department she started working in back in high school (Interview 21 October 1996). The war may have motivated them to work at the factory in the first place, but they stayed on after the war because they liked the work and the money they earned.

The immigrant woman's history at Ball Band, unfortunately, has not been documented, but local historians note that the company encouraged immigration and employed German and Italian immigrants and their descendants during the period between 1900 and 1930 (Kiemnec and Stiso 21). The average wage paid workers at

Ball Band was about \$15 a week in the period between 1900 and 1922 (22). The exact wages earned by women at the factory during this period were not recorded, but nationally, the Women's Bureau discovered that during World War I, six government contractors paid women between 10 and 33 percent less than men (Amott and Matthaehi 126). A New York State Department of Labor survey in 1923-24 found that women in New York City factories earned 60 percent lower wages than men working at the same job (Tentler 19). These figures are significant because, according to Gabaccia, 34 percent of all foreign-born women worked in manufacturing in 1920 (47).

Up until about 1925, women at Ball Band worked primarily on knitting and spinning machines, in the paper box division, and in clerical work (Kiemnec and Stiso 22) and between the 1920s and 1940s had their duties expanded to sewing, packing, tennis shoes, and footwear assembly. During the war, women's jobs were expanded further to include making fuel cells, and other war products such as uniforms and boots. Women's employment at Ball Band, then, up until the war, follows traditional patterns in which women work at jobs that were perceived as an extension of work previously done at home, such as knitting and sewing, for example (Deaux 3).

While Italians and other immigrant groups experienced discrimination when they entered this country (Amott and Matthaehi 111,112), none of the second-generation women interviewed felt that they were discriminated against in the workplace because of their ethnic heritage. From the interviews conducted, it is possible that Italian women, for example, might have been placed in a particular area to work, but within that area women were mixed together on the assembly line. The language barrier certainly made working conditions even more difficult for immigrant women. But by the time of World War II, as noted earlier, most of these differences blurred within the factory structure, according to the women

interviewed, and the company was so desperate for workers that nationality was not a factor. Blacks, who had previously worked at the plant in small numbers, finally were hired during the war, but again did not make up a significant portion of the workplace. Chapter Two will discuss race issues and black employment at Ball Band.

Like the native-born American women, second-generation Italian and Belgian workers expressed satisfaction with their factory jobs and wanted to continue working there after the war. "I do not feel that women lost their jobs after the war," said Anna. "We were building seniority and had pensions to look forward to at that time" (Interview 21 October 1996). "A lot of people wanted to stay on." None of those interviewed felt that women were laid off in great numbers at the end of the war -- that happened in the 1960s when the shoe division was sold and a discrimination lawsuit was brought against the company. This lawsuit will be discussed in Chapter Five.

While immigrant history is a large part of the story of Ball Band, unfortunately much of that history has been lost as the men and women who traveled to Mishawaka from various parts of Europe have died. It is only through the daughters of the immigrants that we learn something about what life was like for the women who either came with their husbands or followed their husbands to a new country. Another unfortunate problem is that so much of women's history as immigrants is tied to that of the male -- the head of the household. That leaves the reader with very little information about the women themselves -- their feelings about the new country, their insecurities, their survival techniques. Yet, through the voices of their daughters, we are able to see them in somewhat of a new light: they were strong, hardworking, ingenious, and compassionate. Their daughters have some of those same qualities, as do their granddaughters. They forged a new life here that may not have resembled their old life, but their old life could not be

denied. Polish immigrant Harriet Palowski writes eloquently about the unique situation of living in two different cultures: "Sometimes this weight has been like a cross which I accepted as part of my birthright. Most of the time, however, it was as natural a part of my life as the sun which gave me warmth..." (Seller 229).

Growing up in Detroit, her father taught her about her Polish heritage -- folk songs, history and games -- when she became aware that the schools would not. "Even today, I find myself snarling at friends who expect American acculturation to wipe out every vestige of Polish culture within me" (230-1).

A story about a black woman making potato salad for a Ball Band potluck dinner illustrates the important racial differences found in the factory during World War II. Joyce, a white woman born in Michigan, remembers that the black woman, Sara, hired during the war, was asked by the other women in her department to bring bread and butter -- items she could purchase at the store -- to the holiday potluck. "When I got the list, I saw that I was to bring potato salad," Joyce said. Because her mother didn't have the eggs, she asked Sara to bring it instead and Joyce brought the bread and butter. "After it was all over with, everyone said that was good potato salad and wanted to know how I made it," Joyce said. "I said, 'I didn't,' and they said 'what your ma?' and I said 'no, Sara brought it.'" She said the women "about flipped" and later commented "I don't know about you, Joyce" (Interview 17 September 1996). She said she asked them if the potato salad tasted good and when they said yes, she said, "Well, what's the difference then?" Eventually, she said the other women in the department came to accept Sara and everyone got along well.

This level of bigotry apparently existed in the plant during the war, and probably afterwards, too, when white women -- both ethnic and native -- were so concerned about racial differences they did not even want to eat something prepared by a black woman. Joyce, whose parents came from southern Indiana and southern Illinois, is indicative of perhaps a more open attitude towards blacks by those who migrated to the North from the South compared with native northerners or

## CHAPTER 2

### **Southern Migrants at Uniroyal: a Story of Black and White**

A story about a black woman making potato salad for a Ball Band potluck dinner illustrates the intolerant racial attitudes found at the factory during World War II. Joyce, a white woman born in Mishawaka, remembers that the black woman, Sara, hired during the war, was asked by the other women in her department to bring bread and butter -- items she could purchase at the store -- to the holiday potluck. "When I got the list, I saw that I was to bring potato salad," Joyce said. Because her mother didn't have the eggs, she asked Sara to bring it instead and Joyce brought the bread and butter. "After it was all over with, everyone said that was good potato salad and wanted to know how I made it," Joyce said. "I said, 'I didn't,' and they said 'what your ma?' and I said 'no, Sara brought it.' " She said the women "about flipped" and later commented "I don't know about you, Joyce" (Interview 17 September 1996). She said she asked them if the potato salad tasted good and when they said yes, she said, "Well, what's the difference then?" Eventually, she said the other women in the department came to accept Sara and everyone got along well.

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Tennessee, she was following her mother and brother who had moved to this area. Alma, born in Mississippi, taught school for five years, but came to this area to get a summer job during the war and ended up staying here with family. These women were the only ones interviewed who mentioned having any college education prior to going to work at the Ball Band plant. A few of the women ended up getting their high school degrees or taking labor studies courses later in life, but none had entered college in their youth. Gloria and Alma illustrate the emphasis on education among black women in that period, who by 1940 had received more bachelor degrees from black colleges than black men. Black women also had earned 62.4 percent of all degrees from black colleges in 1952-3, compared to white women graduates earning 33.4 percent of college degrees nationwide in that same period (Giddings 245).

Discrimination played a part in Alma's decision to try and get a job at Ball Band during the war. Although she had a teaching degree earned in the South, Black women were not hired as teachers in the South Bend area until the 1960s, she said, and she was unable to obtain a job in the field of her choice. Because she felt a duty to help her family survive and at the same time help her country during a time of war, she made the decision to stay at the factory where she had a steady job and the money she needed to survive. When she went there to work during the war she said she thought of it more as an avocation than a job. When she started she spun yarn to make uniforms for the army and today proudly holds up a spindle from the spinning machine.

"After I left the teaching profession and got that job, I would never change," Alma said. "When I came up here, I am not embarrassed to say, they just did not hire colored teachers. When it started opening up they said, 'why don't you apply?' but I said, 'No. I intend to stay with the ones who gave me the job.' And I never regretted it" (Interview 25 November 1996). Although Alma never married and did

not have children, she said she sometimes dreams about teaching school children, who she believes are the most vulnerable in the elementary school years and need the best teachers. Yet, she insists she has no regrets and still feels a strong loyalty to a company which gave her a chance to work during the war when others were not hiring blacks. Her feelings about the company are mainly positive -- as is her overall attitude about life -- and she does not remember specific incidents when she was discriminated against at the plant. Now 78, she retired in 1978 after 34 years of service.

A local ban against hiring black teachers apparently was not universal throughout the north. Author Jacqueline Jones writes that there were 138 female black school teachers in Chicago in 1920, although they were probably confined to predominantly black schools and paid less than their white counterparts (1985, 180). At that time, teaching was felt to be one of the ways that black women could work to "lift the race" (Neverdon-Morton 68).

Gloria's story is not so positive, although she said she too is grateful to the plant for hiring her and helping her earn enough money to send all six of her children to college. Economic gains were her entire purpose for working at the factory, where she said she could earn more money than she could working in an office or even being a teacher. Money was the bottom line and in that sense she said she feels very successful because she and her husband were able to pool their incomes and provide a good life for their family. But she said the plant had a history of not hiring blacks and the only reason she got hired after the war was because she knew somebody. "You had to know somebody to get a job and even then you got lower-paying jobs and were never promoted according to ability." She said she felt that blacks applied there over the years, but most were not hired. A discrimination suit based on race was warranted, she said, but she did not feel there

were enough blacks working there to pursue it and they were afraid they would lose their jobs if they went up against the company (Interview 3 March 1997).

Jones discusses the difficulty and necessity of examining the lives of working-class black women as separate from the lives of working-class white women. The difficulty lies in the paucity of scholarship specifically related to black women who until recently were lumped in either with "all blacks" or with "all women." The study is necessary because their experiences have been so diverse, yet so unique. "In their poverty and vulnerability, black people experienced...historical economic transformation in fundamentally different ways compared to whites regardless of class, and black women, while not removed from the larger history of the American working class, shouldered unique burdens at home and endured unique forms of discrimination in the workplace" (9). Too often authors have ignored the "double discrimination" of race and sex that black women have suffered. The themes of Jones' text on black working women from the time of slavery, *Labor of Love*, *Labor of Sorrow*, are the unique cultural history of the black community and "...the attempt by the black working women to subordinate the demands of their employers to the needs of their own families" (9). She writes that too often the black woman is portrayed as the "long-suffering mother" and she, too, is guilty of that to an extent because of the difficulty of ignoring the many sacrifices and generousities some of these women displayed in the face of their own personal problems. While it would not be accurate to label Gloria or Alma as victims, both displayed and still display a great compassion for others and see it as their duty to help family members in need. Gloria, for example, is taking care of a sick elderly aunt who does not want to enter a nursing home, despite the fact that Gloria's husband just recently died and she has spent the last fourteen years caring for him. While she admits that she would rather be cleaning her house or traveling, she cannot in good conscience let her aunt enter a nursing home. While never

married, Alma has shown incredible generosity toward her many nieces and nephews, putting money away over the years to help send them to college. Both have sacrificed for others, but differ from traditional victims in that they feel good about themselves because of their sacrifices.

Both Gloria and Alma benefited from President Roosevelt's 1941 executive order prohibiting discrimination in hiring during World War II -- an order entered only after protests and demonstrations on the part of blacks for this to come about (Gluck 24; Koziara 16, Baxandall 286, 287). Authors Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise noted that one aircraft company in California had only hired a few black employees -- out of 33,000 workers -- prior to Pearl Harbor and the executive order (12). "There were more than 5 million unemployed Whites to be absorbed into the economy before Blacks would even get a nod," wrote author Paula Giddings (235). A Kansas City defense plant needing 1,000 new workers in 1941 opted to wait for possible white migrants from the South rather than hiring available black workers (Jones 238). It is estimated that "hate" strikes -- white workers fighting against black employment in war industry -- resulted in the loss of more than 100,000 man-days of war production work during the war (Amott and Matthaei, 173). It took a National Labor Relations Board general order the following year to prohibit pay inequality between men and women's wages, although employers were not mandated to enforce this order. Although Gloria said she had a contact to help her obtain a job after the war was over, Alma walked in off the street in August of 1944 and two hours later had a job. Expanding war production and government mandates certainly did not work against her as she went in to apply for a job. During the war years, black women's employment went from 1.5 to 2.1 million -- less of an increase than among white women because of the high proportion of black women working before the war (Hartmann 78). But it also gave the black woman a chance to get out of domestic service and enter factory

work (90). Despite better employment chances in manufacturing, all was not rosy for the black Rosie the Riveters. During World War I, white women entered the job market to fill in for men who were fighting in the war and black women again took their place on the lowest rung of the occupational job ladder doing the dirtiest jobs. This pattern was repeated in W.W.II, and after both world wars black women lost their jobs when white women wanted those same jobs back (Koziara 11). Giddings writes that some of the discrimination encountered by black women during the war came from surprising places, including the ranks of white women who did not want to work side by side with them in the plant (237). Black women also worried that the factory jobs would be temporary and that they would be forced back into domestic jobs after the war (Hartmann 90).

A prejudicial attitude by white co-workers would not have been unheard of at Ball Band during the war or afterwards. A few of the white women interviewed for this project mentioned that they did not remember ever seeing black women working in their departments the entire span of their working careers, so it could have been possible for black women to have been segregated within certain areas of the plant, although it is clear they were not all placed in just one department. Gloria said she started in the woolens department during the war, but was moved around many times, according to the fate of that particular department. If the department was eliminated, she said she had a right to apply for certain jobs based strictly on her seniority. She said she felt that the union helped her in that regard, but when she applied a few times for a job in the first aid station, which was not unionized, she said she had no protection and did not get the jobs. "It was best to work at jobs that were not as nice since the purpose of work is to make as much as you could and get out as fast as you could," (Interview 3 March 1997). She felt sure she was paid the same as white women with the same seniority because of union regulations.

Gloria said whenever she had problems with a particular person at the plant, whom she termed a "troublemaker," she said she just found a way to avoid that person. "Most people were nice and I just didn't associate with those who were mean." She said of the various ethnic groups working at the plant, she remembers more prejudiced attitudes and meanness coming from the Polish employees. She said the Belgians pretty much kept to themselves. Her own personal strategy involved staying to herself and not socializing with co-workers except during parties that occurred at the plant during working hours.

Two of the women of Polish descent who worked at the plant, interestingly enough, or perhaps coincidentally, made derogatory comments about employees, black and of other ethnic groups, during the interviews. One woman commented that during her later years at Uniroyal, when more blacks were hired, she felt some of the younger people made her job harder. While she worked as hard as she could to keep up with increasing production demands, she said the younger black employees did not work as hard and resented her for what she was doing. She said her work was made "real rough" by these younger employees, who she said were not corrected or admonished by the bosses. "We had blacks working there in past years, but not as many," she said. "I don't feel prejudiced, I just had some bad experiences." Another woman did not make derogatory comments about blacks, but said she could never remember one working in the shoe room as long as she worked there. She said she saw black people making tires and working in sanitation, but that was about all. This same woman referred to Italians as "dagos." One Belgian woman said that when she lived in South Bend on Chapin Street she was afraid of blacks when she had to walk down Washington Street at 6 a.m. to change street cars to arrive in time at Ball Band. She said a black woman was brought in one time to watch her doing her job, but did not show up for work the next day. "I never worked with blacks before," she said, noting that more were hired in her later

years at the plants when "a lot changed." She said she could not remember one black woman working in the fuel cell department during all her years there.

Another Italian woman also said she did not remember any blacks in fuel cells when she worked there during the early years. When she went back in the 1980s, she said more blacks had been hired. She said her husband had worked with a black man in the receiving area and her dad had worked with one in fuel cells. She commented that most of the black employees she knew were involved in the union.

The idea of the ethnic immigrants and their descendants as racists has been around long before Archie Bunker made his feelings known on network television in the 1970s. Because many European ethnic groups, such as the Italians and Irish, were deemed "white" by World War II (Gabaccia 9), they found themselves a few rungs up on the job ladder or hierarchy and were in a position of superiority to the black women entering factory work for the first time. There were many instances when white women employees demanded not to work with black women and employers met their demands. Jones writes about a Detroit foreman firing four black women recently hired during World War II because of a dispute involving a sandwich (252). In his book *Free People of Color*, James Oliver Horton contends that a tradition of black and Irish unrest was common as far back as the 1820s and 1830s when both groups were on the lowest employment rung and were competing for the same jobs (170). But, his investigation of German immigrants and blacks in Buffalo at that same time period revealed a much better relationship, possibly because the two groups were not competing for the same employment. Horton writes that the relationships between blacks and immigrants were more complex than previously thought and generalizations should not be made hastily. "They (the relationships) depended in large part on local social, political, and, perhaps most important, economic conditions. Strong occupational competition could combine with other local factors to turn antagonism to violence" (182).

A prevalent stereotype that developed over the years of immigrants as racists, became an emotional issue in the volatile 1970s. In *The Ordeal of Assimilation: A Documentary History of the White Working Class*, Barbara Mikulski, a Polish-American Congresswoman from Baltimore, wrote that ethnic Americans were unfairly maligned. "Liberals scapegoat us as racists. Yet there was no racial prejudice in our hearts when we came...The elitists who call us racists are the ones who taught us the meaning of the word: their bigotry extended to those of a different class or national origin"(442). She said that the ethnic worker was fooled into thinking that the blacks were getting everything from the government. Monsignor Geno C. Baroni, speaking before the United States Congress committee of Labor and Public Welfare, dismissed the notion that the blue-collar descendants of immigrants were bigots. "We reject the accusation that these people are the citadel of racism in our society, although we do not deny that racism exists" (461). He added that because of white flight, the ethnic Americans and the blacks were the only groups remaining in the inner cities. Yet, he continued, elderly ethnic Americans were ignored by the federal government and found themselves in the same poverty bracket as other groups.

Gloria speculated that southerners working at the plant were nicer to the blacks than perhaps the ethnic women possibly because "they were more familiar." Yet, when attitudes about black/white relationships are examined, northern whites in the past and today are more receptive to the idea of equal treatment than white residents of the South (Jaynes 117). As mentioned earlier, an openness towards blacks seemed apparent in Joyce, who had come from a very large family whose parents came to Mishawaka from the southern part of the Midwest. This attitude was also evident in Sue, who came to this area from Tennessee. There were seven children in her family and her parents moved here from the South when she was in junior high school. She said that the company hired quite a few blacks over the

years, but more so in her later years at Uniroyal. Sue said she worked with one black woman for forty years and admired the way she labored to put her children through college.

Rose also is originally from Tennessee. Her father, now 95, was a country boy who ended up working in a plant in Tennessee which the Germans owned. When the government took over the plant during World War II, her father lost his seniority and was laid off. Relatives told him to come up here to Ball Band and put in an application and he worked there for many years before returning to Tennessee in retirement. Rose remembers working with some Polish women in fuel cells, but said that most of the women she worked with were from the South. She reiterated that not many blacks were hired in the beginning, but more were added in the 1970s and 1980s. She enjoyed her time working in the fuel cell division and described making cells for Tomahawk missiles, helicopters and airplanes. She said the F-18 cells took more than 100 hours to make and the work was tedious. "Everything had to work just right, with no leaks in the seams," she said (Interview 9 November 1996). "We made darn good fuel cells," she said. "At one time, it was a really good place to work." She said that one of the benefits of working there was that employees could purchase shoes and anything else the company made, such as luggage and coats, at reduced rates. She said the "seconds" sold at Uniroyal were better quality than the ones imported from Taiwan, for example. With five children to clothe, she said the availability of cheaper shoes came in handy. Some of the shoes could be purchased for as little as a quarter. One of the negatives of working at the plant, she said, is the fact that the working conditions at times were difficult. One time she said it was so hot, yet the boss shut the windows. She expressed bitterness about the small pension received by her father. "He makes it, but it's hard" (Interview 9 November 1996).

Joyce is bitter about a few things, too. Her worst experience at the plant, she said, was the time her brother was taken to the hospital and she was not able to go to him because there was no one available to do her job. "He was dead when I got to the hospital," she said (Interview 13 November 1996). "They had to call three people before I could go to the hospital." She cannot forget that experience. She said that if you called in sick, management would either call you up or come to the house to make sure that you were really sick. "As time went on, the union helped them so that they could stay home a day," she said. But even if management was insensitive to individual needs, she said that her co-workers were always there for her during family emergencies or problems. "When your kids were sick the ladies would all try to help out and send things."

While these southern migrants, both black and white, have been examined in the same chapter, it would not be accurate to state that their experiences were identical or even very similar. While the white southern migrant might have differed from her native co-workers in her southern accent, she was more like them than unlike. Certainly "hillbilly" jokes were made, but there were many more southern white women employed at Ball Band than there were black women hired. Gloria said she does not know exactly how many blacks worked there over the years, but she said the numbers hired in the early years were low. She said she tried to arrange a reunion of black women she worked with during her years there, and came up with only nine surviving women.

The "unique subculture" that Jones writes about is one of the ways that black working-class women differ from white working-class women, although at times it is true they have shared similar class struggles. "A focus on black working women - not only what they did, but also what they desired for themselves and their children --reveals the intersection of an Afro-American culture with a female culture, both of which were characterized by a cooperative ethos..." (Jones 5). To

lump black women in with "all women" or "all blacks" is to deny her unique work history, which differs from that of the white woman in that it dates back to slavery and has always placed her at the bottom of the job hierarchy. Black feminist bell hooks is particularly critical of this tendency by historians and feminists, who often have compared "women" and "blacks." She writes that this comparison "deflected attention from the fact that black women were extremely victimized by both racism and sexism" (141). She writes about black women in industrial America who were forced to take on the most difficult and dirtiest jobs the factory had to offer -- if they were allowed to work at all because of protests from white women. A 1919 study of black women in industry in New York City revealed that black women often were made to take jobs in the factories that white women refused to do (134). Historian Darlene Clark Hine notes that women's history has short-changed black women: "Most women's history pays too little attention to the multifaceted dimensions of Black women's history experienced beyond their enslavement and participation in the women's club movement" (xi). Nearly 100 years ago, black activist Mary Church Terrell wrote eloquently about the black woman's unique double bind: "But the white woman of England and the United States have only one burden to bear, after all, the burden of sex. What would they do I wonder if they were double-crossed, so to speak...if they had two heavy loads to carry through an unfriendly world, the burden of race as well as that of sex?" (Neverdon-Morton).

While Gloria and Alma definitely benefited from new opportunities made available to black women following World War II, they also are a part of the "unique culture" referred to by Jones in that they experienced discrimination on the job, but persevered for the higher good of their families. Neither of them was anxious to discuss the specifics of the discrimination and neither focused on the negatives. They considered themselves more in the category of "survivors" rather than "fighters" and did what it took to get through the day. Jones makes the point

that black people have been capable of an "emotional detachment" which allowed them to "live their lives apart from racism without being oblivious or untouched by it" (9). Like their white counterparts, Gloria and Alma kept quiet, did their job, and went home. But unlike their white co-workers, their racial identity and culture was something they retreated to and found comfort in. Alma, an ardent Republican who is against welfare and food stamps, credits the NAACP and unionization with improving life for blacks in this country. The extended families of these two black women remain the most important aspect of their lives. At first, when interviewing Alma, it was unclear whether the pictures of her nieces and nephews that line her piano were pictures of her own children or not. She has such a stake in her family that there is little difference in her mind between them and her own offspring. Despite living on a fixed income, she is saving now to send one nephew to the University of Notre Dame.

Gloria credits her strong religious beliefs with her survival during the difficult times she and her husband experienced while working to raise their family. "Some people were difficult," she admitted. "I needed the help of the Lord" (Interview 3 March 1997). She said one of the ways she dealt with the people who she termed "troublemakers" was to stay away from them, but at the same time to pray for them. "That's the only way to get strength," she said. Alma also commented on her active role in her church and the importance of her religious beliefs. The church was one place where black women and black men could create "a set of social institutions that helped maintain their social integrity" (Janiewski 46). Church involvement was a way to deal with the daily racism found in the white workplace, as well as serving as a place where black women could have power they could not attain at their jobs. "They worked as Sunday school teachers, supported missionary societies, and served on church governing boards..." (Janiewski 46).

Neither woman chose to participate in the sex discrimination suit filed by some women at the plant in the 1970s. Alma said she knew that the men and women did different jobs and that didn't bother her. "I didn't think I did as much work as a man," she said (Interview 25 November 1996). She said that after the lawsuit, if you needed a job and a man's job was available, you had to take it, regardless of the lifting required. "I never felt discriminated against for color or being a woman," she said. "I don't know how they actually felt in their hearts, but I knew I was never mistreated in any way." Gloria felt similarly regarding the sex discrimination lawsuit and both mirrored the feelings of many of the white women interviewed. "Some jobs should have been left to women," she said. "That's why God made us" (Interview 3 March 1997). Gloria, in particular, appeared to align herself more with black men who were subjected to racial discrimination at the plant. She said both black men and women were assigned to jobs such as cleaning the bathrooms or working with dangerous chemicals.

Much has been written about the relationship between the women's movement in the 1970s and the feeling among some black women and white working-class women that they were excluded from this movement because it catered to the white middle-class housewife restless to take her place in the working world. While none of the women interviewed specifically mentioned the women's rights movement, except those who filed the discrimination lawsuit, it was clear that this movement was not important or relevant in their lives. While a theme of economic betterment punctuated all their comments, even those who filed the lawsuit did not feel the women's movement helped them in any significant way. The two black women, like many black women of the time, identified more strongly with the civil rights movement and were more conscious of race differences rather than gender differentiation. They also appeared to identify more with their white

working-class colleagues who held strong traditional beliefs about the roles of men and women and which jobs should be performed by men and which by women.

Their diverse and at times divergent views -- by both black and white women -- underscore the need for a modern feminism that does not view all women as alike, regardless of differences in race and class, for example. It is interesting to note that Author Robert Charles Smith's text, *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, does not acknowledge the way that black women have been doubly discriminated against, including them in the monolithic "black" category, and does not appear to recognize sexism as a force also working against these women. Although he makes some excellent points about the difficulties of erasing racial prejudice, he does an injustice to black women by not recognizing their unique situations. In his chapter on the internal inferiorization of blacks constantly bombarded by racial discrimination and prejudice, a discussion of black women's particular psychological mindset would have been appropriate. While he discusses class differences in great detail, in his opinion, black men and women apparently are treated the same.

While no conclusions can be drawn about the experiences of white women migrants and black migrants at Ball Band, it is clear that the area of race and sexual identity is a complicated one in which generalizations should be avoided. Alma and Gloria provided good examples of the need for further study in this area. Both view themselves as successes because they supported their families and themselves. Yet, like many of the white women interviewed, they had neither the opportunity, the confidence, nor the desire to fight a company that discriminated against them in hiring and promotions. But they also provided strength to a wider black community which needed their help. Hooks is correct in describing the "complexities of woman's experiences" (190) and the tendency by scholars to ignore that complexity. Both these women's lives mirror that complexity, diversity and depth.

Uniroyal may not have been progressive in terms of race, but for these women, the factory provided a steady income -- something that was difficult for blacks to find during the post-war years. "One thing about that place," Alma said. "They paid you" (Interview 25 November 1996).

James M. Gregory's article "The Southern Diaspora and the Urban Dispossessed" looks in great detail at the lives of both black and white migrants from the South who settled in five Midwest states, including Indiana. The conclusions he reaches, based on data from the Census Public Use Microdata Statistics (PUMS), differs from authors like Jones who previously wrote that blacks and many white migrants suffered lives of poverty in the north after the agricultural South collapsed. On the contrary, Gregory found that what happened to blacks and white migrants differed greatly: many blacks struggled while white migrants generally fit into the northern society to the point that eventually they were indistinguishable from native whites. "...The story becomes one of sharp divergence, of two groups of ambitious southerners finding distinctly different sets of opportunities, one in marginal sectors, the other in the newest work and home settings that a booming economy could provide" (128).

But when gender is looked at specifically, perhaps some of the differences are not so great. By 1970, Gregory determined that 28.7 percent of southern white women migrants were working in blue-collar jobs in the Midwest states, compared with 24.2 percent of southern black women migrants and 24.3 percent of foreign-born white women (127). While average wage and salary differed significantly for white and black migrant men working in the Midwest in 1969, women's salaries were surprisingly similar -- white women earned an average of \$3,594 while black women migrants earned \$3,458 annually and foreign-born white women \$3,728 (127). Gregory concludes that women's earnings or family contribution did not determine whether southern whites or blacks would prosper, but "the stability of the

male-headed households" (126) was the determining factor. While southern white men worked their way up to skilled, craft, and foreman jobs within the factory, southern black men were limited to low-paying, manual labor (124).

Jones, in her book *The Dispossessed*, does acknowledge the role of prejudice and discrimination in keeping the black man and woman down after moving to the North and the way such racism could have benefited white migrants. "In the Midwest, countless Southern black migrants watched poorly educated whites from Kentucky or Tennessee take advantage of skin color and kin ties to secure jobs...Black job seekers told of the grim determination necessary to secure the most menial job, and the luck necessary to retain it; for the vast majority of them, promotions were simply out of the question." (235). Black migrants were not able to ascend the ladder of upward mobility, as the immigrants had before them, not because they were poor, but because of "white attitudes toward their race" (236).

While it would be impossible to compare the economic situations of the women interviewed for this study based strictly on the interviews, from Gregory's statistics it would appear that their earnings did not differ greatly, but their opportunities might have. The fact that Gloria felt restricted from certain jobs because of her race was not something experienced by a white co-worker also from the South. Alma would have entered the teaching profession -- her dream profession and the profession for which she was educated -- if she would have had the chance, but because she did not she made the best of her factory position and saved her money scrupulously. And neither of them apparently benefited from their college educations in terms of promotions. Like many of the white women at Ball Band, Gloria may not have achieved a successful "career," as we think of it today, but her children all graduated from college and are now doctors, teachers, social workers and chemists. In Gloria's eyes, she and her husband were a success because of what their children were able to accomplish.

Both the black and white southern migrant women who worked at Ball Band share a tremendous pride in the educational successes and subsequent professional opportunities of their children and know that all their sweat and blood at the factory was well worth it. Perhaps Gloria and Alma had to work harder because of their race and their limited opportunities, but they worked so that their children might have a better life. "When I see my six kids taking care of themselves and not having to work like I did, I'm happy and comfortable," Gloria said (Interview 3 March 1997).

The headline on a *South Bend Tribune* article dated October 7, 1943 read: "Housewives Work With Dual Purpose." The article was an appeal to housewives to work a four-hour shift at Ball Band to help with the war effort while at the same time keeping up duties as wives and mothers. Two women, one a former teacher, were pictured working at the factory. The former teacher commented that the work is "light and pleasant and allows me plenty of time to keep up with my work at home." The company termed the work "a welcome respite from housework, but helping the war effort."

It also mentioned that these four-hour shifts could be undertaken in addition to a farm job or work at home, for example. No previous factory experience was needed. Such appeals drew many women to Mishawaka's largest factory, which during the war needed to hire 2,000 additional workers, bringing the number of employees to 7,000. According to another article in the *Tribune*, there was an urgent need for women to operate sewing machines, to work as spinners, knitters, spoolers, packers and footwear makers (Kiemnec and Sisco 22). All across the country, factories like Ball Band were putting out similar appeals to attract women to work for the war effort. It is estimated that the labor force doubled during World War II (Sealand 96), with the proportion of women in the work force increasing from 25 to 36 percent -- the largest increase in 40 years (Bazandall 280). This work force included all sorts of new employees such as migrants from the South and racial minorities who were finally being admitted to factory work where previously

### CHAPTER 3

#### **On the Job: W.W.II, Camaraderie, Sexual Harassment and Promotions**

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they had been excluded. And although many women eventually did lose their jobs after the war, it marked a watershed period for women in the labor force. Whereas during the Depression women were castigated for taking jobs away from men, during the war it was a different story. Even if manufacturers, composed of men, were leery of hiring women, particularly married women, such a severe labor shortage meant women were soon coveted as employees and actively sought out in ways such as the appeals mentioned above. Some of these appeals read "if you can drive a car, you can run a machine," and "If you've followed recipes exactly in making cakes, you can learn to load shells" (Baxandall 284). Ball Band officials even went so far as to provide demonstrations at local businesses to show some of the jobs performed at the plant (*Ball Band Red Ball*, Sept. 15, 1945) These appeals served important psychological purposes in convincing women who had been socialized to be home with their children that they were needed to work in war time "to preserve the way of life they cherished" (Gluck 12).

Joyce, a 68-year-old woman, started working at the factory in 1944 at age 16. She quit school in order to work, but received her high school equivalency diploma some 20 years later with the help of her supervisor at the plant. She is one of three sets of twins in a family that included 22 children. "When you were from a large family, you helped out," Joyce said (Interview 17 September 1996). She had previously worked scrubbing floors and emptying bedpans at St. Joseph Hospital, Mishawaka, where she earned 50 cents a night. At the factory she made only 35 cents an hour, but that went up to 50 cents an hour after 90 days of employment. She started out in the footwear division making government packs for the army, and, despite the advertising claim that the work was "light," she remembers bleeding fingers and not being able to drink coffee or water because those materials could come off on the shoes.

Despite the discomforts, she enjoyed working there during the war. "You were doing what you could making things to save someone's life," she said. "And when you made fuel cells and someone wrote you back or wore your governments packs it was really nice" (Interview 13 November 1996). Joyce remembers the pride she took in receiving a "zero defect pin" for good work done during the war and the pride all workers felt when the company received an "E" award for producing a large amount for the war effort. "If you made an error you had to repair it yourself and you didn't get paid for that. That put in your mind what you were doing to help those people over there." In the company newsletter, the *Ball Band Red Ball*, it was reported that the factory received this "E" award four times (Sept. 15, 1945).

Of all the women interviewed, Joyce was the most intensely patriotic and reacted with anger when co-workers would express anti-war sentiments. Her feelings are understandable when taking into consideration that one brother died in World War II and others served in Korea and Vietnam. She said her husband worked with lots of Jehovah's Witnesses in his department who were against World War II. She got very angry when a young male co-worker commented after President Kennedy had been shot that he should have died because he was a warmonger. "I lost my temper and I usually don't swear. I said to my boss, 'what in the hell is he doing in here working on a government missile?'" Joyce said she went on to tell the young man that he should work somewhere else. "I've trained too many of you guys (college students) to hear you come in here and say something like that" (Interview 13 November 1996).

The image of Rosie the Riveter as the tough but still womanly factory worker was perpetuated by Hollywood and the government to attract these patriotic women workers to jobs which would ease a severe labor shortage. "Photographs of women war workers emphasized glamour, and advertising copy assured readers that

beneath the overalls and grease stains there remained a true woman," (Hartmann 23). Even Norman Rockwell's famous depiction of Rosie the Riveter displayed both a rivet gun *and* a powder puff and mirror on the muscle-bound masculine body of the woman worker (Gluck 12). While women did prove that they could take on jobs they had never been allowed to take on before, even during the war they were paid an estimated 65 percent less than men had made in manufacturing jobs before the war (Baxandall 281). By changing the job titles, factory owners could easily restructure the wage scales. Owners also claimed that new regulations aimed at protecting women, such as lifting restrictions, and new rest room or break facilities, resulted in higher costs which translated into lower wages (Sealander 101). Factory women made on the average just \$31.21 a week in 1944, compared with the male paycheck of \$54.65 (Hartmann 87). Author Susan Hartmann writes that women made actual economic gains in war manufacturing plants in jobs previously held by men as well as in some office and service jobs (21).

Although the matter of whether women gained economically during the war could be disputed, the existence of prejudice against hiring women cannot. After Pearl Harbor, it is estimated that 750,000 women applied for jobs in the defense industry and only 80,000 were hired. Industrialist Henry Ford was well known for his opposition to hiring women at his new Willow Run plant outside of Detroit, which was built for the production of bombers (*American History* magazine 54). The idea that married women belonged home with their families was deeply ingrained, despite concerted efforts by the government to appeal to women to help their country on a temporary basis. "Coming on the heels of the depression, when hostility toward married women working was so intense, the campaign was especially difficult" (Gluck 153).

The women who worked at Ball Band as teenagers during the war years did not experience the prejudice experienced by married women. Many of them

remember the war years as Sylvia did: "it was a lot of fun" (Interview 4 September 1996). She got a kick out of working with high school kids from all over the area. Joyce remembers that the supervisors at the plant just tolerated the teenager's attitudes, which resulted in a lot of what she called "talking back," noting that managers at the plant "... were not used to that" (Interview 13 November 1996). Virginia remembers a supervisor or a foreman going to the movie theater to fish out the eighth-grade kids who were supposed to be working. Author Sharon Gluck notes that the war industry was dependent on the use of teenagers who had to postpone their college education or perhaps even their high school education in order to work in the defense industry. Most of the women interviewed for this project never returned to school to complete their education. Gluck writes that by 1944, students made up 20 percent of all workers in defense plants (12).

The women interviewed took a lot of pride in the finished product and genuinely felt they were doing something for their country, but they did not seem to analyze their work in terms of wages, job descriptions, or poor working conditions. Perhaps that was a product both of their youth and their gender. The Women's Bureau, established by Congress in 1920 to investigate and improve the conditions of women in the workplace, did analyze the issues that women might not have had the time or inclination to analyze during the war. But the bureau also held an idealized view of working women and seemed to accept the societal notion that a woman's place should be in the home. Secretary of Labor William Wilson remarked on the creation of the bureau: "We are safeguarding the mothers of tomorrow. All will agree that women in industry would not exist in an ideal scheme" (Sealander 3). Some contradictions inherent in the bureau included lobbying for issues like equal pay while at the same time lobbying just as hard for special job restrictions and protections for women (Sealander 5). Some of these same protections and restrictions were recalled as positive by women workers at Ball Band, who did not

want the heavier jobs requiring more manual labor. Yet women who filed the discrimination suit to be covered in chapter five viewed the restrictions as a legal means to keep women out of the higher-paying jobs.

When the war ended the Women's Bureau could not do much to save women's jobs, despite efforts to ease the transition from war time to peace time. Many of the unions had clauses that protected men's jobs once the war was over (Sealander 103, Baxandall 281). The theme of the bureau at that time was that "the majority of women workers had to earn a living, and more often than not, had to help support others." A survey of 13,000 women workers in ten wartime production areas reported that 75 percent of them wanted to remain working and 84 out of 100 women said they had no alternative but to work in order to support themselves or others. Only eight of 100 said they wanted to work because they liked to work. (Weissbrodt 19). This report caused considerable alarm when it was published in the *Wall Street Journal* as men realized what had happened while they were away. FDR's secretary of the interior, Harold Ickes wrote: "I think that this is as good a time as any...to warn men that when the war is over, the going will be a lot tougher, because they will have to compete with women whose eyes have been opened to their greatest economic potentialities" (Gluck 16).

The women interviewed for this project all wanted to keep working after the war and none of them lost their jobs at that point. They did not feel pulled by societal demands to go back home and retreat to pre-war domesticity. Sylvia was one of two interviewed who left her job to get married and have a baby. She took up office work for a short period, but that did not last long, and she eventually returned to factory work. While some of the women were still living at home with their parents after the war, others had married and needed the income to survive. "After the war we were made to feel that we should give up our jobs, but a lot of women didn't have husbands," said Martha, who worked at Ball Band for about

eighteen years. "Men resented women for taking their jobs because they had families to support. But a lot of women had more seniority." (Interview 11 October 1996). Her friend, Marjorie, who didn't work at Ball Band during the war, said that at that time "when men came back from the service they began shoving women out" (Interview 11 October 1996). Herbert E. Smith, president of U.S. Rubber, visited the Mishawaka plant and remarked that once the war was over, women would be expected to make room for the returning soldiers. "It will be to the economic interest of the nation for married women to leave their factory jobs and return to the homes from which they came to aid the war effort" (*South Bend Tribune*, Aug. 2, 1944).

A new category of women surveyed after the war included widowed or divorced women who now were in the position of supporting themselves and their families (Weissbrodt 20). Married women, too, found themselves in situations where they needed to work just to keep the family going. The women interviewed here said they needed to keep working and didn't remember many women losing their jobs. They said they did not remember women losing their jobs until the 1960s and some even commented that they felt the men were entitled to the jobs after the war, if it came down to that. "But a lot of these men didn't want to do these jobs," Joyce said. "They felt, 'Wait a minute, I'm not a piece of machinery, if I want to take a smoke, I'll take a smoke'" (Interview, 17 September 1996). Author Stephanie Coontz, who wrote about the decade of the 1950s, notes that by 1952, two million more wives were working than during the war, although she adds that their jobs had been "downgraded to lower paid 'female' jobs" (31). This happened despite a heavy media blitz to get women back home that included *Esquire* magazine writing that working wives were a "menace" and *Life* calling the trend a "disease" (Coontz 32). The Under Secretary of Labor, James O'Connell wrote in 1960: "When a woman comes to be viewed first as a source of manpower, second

as a mother, then I think we are losing much that supposedly separates us from the communist world" (Sealander 140). It should be remembered that nearly half of women surveyed working during the war had already been working five years previous to wartime, so it is not that surprising that they wanted to remain at work (Weissbrodt 4).

Seemingly unaffected by this media blitz to encourage guilt, the post-war years at the plant were remembered with fondness by the majority of the women interviewed. Several made a distinction between the years after the war until various times in future years when they perceived that the company started "going downhill." Some women marked the beginning of the end as the time mentioned earlier in the 1960s when massive layoffs occurred among women workers when the shoe division was sold. Many noted the quality of the shoe produced at Ball Band and later Uniroyal and commented how unfortunate it was that the decision was made to move the shoe business considering the market for tennis shoes today. Others traced the plant's downfall to the 1980s when the Jesup Group took over. And still others blamed the women who filed the discrimination lawsuit as the ones who precipitated the company's demise.

One could speculate that the "happy days" at the plant in the 1950s and early 1960s were more of a reflection on the perceived "happy days" of our society in those decades prior to the tumult of the Vietnam war and the race riots and civil strife that would soon follow. The prosperity of the country as the war ended seemed to permeate the thick, brick walls of the massive factory in Mishawaka, where women recall working together as "one big happy family." It is interesting to note how many women made this observation -- which has the effect of transforming one's work life into another form of family life. It is not a substitute for the traditional world of husband and children, but it has some of the same characteristics. While the women interviewed were eager to discuss the work that

they performed and took great pride in it, they also appeared comforted and supported by the camaraderie of the workplace. Another explanation of this perceived happiness of the workplace at Ball Band could be that the blue-collar working-class women of the 1950s did not buy into the happy housewife image perpetuated by the American media in that decade -- aimed squarely at the middle-class -- but were content with their own employment and work life. It should be remembered that despite all the talk of prosperity, nearly a quarter of all Americans were poor in the mid-50s (Coontz 29) and work was a necessity, as it had been for poor working-class women in previous generations. Mandatory high school attendance also meant that children could not be expected to help support the family anymore and wives were needed for family income. Anna was the only one who mentioned that she and her husband wanted to be able to buy some of the consumer goods, such as cars and appliances, which were unavailable during the war, but these desires were widespread. During that time period following the war, food spending went up 33 percent while household furnishings and appliances increased 240 percent (Coontz 25).

The image of work as family -- a concept that fits more comfortably within the decade of the 90s -- was repeated many times by women who recalled their years at the factory. "My husband used to say that Uniroyal was my first home. I made a lot of friendships there," said Marjorie (Interview 11 October 1996). She and Martha have been friends for more than 30 years, dating back to their early years at the plant. It was only after they got to know each other on the job that they realized they were neighbors, too. Sue, the only woman interviewed who assumed a leadership role in the union, said she gets sad when she thinks about Uniroyal closing. "I try to just remember the good times. I really had some good years there, and it seems like my better years were before I ever got involved with the union" (Interview 17 October 1996.)

Memories of the little things -- the coffee breaks, lunch in the cafeteria, baby and wedding showers -- all those small daily occurrences, still mean a lot to the women who worked at the factory. "They had the best cafeteria in the old days," said Sylvia. "Mashed potatoes, stuffing, vegetables, breakfast, one man did it all. When I worked there in high school, I loved to have a scrambled egg sandwich" (Interview 4 September 1996). Joyce said she was the person who would run down to the cafeteria with a wagon to pick up the sandwiches and coffee for their 11:30 a.m. lunch break, which lasted only a half of an hour. "They bought me a little wagon because I was fast and could bring food for two lines" (Interview 17 September 1996). Several women lamented the fact that the cafeteria closed when the canteen came into the factory and they lost the home-cooked meals they had before. Jean, who worked at Ball Band for 35 years, said she had lots of fun working in the mill room. "We were eating all the time," she said with a laugh, recalling going to the Vita-Frost Frozen Food Locker, Kuss's Bakery, and Florence Cafe for spaghetti (Interview 29 October 1996). Others remember the various parties and potluck dinners that were given within the departments to celebrate retirements, weddings, and new babies. Some produced a photograph of co-workers gathered around for a celebration of one of the milestones in their lives.

The company newsletter records some of the informal social events sponsored by the factory: garden contests, country fairs, bowling teams, softball teams, and basketball leagues. There is even a photograph of Joyce surrounded by smiling fellow night shift workers as she opens presents at a baby shower (*Ball Band Red Ball*, Jan. 15, 1948). Perhaps these parties provided the women with a break from their jobs, which some might consider monotonous and physically difficult, although very few of them complained about working conditions. Few of them complained about anything at all. Alice, who was one of the supervisors, remembers women singing, talking and joking while working. "I remember during

the war you worked on Christmas Eve, and you'd have your Christmas party right there. We exchanged gifts. It wasn't all work, but work was the main thing" (Interview 13 November 1996). One woman has had chronic back problems, but refuses to blame the years on the assembly line as the cause of this medical condition.

Only recently have scholars begun looking at friendship between women and friendship between women in the workplace in a serious way. While it has always been thought that relationships made through work were less significant than other friendships, scholars have found that these friendships are different, but indeed, important. Some researchers discovered that friendships in the workplace "were often the most positive aspects of the routine alienating jobs done by women in their studies" (O'Connor 161). Other studies have shown that these work friendships are dependent on factors such as number of years on the job, number of hours worked, schedules, or proximity of employees. In fact, those employees who do not have the possibility of promotions or occupational mobility tend to have friends who work near them (162). This was true historically, as well. At the beginning of the 20th Century, women working in factories formed a "group life" that "coalesced around interest and values ultimately conservative in their meaning," such as dress, boyfriends, evening entertainment and work friends (Tentler 69). In such a way, these friendships formed a stabilizing influence.

While the friendships between women employees were important, several women did mention a tension between the sexes that today would be classified as sexual harassment. Back in the post-war years that term did not exist, but their comments indicate that even during the 1950s all was not well. Martha, one of the plaintiffs in the discrimination suit, said sexual harassment was common at the plant. "The girls would be working on the line and a man would walk down the line and hit the girls on the butt. The second day he did it I had my scissors and pointed

them at his stomach. I told him if he did it again he would get this in his belly. He didn't do it again" (Interview 11 October 1996). Martha went on to say that the others girls she worked with thought she was wrong to have said anything to him about the harassment. Her friend, Marjorie, said she encountered a similar situation and did report the man to management. She said she told him if he ever did it again he would be "a dead SOB." Both women said their husbands were not enthusiastic about them working at Ball Band, because they had heard that there was a lot of "hanky panky" going on between men and women. They also said that the women who "cozied up to the bosses" did better than women who were rebellious and stood up for themselves. Joyce said she believes that she didn't get promoted the way she should have been promoted because she was a woman. "If you flirted with your boss, yes. I hate to say it." She said she refused to take the job of key operator because "...the first thing they would say to you is, 'are you running around with so and so?'" (Interview 17 September 1996). Instead she said she learned every job she could because she could serve more as a replacement. "I was only 16 years old and I saw it as a challenge." Betty, another plaintiff in the discrimination lawsuit, asserts that sexual harassment was common at Ball Band. She said many women went along with the boss or foreman in order to get ahead. "But a lot of women had dirty jobs and were underpaid, too," she added (Interview 21 September 1996).

Author Kerry Segrave, who writes about the history of sexual harassment, emphasized that it has been around as long as women have been in the work force, but it didn't get an actual name until the 1970s, due mostly to pressure from the growing and expanding women's movement (1). Dating back to the 1850s, women who worked in factories were deemed "common" and "loose," possibly because of a lack of education and because they were at the mercy of their employers, who could hire and fire them if they did not cooperate. A 1911 study by the federal government reported the four occupations that were morally dangerous for a

woman: domestic service, low-grade factory trades, waitressing and nursing. It went on to state that "the danger was not in the work but in the kind of women likely to enter such occupations "(7). Factory foremen in 1900 felt no hesitation in pinching and fondling women on the line (4). This could be part of the reason that immigrant men felt more comfortable if their female relatives worked in the same plant -- so they could protect them from the assaults and even rapes that were common in factory work in the early part of the 20th century (64-5). But, when women were needed during wartime to man the factories, their moral character was not questioned. "At times like those there tended to be much less publicity given to that idea that work and female morality went hand in hand," Segrave wrote (5). Women at the Ternstedt General Motors Parts plant in Detroit reported that sexual harassment was common in 1934 prior to unionization. "Women who refused to participate in this exchange received poorer work assignments, less work, less tractable machines, and constant harassment from foremen" (71).

The women at Ball Band interviewed here experienced harassment beyond the beginning of unionization in the 1930s and either opted to try and handle it themselves or tried to ignore it. A grievance system for harassment was not put in place by the union until many years later. Segrave quotes feminist Andrea Dworkin: "The debilitating, insidious violence of sexual harassment is pervasive in the workplace. Women shuffle; women placate; women submit; women leave; the rare brave women who fight are tied up in the courts, often without jobs, for years" (Segrave 1). The women interviewed for this project would certainly not agree with Dworkin's strident words and appeared to accept harassment (which they did not call by any particular name) as rather commonplace and ordinary -- but nothing to get too worked up about. Mostly, they dismissed harassment as something annoying that had to be accepted if you were going to work. A mechanic questioned about

his female co-workers in the 1970s admitted that women were harassed, but said "Women should learn to deal with it, that's just how guys are" (Deaux, 122).

The question of promotions for women at Ball Band and later Uniroyal will be examined in greater detail in chapter five when the separate seniority system and the lawsuit are discussed. For now, it is interesting to look at the case of Virginia, now in her 80s, who said she became the first woman foreman at the plant. She started out in the shoe room making boots in about 1945. She went back to work when her son was fifteen and she wanted to begin saving money so that he would be able to go to college. "I heard they were hiring at Uniroyal and we hadn't been able to save very much from the Depression" (Interview 27 November 1996). When she began work, she earned 35 cents an hour. She told several stories that indicated a feistiness and a willingness to say what she thought without fear of reprisal. "One time I reported a problem and nothing was done about it. The quality control man did nothing. I said, 'Come Monday morning if those linings aren't right, I'm going to use them anyway.' I did and they put it on my work record. I would not sign it. I had done my job." The next time the boss called her back, she wondered what she had done wrong. But instead of chastising her, he asked whether she would consider becoming a supervisor. She said no right away because there were other people qualified who had families to support, but when she was assured that the man she was replacing would be transferred laterally she accepted. There were other women supervisors at the time, she said.

When the quality control foreman was leaving, her boss again called her into his office and asked her if she would accept the job. Again, she said no. "I said no because I would be the only woman. I thought if I had an idea, nobody would listen to it." He assured her that would not be the case because in quality control it was important that everything was done right. "He was a wonderful person. He told me that I should not be afraid of making a mistake." She took the job and said she

enjoyed it. "I tried to do a good job and I think I did do a good job." She said during one of the many strikes that occurred during the years she was there, she had to cross the picket line because she was now a part of management. "All the girls, all my friends, I hated to do that." When she first got the job, she said she went to the employment office at the plant to get a new badge, but when she got it back, all shiny and new, it still said "supervisor" on it. "I said, 'this is not correct. It was supposed to be changed to foreman,' " she said. She was told that there were no women foremen at the factory and that was company policy. "I said, 'don't talk to me, go talk to my boss' " and soon she had a new badge that said "foreman." She added that her husband went to his job at another factory in the area and told his buddies that his wife had become a foreman. They did not believe him and asked whether he could bring her badge to work. "I took the page with the job description on it from the phone book, because we had two of them, and he took it to work so that they would believe him" (Interview 27 November 1996).

Virginia served in her job as foreman about fifteen or sixteen years and said she was not given as hard a time as she expected. She said the women would argue among themselves about various things, such as whether the Pope would take over the country if John F. Kennedy were elected president. Several of the Polish women were devout Catholics and she said some pretty good arguments took place, but they did not seem to mind a woman foreman. One time she said there was a dinner planned at a local restaurant by the company because of a job description she had written. "I said I'm not going because I'd be the only woman and I would cramp their style. When they get together they would drink and start telling dirty jokes." But her boss assured her that would not be the case and it wasn't. She said they had one glass of wine and everyone was civil. Virginia credited her success at the factory with her boss, who she said was a religious person who wasn't very well

liked by some of the other men because he wasn't "one of the gang." She said he was a "decent person."

When she was 58 years old she decided to retire because there simply wasn't enough work for her to do. She said the number of people in her department had been reduced and she was bored. She acknowledges there was discrimination at Uniroyal and elsewhere in the area and the country. Years before, she said: "I went to get a bookkeeping job and didn't get it because I was a girl and a young girl." She said she knew she did not make the same money as a male foreman did at Ball Band, but didn't do anything about it because she liked her job. "It was better than going back to the shoe room or some of the other departments making raincoats." She said she would have enjoyed going to college if her family would have been able to afford it. Her mother died of tuberculosis when she was only two years old and she and her brothers and sisters were raised by their grandmother. "I would like to have studied chemistry," she said. "I like to use my hands and my head, I like to keep busy." As a child, she remembers digging in a gravel pit near her family's lake cottage and thought she would have enjoyed being an archaeologist (Interview 27 November 1996).

Virginia's story is a telling one because it demonstrates that she was promoted largely because she had a boss who believed in her and in her abilities, rather than through any self-promotion. In fact, she probably was promoted despite her own protests. Yet, like many women interviewed, she worked hard to keep up with the production schedule and believed in her own abilities. While she said what she thought was right, she seemed reluctant to rock the boat when it came to the male-female power structure so strongly entrenched at the plant and in society. She remarked about a time during a particularly difficult strike when she ended up bringing in her own coffee pot and making coffee and sandwiches for those who didn't want to go out and cross the picket line. Psychologist Paula J. Caplan writes

that even when women have been promoted to managerial positions, they often play the part of the nurturer. "...The working women were enmeshed in the caretaking role, just as their mothers -- working at home and outside -- had been" (98).

Virginia certainly was an anomaly at Ball Band; promotions such as hers were quite rare, but she seemed to possess the qualities needed at that time to work satisfactorily with both men and women and was not resented by either group. She seemed particularly concerned with taking jobs away from men and only would take a promotion when she felt she wasn't hurting a man who had a family to support.

According to Caplan, women in the workplace usually are labeled either "submissive-compliant" or "powerful, bitchy" (143) with very little in between. The women interviewed here probably would fall into the first category because of their desire to remain employed and remaining employed often required trying to please the male boss. But Caplan also points out that if a woman tries too hard to please the boss, she stands the chance of alienating her co-workers, who she might be competing with for jobs or promotions. "... So, after all their fruitless struggles, they have often found themselves without power, promotions, or raises, and also without the friendship and allegiance of their women co-workers" (147). In this case, though, a decision to do what was expected at work every day, without rocking the boat, apparently was the normal way of behavior for the women interviewed. As a result, most of them acquired good friends who made the work situation bearable. Several women who mentioned the amount of "hanky panky" going on at the plant also noted that the women who engaged in such activity may have been treated differently -- better -- than those who resisted this kind of behavior. One of the results of this resistance might have been a lack of promotions to better jobs. The woman, then, is left in a poor-paying position with only her friends as solace. Looking back to those days, though, the women are not bitter about missed opportunities, but rather seem to cherish the friendships they made

and have kept all these years later. Even though the plant in Mishawaka has closed its doors, they still have the friends they made there so many years ago.

And almost as important as the friends they made there was their collective pride in the work produced by their own hands. Almost universally, the women interviewed enjoyed discussing the work process and the part they played in producing the product -- whether it be shoes, raincoats, or fuel cells. They still recall the department numbers where they worked, the various departments they worked in, and who worked next to them on the job. Several commented that the women supported each other in ways that might not have been found in the employee's handbook. For example, if a woman had to use the rest room when it was not her break time, the other women knew the job well enough that they could fill in for her until she returned.

Pride in workmanship at times took precedence over relationships with other women and apparently goes against the "one big happy family memory." Several women said that they had to report someone who let shoddy workmanship go through, despite the fact that this particular woman would be unhappy with her and might hold a long-lasting grudge. Irma, who said she "loved" working on fuel cells, remembers a time she reported a woman who had made the disastrous error of puncturing a cell accidentally with a pair of scissors. "She got time off for that," she said. "It bothered me because it was my cell. I didn't want to be called on the carpet" (Interview 19 November 1996). Another time she said a woman became jealous of her because she had more seniority. "I was a nervous wreck because I thought she had it in for me. She was the only one I had problems with."

Those women who worked in fuel cells expressed more satisfaction with their jobs than the other women interviewed. Most of them commented that the work was very interesting and they enjoyed coming to work every day. Anna, who worked as a secretary in fuel cells, said one of her jobs was to develop paint that

would fit the fuel cell specifications. During the war she worked in fuel cell development and tried to make them self-sealing so if they were pierced by armor, they would not leak. "We developed self-sealing and lightweight ones that could be used in airplanes" (Interview 21 October 1996). The work on fuel cells was classified, she said. Several years later, in 1988, she was called and asked whether she would go back and try and bring some of the fuel cell specifications up to date. She worked there until 1991 when the company filed bankruptcy. Irma recalls working on one cell called a "dreamboat" that was as long as her kitchen. "We had to make 120 percent or the company would lose money. I always made 132 percent, which was as much as we were allowed to make. I tried to make it and do a good job" (Interview 19 November 1996).

## CHAPTER 4

### Combining Work and Family

"I want more time to live. You get old fast enough without working yourself to death" (Kessler-Harris 217). This statement was made by a woman surveyed about her work hours in 1927. It just as easily could have been made by someone working today. Combining work and family: it's a topic that is discussed often in the 1990s, whether around the coffee pot with co-workers, on daytime talk shows, or at seminars for working women who want to learn how to cope with the stresses of daily living. But during World War II and after, few women would have understood the concept of combining work and family. It was not a *concept* then; it was a daily reality much more difficult because good quality day care did not exist and the social taboo against working was strong. The women interviewed for this project did not have the luxury of putting much thought into the matter -- they had to work something out quickly, and hopefully the arrangement was just on a temporary basis. Like women of today, a few mentioned feeling guilt when they left a crying child to head out to the factory. But for those who had lived through the Depression, guilt wasn't as significant a factor as survival. Working was not a choice and in most cases there was much less of the angst career women experience today.

The government-sponsored day care centers designed by the Lanham Act with the idea of helping Rosie the Riveter go off to the factory humming a patriotic tune turned out to be inadequate to handle the needs of the women and small children affected by the war and served mainly areas where defense plants had been

constructed (Gluck 12-13, Hartmann, 84-5). Just as those governmental groups who were supposed to organize women to work during wartime ended up being disorganized and rather haphazard, so was the day care situation. The government allocated a mere \$400,000 to build centers (Amott and Mattheai 131). As a result, most women handled their own situations by using friends or relatives to help them out. "At the beginning neighbors were watching children and there were children that were neglected....the Child Care centers were good. It was good for the children. I sent my own children and to this day they remember it," said a California woman who worked at Lockheed during the war (Gluck 253). Perhaps part of the reason this experiment was not entirely successful was the ambivalence expressed by both the government and the American people about the wisdom of women working in the first place. While there is no doubt women were needed due to labor shortages, resistance to the *idea* of women in the workplace persevered. The official government policy mirrored this ambivalence: "Now, as in peacetime, a mother's primary duty is to her home and children" (Hartmann 58). A vacuum cleaner advertisement stated: "...like you, Mrs. America, Eureka will put aside its uniform and return to the ways of peace...building household appliances" (Hartmann 200).

Because many of the women interviewed for this project continued working after the war, child care issues remained as something that had to be dealt with -- a nitty-gritty practical matter. In some cases, they handled it with ingenuity and imagination. Several of the women said they chose factory work in the first place because it provided an opportunity for shift work that would not have been available in a store or an office. If a woman wanted to work nights and her husband worked days, someone would be with the children at all times and they wouldn't have to hire someone else to help out. Sue, a Tennessee native, began working at Ball Band in 1952 and worked there for nearly 38 years, quitting when the company filed for

bankruptcy. She said she took a leave to have her second child, but ended up going back temporarily because the future of her husband's factory job was in doubt. That was a good decision because her husband ended up getting laid off for two years. "I was the bread winner at the time. There was no welfare. But I would rather work" (Interview 17 October 1996). She said she chose factory work because of the flexibility she got from shift work. "An office job would have been 8 to 5 and I couldn't have done that because of the kids." It was tough work, she said, but one was able to work around the family. She said she and her husband worked different shifts so that one of them was with the children most of the time. Sue said she had a neighbor help out occasionally, but most of the time, her husband would make dinner, give the children baths and make breakfast. "He'd work days and I'd work nights. A lot of people worked midnights because their children were in school all day and they needed the afternoons free. That shift had a lot of good points." Of course, it also meant that husbands and wives had very little time to spend together, except on the weekends, and sleep was at a premium for those working the difficult shifts. Sylvia, who quit Ball Band when she had her first child, expressed extreme dislike for the midnight shift. "It about did me in," she said. "Sometimes you had to work six, seven days a week and they didn't ask you, they told you. I had trouble sleeping during the days" (Interview 4 September 1996). She ended up working the afternoon shift from 2:30 until 11 p.m. Her husband's mother watched the children until her husband got home from work. When pregnant with her second child, she said she had to quit at three months and couldn't come back until the baby was three months old. But she said she attributes that company policy to health concerns because of the danger from chemicals in the fuel cell division. "I would have to say that the company was fanatic about health and safety" (Interview 4 September 1996).

Virginia was the only woman interviewed who stayed home until her son was a teenager before she entered the work force. Her only child was 15 when she went to Ball Band to work. "I felt it was important to be home when he was little. I also think things would be a lot better today if everyone could do that. You miss an awful lot when you work and your children miss things, too" (Interview 17 November 1996). After the war, Mary quit her secretarial job at Ball Band when she had her son and opted to stay home with him for three years. After that, she was asked to go back into work for a special part-time, confidential job. "I asked my Ma and she said yes to watching the baby so I ended up working full time there" (Interview 1 October 1996). She admitted it was hard to go to work with a young child. "Sometimes when I dropped him off he cried and cried. Then I got my cousin to watch him because she only lived one door away and she would come to the house so that my son could stay in bed in the morning." She said she was able to stay home when her son was sick because management knew she was reliable and would not miss work unless it was absolutely necessary. She ended up becoming secretary to the general manager and said she loved her work and would liked to have worked longer if her husband hadn't gotten ill. She attributes the success the couple had in their life -- and the success their son had because of increased educational opportunities -- with the fact that she worked. "The two of us could not have done what we did without it. We didn't have anything when we started" (Interview 1 October 1996). Like women today, each of these mothers handled their child care situations differently and in the best way they knew how. Sociologist Jane Ribbens notes that very little attention has been given to the way that mothers raise their children and her research indicates that women "act as independent social actors within their family lives" (Ribbens 17), working hard to accept their own particular situation.

Yet, accepting one's own situation did not mean that others always did. Discrimination against working mothers was common, according to Joyce, who said she and her husband had difficulty finding an apartment because they had a child. They ended up renting a trailer and living in a trailer court where they were charged according to how many family members lived there, including children. "They looked down on you if you worked," she said (Interview 17 September 1996). She paid a woman who lived in the trailer park 75 cents an hour to take care of the baby while she worked at Ball Band. "We bought this home in 1953," she said. "I had it in my head that I was not going to live in a house trailer when my girl went to school." She said her own family was against her working in a factory, although they would not have minded if she had worked as a domestic. Joyce said she was the first woman in the family to enter factory work. A Gallup poll done in 1936 reported that 82 percent of all Americans were against married women working, although that apparently didn't stop those who had to go off to work each day (Baxandall 245). A systematic bar against hiring married women was in place up until the 1950s, according to economist Claudia Goldin, who said it disintegrated when there were not enough single, unmarried women to fill the labor market (184). As a result of the "marriage bar" discrimination, women had little incentive to gain skills in areas where married women were not hired. For example, a woman might be hired as a secretary or a factory worker, but would not be hired as an accountant (178).

Mary is an example of an American woman who was not atypical -- despite media propaganda. She began working at age 18 at the very end of the Depression, worked during the war, took a brief hiatus to have a child, and continued working until retirement age. During the 1930s, one in nine married woman worked and most were from the 42 percent of American families who lived at the poverty level or below (Gluck 7). Following the Depression, 15.5 percent of all married women

worked and in 1940, nearly 25 percent of white women and 38 percent of black women worked (10). During the war, half of all defense workers came from the ranks of women who had been previously employed (11). According to Author Stephanie Coontz, women's paid work has been on the rise in every decade since 1880, demonstrating that women have always worked. "...No group of women who chose to work in any of those decades ever permanently returned to the home" (162). So, as single women and married women entered the work force in greater and greater numbers, the burden of the "double bind" of work and home also increased. And with the tremendous consumerism in the post-war 1950s came the time-saving devices aimed at helping ease the work burden at home. But Coontz points out that women in this decade actually spent more time doing housework than they had done previously "despite convenience foods and labor-saving devices" (37). New vacuum cleaners raised the standard for floors: now they had to be so clean you could eat off of them (Amott 20).

This "double bind" of housework and work outside the home hit the women interviewed here as hard as it hits women today, especially those who had to work and take care of their family during the Depression. Irma, now in her eighties, started at Ball Band at just 18 years of age in 1928 and retired after forty years there. Her son was born in 1932 and she lived with her mother-in-law to save money. "There were times I didn't have anything for us to eat except beans and soup, two to three times a week" (Interview 19 November 1996). She said her in-laws were wonderful and brought them small sacks of groceries. After the Depression in 1935 she said it was much easier for women to find jobs than men, so her husband stayed home and took care of the five-week-old baby and their three-year-old son because he had been laid off from his job at another local factory. "It was awful rough," she said. "He wanted to work, but there were no jobs." She remembers making diapers from flannel and then hand washing them on a

washboard every night in hopes that they would dry by the next day. Her son was croupy and she said it was suggested that he might not be so sick if she wasn't working.

These difficult times took their toll on Irma and her husband. She said he had a drinking problem and verbally abused her and roughed up her son. She stayed married for 25 years, but then couldn't take it anymore and got divorced. "I was one of the first in my family to divorce. I thought maybe I hadn't tried hard enough" (Interview 19 November 1996). She ended up raising her second husband's two small children and they have been married 39 years. She said her second husband helps her clean the house because she has knee implants and arthritis. Despite the many hardships, she worked twenty years in fuel cells and really enjoyed the work. "I went to work as soon as I could. It was either work or starve," although she now wishes she had been able to finish her high school education.

Author Susan Yeandle, who studied contemporary working women in Kent, England, notes that while women's participation in the job market has increased steadily throughout the decades, men have not increased their participation in domestic duties. "Women are still expected to take responsibility for the young, sick, and elderly in their families, and to perform the bulk of domestic chores (19). Yet, several of the women interviewed here noted that their husbands did in fact help with the children while they worked. It was not mentioned as often that husbands contributed to housework, but several did comment that their husbands would make meals and prepare the children for school and see that they had their baths in the evening. This is perfectly consistent with the findings of Yeandle's study, despite the fact that she studied much younger women. She writes that there is a great difference between a husband doing child rearing duties and a husband doing housework, such as cleaning. Of all the women surveyed in her study, only one said her husband would sometimes wash clothes, and none reported that her

husband was willing to do ironing" (144). And some of the men who were willing to do child rearing duties, which in some cases enabled the woman to work in the first place, were not willing to take off work when the child was sick or off school for holidays (143). That remained a woman's job.

Several authors refer to the work that women must do at home as the "second shift" or the "double day" (Amott 87, Baxandall 336, Goodnow 10). As the number of hours women work outside the home in the work force increases, the number of hours spent doing domestic chores decreases. The difference, according to sociologist Arlie Hochschild, is the women do more of the daily housework that needs to be done, while men perform occasional duties (such as taking out the trash). Also women often do two things at once, such as cooking dinner and keeping an eye on the children, while men concentrate on a single task (Amott 88, Deaux 26). Although women's work force participation has changed dramatically over the last decades, changes in attitudes regarding child care, housework, and gender roles are much slower and more difficult to achieve (May 223).

Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, who studied women's work during the past 200 years, note that even from the early Colonial days, including even slave labor, women's needs have always taken a back seat to the needs of a husband and children. "Throughout the history of the United States, its residents have distinguished between men's and women's work and the respective contributions of each sex to the household" (6). Barbara Mayer Wertheimer writes that if men working in factories at the turn of the century had a difficult time making progress, then it can only be imagined what women experienced. "After a fourteen hour workday she returned to the full responsibilities of her home: bread to bake, water to heat and laundry to wash, clothes to make or mend, supper to cook" (x). It is only natural to assume that with this double bind women did not spend much time on recreational activities, because they had too much housework to do when they

got home from work (Groneman 206). That could be true for the women who worked at Ball Band as well.

Anna, one of four women interviewed who did not have any children, found she didn't have the time or the inclination to take part in many of the social activities organized by the plant, such as dances, ball games or picnics. She said her life was dominated by working and housework. "You'd work eight hours, come home, and you were busy all the time" (Interview 21 October 1996). Although she started work during the war at age 17, Anna was one of the youngest to quit, opting to retire at age 46. "My husband and my mother were sick, my husband had a bad heart, so I decided to take my pension rather than go back to work." She ended up working there for a few years in the late-1980s typing up specifications for fuel cells, an area she worked in for many years. While she did not have children to take care of, Anna felt duty bound to care for her ailing husband and mother, even at the expense of her job; so she quit at a relatively young age. Jane also said she didn't have much spare time because in those days, when an older relative couldn't work, they came and stayed with you. While still living at home as a young girl she remembers working the 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. shift and then coming home to begin cooking (Interview 13 November 1996).

Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Glenna Matthews' studies of housework give it the serious attention that many scholars may have ignored in the past. According to Cowan, the housewife is the last "jack of all trades" left in our society, doing everything from figuring out household finances on a home computer to getting under the sink trying to repair a leaky faucet (5). She compares the industrialization of the workplace with the industrialization of the home and comments that the two go hand in hand. As more and more appliances and now electronic devices have found their ways into our homes, "the kitchens are a locus for industrial work as much as the factory" (4). Cowan writes that the reason for this increasing

industrialization at home was the rising consumer demands that occurred following World War II. Ironically, though, this increase in supposed labor-saving devices within our homes actually resulted in more work for the housewife, due in part to the fact that the post-war housewife was not able to afford help for laundry or child care as women of past generations had been able to do. "As time went on...members of the postwar generation, discovered that they were working longer hours than *their* mothers had worked, because of the double burden of housework and outside employment" (193). "Although the work is more productive ... and less laborious than it used to be, for most housewives it is just as time consuming and just as demanding" (201). While women may have saved effort from new appliances, in the 1950s they shifted their efforts to other areas like child rearing and decorating in an effort to "increase standards" (Hartmann 168).

According to Cowan, the factory women studied here and the wife of an attorney probably ended up doing similar amounts of housework, despite class differences and educational backgrounds (199). Studies have demonstrated that the housewife in 1965 spent on average four hours a day on housework and three and one-half hours a day on child care -- figures that do not differ greatly from statistics from 1912 or 1935 (199). Income levels do not change the figures much either and those who worked outside the home averaged only 15 hours less a week on housework compared with those who did not work (200). And while husbands apparently do more housework if their wives work, the woman remains primarily responsible for household and child rearing duties (Deaux 27).

Contrast these contemporary housework studies with the findings of a Conference on Womanpower held in 1957 at Columbia University called "Work in the Lives of Married Women." While housework is discussed in the study, no single chapter is devoted to it. The theme of the conference was "the importance of women in the national economy" (4) and looked at matters such as how working

would affect children; training and education for women; utilizing older women, and the income earned by women. This quote about housework is apparently aimed at middle-class women entering the work force, possibly for the first time: "... her outside work may make it possible to have at least house cleaning help, that's perhaps relieving her of a task she may hate, while the family receives the benefit of 'clean living.'" (109). Such a statement does not address the needs of the blue-collar working women who found themselves in factory work at Ball Band in 1957. None of those interviewed could afford outside help, yet housework was as much a concern to them as to the "June Cleaver" types that this Columbia study addressed. The conference authors did mention the possibility of husband, wife, and children sharing household duties for the good of the family (112). But it also goes on to discuss in great deal the possible harmful effects (i.e. juvenile delinquency) on children if their mothers went out to work. This must have been a very scary proposition back in the 1950s. "There is no doubt that many families pay a penalty if the wife works...Many children, for manifold reasons, need their mothers fulltime" (114). One comment made by a conferee in 1957 was that housework could be more interesting and rewarding than factory work" (126). That statement would not have been confirmed by the working women interviewed for this project, who for the most part enjoyed their work and the friendships they made at Uniroyal. While housework and child care were concerns to them, the majority also took such great pride in the work that they produced with their own hands at the factory that they would not have wanted to be full-time housekeepers. Their comments were similar to those made by women steel workers interviewed in the late 1970s and 80s. In that study, 70 percent of the women said they liked their job "quite well" or "extremely well" (Deaux, 132). One woman said: "It's different from housework. I get to meet people and learn about steel" (133).

Only two of the women interviewed for this particular study said their main reason for entering the work force was that they were not satisfied being home anymore. The great majority responded that they worked for economic reasons. Of the women who went to work for their own personal satisfaction, Sylvia mentioned that when her daughter entered first grade, she got "bored" at home and went back to the factory (Interview 4 September 1996). Marjorie also said she was "bored with housework" and when her three children were in school all day in 1954 she "wanted to get out of the house and do something" (Interview 11 October 1996).

While feminism was not a popular concept among the working-class women in the 1950s, perhaps Sylvia and Marjorie felt the same societal pull to leave the apron behind in the kitchen that middle-class housewives were beginning to feel at that time. Matthews' study of housework, although confined to the middle-class housewife, devotes a chapter to Betty Friedan's "problem that has no name" -- the general discontent felt by housewives, despite new appliances and gadgets. For one of the first times, an American woman writer discussed what it was like to be nineteen, married, and a mother and housewife. "Until I was twenty-eight I had a kind of buried self who didn't know she could do anything but make white sauce and diaper babies," wrote poet Anne Sexton (Matthews 214). According to Matthews, it appeared that women identified with Sexton, who expressed the darker side of the isolation experienced by many women of the time. "To be a housewife in the United States in 1960 might well open a woman up to negative emotions" (216).

Cowan writes that the consumerism rampant after World War II was not only intended to get Americans buying again after the war, but to entice women back to their kitchens and their homes because no one assumed they would want to be anyplace else. "Almost no one who participated in the process...seems to have doubted that the individual household would be the ultimate consumption unit, and that most of the work of that household would be done by housewives who would

continue to work, as they had in the past, without pay and without time clocks" (Cowan 211). This thought process was further enhanced by the millions of Americans who moved to the suburbs with the idea that the breadwinner would get in his car and go off to work every day while the mother would stay home and mind the house and the kids. Yet, most of the women interviewed here did not participate in this move to the suburbs and many of them chose to remain living within the city limits of Mishawaka -- whether it be within an ethnic neighborhood or another neighborhood within the small city. The black women interviewed lived within the neighboring city of South Bend and one has retired to a more suburban area, but the rush to the suburbs did not occur with most of these blue-collar women.

Women, in general, though, did not want to stay in the kitchen, whether they were working-class or otherwise, and found ways to combine work and family. Coontz debunks the myth of the 1950s Ozzie and Harriet family, which she writes is a middle-class fairy tale that "distort(s) the diverse experience of other groups" (6). Rose is a good example of a woman and mother who found a way to make her situation work. She began working at Ball Band in 1958 and stayed there for the next 31 years, had five children -- the second highest number of the women interviewed. Her household duties certainly would have been more demanding than the other women, particularly those who did not have any children. Yet, she does not look back on those years as particularly difficult, primarily because the children had to help with the housework. She said her two oldest daughters took turns cooking because "you couldn't put them together in the kitchen" and helped babysit the younger children (Interview 9 November 1996). Rose said that her husband worked afternoons and did not like cooking since he had been a cook in the Navy. "He helped with the kids, but did not do housework. That was a woman's duty to do."

Fortunately, she said children were not involved in the kinds of activities they are involved in today, so she didn't have to worry about getting them places. Her son was in Little League and sports in school, but the children could walk to those activities. In many ways, she said she thinks it was easier to raise kids in her day than it is today. "I wouldn't want to raise my family now" because she said "everything is so much more expensive." Yet, she does have regrets about the fact that she and her husband did not get to spend much time together because they worked different shifts for the benefit of the children. "I only saw him on the weekends," she said, "We didn't get to do too much together" (Interview 9 November 1996). He died suddenly at age 66 only seven months after he retired.

friends, in some cases, and at times even family members were divided. While the \$5.2 million settlement was considered large at the time, and although it apparently did not set legal precedent, for most of the women interviewed it was something negative, almost evil, and it has taken on a life of its own. Retired women still sit around kitchen tables talking about how the company was different — better — before the settlement. They say after the lawsuit women were treated as numbers, whereas before they were individuals. They talk negatively about the original twenty-six plaintiffs in the case and claim that they were only "after the money."

The story told by the plaintiffs is much different: they said they did what they had to do despite threats and intimidation from other women, the union, the company, and some of the men who worked there. They assert it would not have been worth what they went through if money was the only motivation: they did it for future women who faced such a job segregated system that a man walking into the plant off the street would start out making more money than the women with the highest seniority. While the job system in place at Unisroyal may seem unbelievable today, at the time it was widely accepted by the men and women who worked there and those who fought it were made to feel they were fighting a losing battle and

## CHAPTER 5

### The Lawsuit

The discrimination lawsuit filed by twenty-six women employees of Uniroyal in 1975 divided those interviewed for this project more than any other issue discussed. They may have had their differences about Vietnam, religion, politics, and the union, but nothing evoked such an emotional response -- nearly twenty years later -- as did the issue of *THE LAWSUIT*. Friends were no longer friends, in some cases, and at times even family members were divided. While the \$5.2 million settlement was considered large at the time, and although it apparently did not set legal precedent, for most of the women interviewed it was something negative, almost evil, and it has taken on a life of its own. Retired women still sit around kitchen tables talking about how the company was different -- better -- before the settlement. They say after the lawsuit women were treated as numbers, whereas before they were individuals. They talk negatively about the original twenty-six plaintiffs in the case and claim that they were only "after the money."

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possibly endangering the very future of the plant. The plaintiff's attorney, the late Thomas Ewald, remarked that the case represented "...one of the last 1960s style discrimination cases, where a company utilized two separate job systems for men and women" (*South Bend Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1979).

Some background is necessary. The lawsuit originally filed by the 26 women plaintiffs became a class-action suit that included about 400 women laid off in the late 1960s when Ball Band /Uniroyal began phasing out its canvas footwear division, which had employed mainly women. The class-action suit of 1975 charged that a disproportionate number of women were laid off while men with lesser seniority were kept. The lawsuit further uncovered a separate job system for men and women -- separate seniority lists, separate employment offices, separate layoff lists, all which the plaintiffs claimed were in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which prohibited sex discrimination in employment). Eventually, the company was barred from government contracts by the Labor Department because of the charges made in the class-action lawsuit, which, according to Ewald, was the first time such a sanction took place against a Fortune 500 company (*South Bend Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1979). After many legal ups and downs (including the death of the trial judge in the middle of the case), the company settled for the \$5.2 million amount in October of 1979. The settlement also included rehiring 400 of the women laid off since the late 1960s and restoring the pension benefits for 350 women who retired after the layoffs.

The largest group of women -- those who lost their Supplemental Unemployment Benefits when their jobs were terminated -- were scheduled to receive \$13,500 each. Another group was to receive \$10,000. The 26 plaintiffs were to receive additional money and their attorneys fees were to be paid. The question of attorney fees eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court and was not settled until the early 1980s. The women had also filed a lawsuit against the union

for cooperating with the company in its discriminatory practices, but that lawsuit eventually was dropped.

The woman behind the lawsuit is now a retired grandmother who enjoys going to her grandson's high school football games. Although a small woman, Betty still demonstrates the toughness of character that gave her the will and the perseverance to withstand the pressures of the discrimination litigation. She pulled out boxes and boxes of yellowed, crumbling newspaper articles and court documents that she has saved in a closet all these years. If she ever moves out of the house she's lived in, she doesn't know what she would do with the collection. It's difficult to believe that this is the same woman who was called "a villain" by the *Wall Street Journal* (Interview 21 September 1996). She laughs about it now, remembering that she was treated well by *Forbes Magazine* and *The Washington Post*. She also recalls that *The South Bend Tribune*, the local newspaper, showed some hostility towards the women plaintiffs. "I had a very strong conviction and knew that the company had done wrong," she said. "I knew that I was going to stand up for what I believed in..." (Interview 21 September 1996). It is interesting to note that there were 5,800 sex discrimination charges filed in 1971 and 10,400 in 1972, approximately the same time this one was filed (DeCrow 90).

Betty began working at the factory in 1959 at the age of 26 and started on the boot line. She said she was glad to get work, any work, because she was the divorced mother of two small children. When the jobs on the boot line were eliminated she went into tennis shoes and marine tanks. After being laid off again she was recalled and was once again laid off when the shoe line went out in 1969. "The male was superior at the time. It was accepted," she said. "I was glad to have a job" (Interview 21 September 1996). But after the Civil Rights Act was passed into law and the company still maintained an "A" and "B" list for jobs, with the "A" jobs being the ones performed by men that paid the highest wages, Betty began

to move cautiously towards legal action. "When the Civil Rights law came about I could see it all in a different light. It was like a light at the end of a tunnel," (Interview 21 September 1996). She said her sister, who worked at another local plant, told her about a equal pay for equal work lawsuit there. She went downtown in 1970 to talk to the Hour and Wage office and they determined that it was not an equal pay for equal work situation and recommended she go to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) office in Chicago.

She and seven other women, who all became original plaintiffs in the case, headed straight to Chicago. Marjorie said she went home and told her husband that she was going and needed some money. He told her that she better be sure of what she was doing because "you've got to stick with it until it's finished" (Interview 11 October 1996). The EEOC told the women they had a good case and Betty retained a Washington, D.C. attorney who was familiar with Civil Rights actions. She said that they first decided to file a lawsuit when they discovered that they had lost their supplemental unemployment benefits while men who had been laid off had not. "That's what really started the ball rolling," she said. "Just like Rosa Parks (the woman who began the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 by refusing to give up her seat to a white man). Supplemental pay was 80 percent of our pay checks" (Interview 21 October 1996). "It put a hardship on people. They needed that money to exist."

Betty believes that she could not have withstood the years of legal maneuverings as well as the pressures and threats if she had still been working at Uniroyal. She went on to work at two different companies, but did not reveal that she had filed the lawsuit. She said she had to cover up her involvement because she needed her job and did not want to be blackballed from other jobs. She always intended to go back to Uniroyal eventually and, she finally did, but not until 1981 -- after the settlement. While she was not working within the plant during the years

the lawsuit was pending, Betty said she had an informal information system set up so that she would know exactly what was going on there at all times. She remembers a time when a man was going through the plant trying to get women to drop out of the class-action suit because of the possibility that the workers would lose their jobs if government contracts were lost. "I knew about that almost instantly. I had my informants" (Interview 21 October 1996).

Betty said she survived the difficult times by "distancing" herself emotionally from what was going on. "You had to be very strong. My stomach hurt so much sometimes." Marjorie and Martha, two of the original plaintiffs with Betty, confirm the strength she demonstrated as spokesperson for what at that time was a very unpopular group and cause. "If she was ever afraid, she didn't show it," Martha said (Interview 11 October 1996). The two of them, though, at times still feel a little afraid and were worried that their identities would be revealed through this project. At the time of the lawsuit, Martha said she got a telephone call threatening to kill her and she thought she was being followed home from work. She said Betty's tires were slashed and her car was damaged. Betty, who acknowledges the threats, said she thinks they were coming from just a few people in the union. She said she got nasty telephone calls, heard some shots in the back yard and had her car's headlights knocked out. "You would go to the mall and be walking down the corridor, but you had your eyes to your back" (Interview 21 September 1996). She said she was so busy trying to keep up with the lawsuit that she really didn't have much time to focus on the possible danger, which she took seriously but didn't dwell on.

During the course of the lawsuit several facts about the company were revealed that showed an entrenched system of discrimination against women. For example, in 1969, 337 positions were listed as "male" and 92 were listed as "female." None was listed as open to either a man or a woman (*South Bend*

*Tribune*, Jan. 30, 1980). The number of jobs open to women began decreasing and dropped to 50 in 1971. From 1968 until 1973 the company hired 310 men but did not hire a single woman, with the number of men at the plant increasing from 58 to 70 percent of the work force, while the number of women declined from 42 to 30 percent (Ewald letter, Sept. 15, 1975). According to court documents, the company physician assessed whether each job within the company could be performed by a male or a female. For example, male jobs included mill operator, service knitter, inspector, shipping clerk and storekeeper (U.S. Court of Appeals, Nos. 79-1791 and 79-2059), as well as management-type jobs such as factory manager, production manager, sales manager and chief foreman. In June of 1970, the company restricted women from 61 departments. Four departments were considered "female" departments and 24 departments could hire men or women. (U.S. Court of Appeals, 15).

"The record clearly shows that the defendant deliberately constructed a system of classifying jobs in which the determinative factor was on the individual's sex and not on his or her ability," the court found. "Although ostensibly based upon good faith, Uniroyal's presumption that all female workers could perform none of the male jobs because of their supposed physical limitations is precisely the evil Congress had in mind when it enacted Title VII" (U.S. Court of Appeals, 10). The court noted eight instances in which the company had continued to discriminate against women after the Civil Rights Act went into effect on July 2, 1965. The company did not dispute the discrimination allegations, but tried to justify the "A" and "B" job classification system based on physical capabilities. The court found that job classification system discriminatory because women had not had the opportunity to demonstrate that they were capable of performing a job previously done by a man (Court of Appeals, 38).

The court also found that women at Uniroyal were paid a lower wage rate than men, based strictly on sex. In 1969, in eight of fourteen divisions at the plant, the lowest paid man in an "A" job was paid more than the highest paid woman in a "B" job (Court of Appeals, 16-17). The court did not find a violation of the Equal Pay Act because it was not able to determine that a woman made less money in a job also done by a man. In most cases at Uniroyal, and at other places of business around the country, men and women did not work in "equal jobs" -- women were segregated in certain parts of the plant that traditionally had been occupied by women. At Uniroyal, women mainly had been concentrated in the footwear division (42 percent of the work force, 59 percent women) in the late 1960s at the time the massive layoffs occurred.

Uniroyal's apparent strategy, according to Betty, was to eventually make the plant an all-male work force. "They weren't hiring more women, but they were hiring more and more men," she said. "There were many women working there who were supporting their families. Why should a man be given preference over a woman?" (Interview 21 September 1996). One case in point is a woman mentioned in the lawsuit who sought, unsuccessfully, to "bump" into a male job -- felt former -- in the automat department. She and the union filed a grievance with the company and an arbitrator ordered the company to offer her the job and pay her the \$4,000 she had lost while working in a designated "female" job (U.S. Court of Appeals, 1-4).

Betty said she still gets a little irritated when she hears comments that people thought she and the other plaintiffs pursued the lawsuit just for the money. She laughed and joked that "a lot of the people who worked at Uniroyal had strong chemical on the brain." She added that she never could be compensated for the amount of time she put into the case. "If I would have had a part-time job at

minimum wage I would have made more than I made on this. But there was a principle involved. That's the way I looked at it" (Interview 21 September 1996).

The issue of occupational gender segregation is relevant here. It is well known that one of the ways that women have failed to progress economically and in other ways is because they have become concentrated in certain occupations, such as nurses, secretaries and teachers. By being concentrated in these traditionally female job categories, women have learned to accept a lower rate of pay. And "... the traditionally female jobs are characterized by the absence of career ladders. There is no progression from nurse to physician, from secretary to manager, from electronics assembly worker to electrician" (Stratham 297). While protective legislation enacted during the war, for example, limited how much a woman had to lift, these same "protective" mandates also limited women's chances of entering non-traditional jobs (Cobble 149). Likewise, this same segregated system occurred within the factory at Uniroyal. While both men and women worked within the walls of the massive plant, women traditionally were restricted to certain jobs that brought with them low pay and little chance of advancement. A quick glance through the court documents in this lawsuit shows that women were not allowed to operate machinery, supervise or manage other people, or take positions of responsibility.

Author Claudia Golden writes that certain jobs within factories at the turn of the century became known as "men's jobs," thus giving the workplace "an aura of gender" (81). For example, women were not considered suitable for the job of "handling the knife" in a meat packing plant. Such traditions, once established, were difficult to break. Late in the 19th century, women were not considered strong enough to be typists (204). "Norms often barred women from various occupations within industries long after strength requirements, which may originally have justified a male labor force, could be surmounted" (81). This apparently occurred at

Uniroyal, where over time women came to do certain jobs, such as working on tennis shoes, while men did others. The plaintiffs began to notice that some of the men's jobs could be done by women and they eventually began to feel anger that they were being excluded from the best and highest-paid jobs in the plant solely because they were women. Betty said there were some men who were not physically strong and should not have been doing the job they were doing while some women were perfectly capable of more physically-demanding jobs. At the same time, she said that some of the assembly line jobs that the women withstood over the years were difficult jobs, especially when the bosses made the decision to speed up the production line or as Joyce called it: "set up the jack" (Interview 13 November 1996). E. Smith 35). Barrett goes on to assert that sex-role attitudes are strong

within Southern factories participated in gender segregation as well as racial segregation. In Durham, North Carolina, textile workers were divided according to various jobs. For example, women did "light" work such as spinning and weaving and men did the "heavy" work such as opening cotton bales and carding. Men were also assigned "skilled" and supervisory tasks (Janiewski 99). A hosiery manufacturer noted that women can work evenings after their children were in bed and their household duties completed. "Thus the sexual division of labor took account of women's specific responsibilities for reproduction and domestic work, while providing employers with an ample supply of cheap labor" (Janiewski 99). Within the tobacco industry in the early part of the twentieth century, black women were concentrated in jobs in the leaf and stemming departments, while black men did the heavier labor within the same department. White men and women had "cleaner" segregated jobs producing the cigarettes (100-101).

Author Teresa L. Amott writes that employers throughout history have used legal and illegal techniques of occupational segregation "to help establish and enforce a hierarchy of sex and race in the labor force by reserving certain jobs for

white men and confining women and men of color to the jobs that remained" (22). While the Equal Pay Act of 1963 could be viewed as a victory for women, it "did nothing to attack gender segregation at work or the continuation of low pay for women's work." Instead, it furthered gender segregation (Cobble 149). Author Joan Hoff-Wilson wrote that the Equal Pay Act helped mainly professional, college-educated women who entered male professions such as pharmacy, law, engineering or medicine (252). As noted above, it was not relevant when the women plaintiffs tried to use it to prove discrimination. The law fails to mandate equal pay for those doing different kinds of work, which is exactly what happened at Uniroyal. Nancy S. Barrett notes the difficulty of trying to determine which jobs are equal in nature (Ralph E. Smith 35). Barrett goes on to assert that sex-role attitudes are strong within the working-class environment. "Women allegedly are better than men at tedious, repetitive tasks and jobs requiring manual dexterity...women are supposed to be more sensitive than men to loud noises and dirty equipment" even though she notes that most modern technology operates without the necessity of physical labor. "As in the white-collar world, traditional sex roles dictate that blue-collar women should be supervised by men" (Ralph E. Smith 48). President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 for Women who try and fight this system are viewed as unfeminine and are "ridiculed" by other workers, as was the case with Betty and the other plaintiffs in the case. More than one person referred to those who wanted to take male jobs in the plant as a "he-she" type person -- someone who is a woman but really wants to be a man. Comments made about them by other women interviewed indicate that some of the hostility is as strong today, while time apparently has tempered the feelings of others. primarily by white, middle-class, college-educated housewives. Rosaly Women's rights were important to Betty, and the other women plaintiffs interviewed, who felt strongly that women at the factory should be treated the same as men and they expressed their outrage and indignation through legal means -- a

common but highly effective strategy during the women's movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Yet, as significant as this lawsuit was to them at the time, Betty said she did not receive the backing of the local National Organization for Women (NOW), although she contacted them about the case. She said the group did not commit to supporting them or not supporting them. "They more or less told us to go on our own way," she said (Interview 21 September 1996). Joyce Wegs, co-chairperson of the local NOW group, said that the local chapter was not even formed until the early 1980s and could not have been in a position to support any lawsuit in the 1970s. She said it is possible Betty talked to a local woman who was a member of the national organization (Telephone interview, 13 May 1997).

While the local NOW group did not participate directly in this lawsuit, Betty and the other women plaintiffs benefited from the accomplishments of the national organization and other locals prior to the filing of the lawsuit. For example, after Title VII was passed in 1964, women found that employers were not enforcing its provisions and it took incredible pressure on the EEOC by NOW and those participating in the women's movement to see that compliance occurred. Part of that pressure included Executive Order 11375 signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 forbidding companies from awarding government contracts to those practicing sex discrimination (Davis 57). The plaintiffs also benefited from the general atmosphere of the times, which encouraged activism versus passivity and which challenged women to step forward and fight for their rights under the law.

Yet, working-class women and minority women did not feel much support from the traditional women's movement. These women felt that they were invisible to a movement run primarily by white, middle-class, college-educated housewives. Rosalyn Baxandall writes that while working-class women do not consider themselves feminists, they do agree with issues such as equal pay and equal job opportunities (334). Possibly one of the reasons, though, that working-class women

did not embrace the women's movement wholeheartedly is not the content of the issues, but this lack of inclusion felt by Betty and the women plaintiffs. White middle-class women who might have felt excluded by some of the other major movements of the time, such as the civil rights and anti-war movements, certainly would not have wanted to be viewed as elitist (Coontz 166). Yet that is how they were perceived by these groups of women who felt as if they were "outsiders." Feminist bell hooks argues that white feminists "could pay lip service to the idea of sisterhood and solidarity between women but at the same time dismiss black women" (9). That same argument has been made in regard to class: the white feminists too easily ignored working-class women who might have had more immediate and pressing needs in the workplace.

These Uniroyal women may not have felt a part of the overall women's movement, but their efforts against blatant discrimination resulted in furthering the rights of all women -- working-class and middle-class. Their efforts served to help begin erasing sex discrimination in the workplace, regardless of whether the workplace was a factory or a hospital or a large corporation. Betty said she was determined to be strong and do what was necessary, regardless of who supported her and who didn't. She really didn't care. "I was confident. There was no way I was going to quit once we started because that would have jeopardized so many more (legal) cases," she said (Interview 21 October 1996). Marjorie said the money they received didn't begin to pay for all the emotional and legal "ups and downs" of the case. She said she did it because of the discrimination. "We wanted to be treated like men for the same amount of money," said Martha (Interview 11 October 1996). Marjorie remembers a reporter approaching her in Washington, D.C. and asking her if her husband approved of what she was doing (Interview 11 October 1996).

The support of the union was more important to Betty and the other women interviewed here than the support of women's rights groups. After all, their personal

identities were linked closely with the union -- they all considered themselves union women. Unfortunately, support didn't come from that group either and, as mentioned earlier, the women went so far as to sue the union for cooperating with the company in maintaining discriminatory practices, but that suit eventually was dropped. If the union had done what it was supposed to have done (protected the women's job rights within the factory) then Betty felt they never would have had a case. She said women had never been a part of local union leadership and the highest position a woman obtained was secretary -- and that was only a token position to make the union look better. "We didn't know until we had gotten into the case that the union had dealt our rights away," Betty said (Interview 21 September 1996). She said the seniority system that evolved at Uniroyal with separate classifications for men and women was a part of the union contract. "The union would have had the opportunity to fight for the women within the contract, but they didn't do it." She said some of the most vocal opponents of the lawsuit came from within the union and the man who was the international lobbyist for the union in Washington, D.C. was one of the people who worked the hardest to quash the case.

In a letter to the Departments of Labor, Interior and Defense, the plaintiff's attorney, Thomas Ewald, noted several instances when the union, the United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America International Union and its Local No. 65, cooperated with the company in perpetuating the discrimination at the plant. For example, Ewald wrote that all women hired at the plant had been employed subject to an agreement between the company and the union that new female employees would be paid lower starting rates than new men (Ewald 6). Layoffs also were based on sex and Ewald said that the union did not hide this fact - in fact displayed the separate male and female seniority dates on a sign board in the front window of the union building (11). Ewald claimed that the union did not

do its duty to represent the female members of the union. In fact, in this letter Ewald encloses a letter from the company's director of Industrial Relations that indemnifies the union against liability "as a result of any court judgment rendered against the Union or the Union and the Company...as a result of any violation of any civil rights act, because of illegal female sex discrimination" (9). The union eventually filed its own suit against the company requesting back pay for the women union members who had been discriminated against.

The complicated nature of this long and difficult case become apparent when examining some of the documents. Betty said that although the U.S. District Court judge granted partial summary judgment in favor of the plaintiffs, when he died the case came to a standstill because then President Richard Nixon did not replace the vacancy on the court for a long time. Meanwhile, the discrimination at the plant continued and the plaintiffs became more and more discouraged. Betty said they made the decision to sue the Departments of Labor, Interior and Defense because of the company's failure to comply with the Civil Rights Act in the awarding of government contracts. According to the Ewald letter, "Federal officials have persistently ignored the company's violations in disregard of their own regulations under the Executive Order, making it necessary for the company's female workers to attempt to enforce their own rights to equal opportunity by filing suit in the United States District Court (1).

Betty said this tactic "really got the ball rolling" and the government began seriously investigating the company and started "pulling contracts and shutting down plants" (Interview 21 October 1996). The plaintiffs did not ever collect against the government, but the government finally took some action and the plaintiffs were satisfied, according to Betty. But at the same time the lawsuit finally was progressing, the company and the union began pressuring women who had signed on as part of the class-action lawsuit to "sign off " because they claimed if

the plant lost its government contracts, everyone, including their husbands, would be losing their jobs. The number of women who ended up in the class suit dropped from about 1,000 to 500.

An article in the *Wall Street Journal* dated Feb. 24, 1976 under the headline "Girl Talk in Mishawaka," is a telling example not only of the attitudes toward the women at the time, but the fear that the company and the union had instilled in the women who became vocal opponents of the lawsuit. "The women who argue that distinction of sex at the factory didn't constitute unjust discrimination aren't afraid of hard work as such," wrote reporter John J. Ryan. "Chairperson Joanna Nix was pert and attractive in a blue checked pant-suit. When she whacked her rolling pin on the rostrum for the last time to end the meeting, she displayed her hands, palms up to a visitor. They were heavily callused. 'That's factory work,' she chuckled, her femininity totally intact."

The theme of the article was that these women were not willing to lose their jobs and possibly the jobs of the entire work force for the sake of discrimination that they did not feel was taking place. Sue, one of the women interviewed for this project, the only one who became active in the union, spoke at this meeting and was quoted in the article. She spoke against the Equal Rights Amendment and stated that the women's movement was not in touch with blue-collar workers. "They're concerned about the theoretical question and have no concept of factory work," she said at the meeting at the union hall. The 200 women gathered at the meeting, which Betty attended as an observer, passed around a petition signed by 125 women stating that they did not believe they had been discriminated against and expressing their desire to "opt out" of the class action lawsuit. Betty claims that the women's fears were unfounded; if the company complied with the federal regulations, it would not lose its government contracts. But she said once she got deep into the case, she and the other plaintiffs discovered the company's terrible financial

condition. "We found out that they were near bankrupt at that time anyway. We found insufficient funds in the pension accounts...They (the other women) thought that by fighting they would protect their jobs, but there really was no security" (Interview 21 September 1996). She added that the same women who chose to remove themselves from the class action tried to get themselves reinstated when the settlement was announced. She even criticized some of the women who were part of the class suit who were not satisfied with the amount of the settlement. She said they wanted more of a settlement, but had not put themselves on the line the same way that the 26 original plaintiffs had. When they wanted to appeal to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals following the settlement, Betty told them to go ahead. "But keep in mind you have to get your own lawyers, pay them and pay court costs...I think we did the best we could under the circumstances" (Interview 21 October 1996). She said she became so familiar with the law during the entire ordeal that one of the attorneys in the case, a professor at Rutgers University, suggested she go to law school. "I was almost fifty by that time," she said. "I was a little too old to be doing something like that."

The strong feelings many of the women interviewed for this project still have against the lawsuit and its consequences perhaps are an indication of the traditional views about men and women that many of them still hold. Yet, some of them express contradictory feelings, for example, extreme pride in their work and a self-confidence in themselves as a result of their work and at the same time a feeling that men should be boss. The most common reaction to any discussion of the lawsuit was that afterwards, women were treated more as a number rather than as an individual. Several of them also commented that they never wanted men's jobs -- which they saw as the physical, manual jobs -- but wanted things to stay the same, regardless of the pay differential. A resistance to change would perhaps sum up what they seemed to express over and over again. Perhaps they resented the demise

of their "one big happy family" -- with men and women no longer secure in their traditional places.

The strong feelings these women expressed about what it means to be a woman and the importance of retaining that important division between the sexes were similar to sentiments expressed during the backlash to "women's lib" at the time when the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated. To the women at Uniroyal, this sex discrimination suit was as threatening to their security and way of life as was the ERA. While these factory women did not fit into the "traditional wife and mother" type who opposed the ERA because it threatened their lives at home, they felt that the lawsuit would result in changes at work that they could not tolerate.

Joyce, one of the most outspoken and toughest women interviewed, went along with her husband, who also worked at the plant, and was dead set against the lawsuit. Her husband also was active in the union. "The lawsuit hurt you because afterwards you became a number, not a person or a female. That hurt being a woman because they had to reclassify every job" (Interview 17 September 1996). She said everyone knew they had an "A" and "B" list and it didn't bother most people at Uniroyal. "The man is the head of the household. He is the responsible person." Joyce became animated as she discussed her testimony against the lawsuit in federal court and said she had to go against her own sister-in-law. "They called it discrimination and I told them it wasn't. They asked me why and I said because we all voted at the union hall at the time we were let out." She said she felt there were other ways to get what the women wanted other than the lawsuit. "It ruined the company." In 1986, the company was sold to the Jesup Company. She said a lot of the women signed off on the lawsuit to save jobs and the only reason the company settled with the women plaintiffs was because of the fear of loss of government contracts. She claimed that some of the husbands of the women who filed the suit pushed to have it continue because they wanted the money. "I wasn't

against separate lists. You could work in a factory and still be a lady" (Interview 17 September 1996).

Jean's comment about the lawsuit was direct and to the point: "It stunk." She said she was happy working there and didn't see why it had to change. "I felt I wasn't discriminated against," she said. "I did not want the man's jobs. They were more physical" (Interview 29 October 1996). The women who are second-generation immigrants held the traditional values expressed by some of the other women interviewed here. Alice did not like the fact that the women involved got so much money in the settlement. She said a woman told her that the company owed the women and she responded: "They owe it to you? They didn't tell you to come here and get a job" (Interview 13 November 1996). Joyce, who was at Alice's house when this discussion took place, said most of the women plaintiffs were not even working at Uniroyal at the time of the lawsuit and were making money at other jobs. "They were working at others jobs while they were trying to collect this big money." Alice said after the devastation of the Depression, people should have been just "tickled pink to have a job."

Virginia, the first woman foreman, viewed the lawsuit in a slightly different way. While she did not call herself a feminist, she recognized the merit of what the women plaintiffs were doing because she said she realized that she didn't get paid the same as the men foremen, although she didn't think she was making very much less. She had already retired when the lawsuit was filed and said she didn't get involved because she didn't want the hassle. She was more pragmatic and seemed more aware of the company's financial situation. "I didn't think they'd get that much because the company was bankrupt. Stocks had dropped to \$4 a share and it was \$37 when I bought it" (Interview 27 November 1996). Virginia, who traveled extensively after retirement, did not express the financial worries that other women did.

Sue, the union activist quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* article, does believe that women should earn the same money when doing the same job. Unlike the other women, she did not feel things were that much different after the lawsuit was settled and said she had "no extreme problems" and was treated fairly (Interview 17 October 1996). She said she had more problems with the skilled trades people like the electricians and pipe fitters who got higher pay than other workers. She is still involved with the retirees group in a current lawsuit (recently settled) to get pension money for the retirees. As a member of the committee fighting for these pension rights, Sue is more concerned about this current lawsuit. "I put most of my years in for the old company and they should have been responsible for me. So I feel like the government, the union and the community let us down because it wasn't enforced." She is bitter about what happened and thinks she earned more retirement than she has received. "For all those years I worked there, don't you think I should be compensated more than \$400 a month?"

While the women who disputed the lawsuit at first glance mirror the traditional, conservative, society they grew up in, they also could reflect a contemporary concern by some women and scholars in the 1990s that perhaps equality with men is not the total answer. While the discrimination cases of the 1960s and 70s certainly were an important first step towards equal rights for women, they remain an important first step, with many, many more steps remaining. Feminist Catharine A. MacKinnon writes that these initial first steps (discrimination lawsuits, for example) were guided by the premise "we're as good as you. Anything you do, we can do. Just get out of the way" (Bartlett 83).

She writes that this approach served an important function in admitting women to "do the work of society," which unfortunately had to be fought for when it should have been automatic. Yet, these approaches do not recognize the differences that both men and women recognize but cannot fully articulate. One of

these differences is an obvious one -- a woman's physical ability to become pregnant. Another difference is the fact that, for some very complicated reasons, women remain concentrated in low-paying jobs. While the discrimination lawsuit at Uniroyal changed that fact at that particular factory, which has closed its doors in Mishawaka for good, in other parts of society, women remain segregated in jobs such as teachers, nurses, and secretaries. And even in jobs where college-educated women are employed side by side with men, they still earn only 69 percent of what their male counterparts earn indicating "that men are paid more than women at every level of employment in the United States" (Hoff-Wilson 252). The Rand Corporation estimates that by the end of this century, women will make only 74 percent of what men earn (252).

One of the most famous class-action discrimination suits of the 1970s, the EEOC v. Sears, Roebuck & Co., speaks to some of the difficult questions of equality that remain with us today. Two well-known women historians testified on different sides of the case. This was controversial in itself because the feminist community gave the appearance of disunity. The court ended up ruling in favor of Sears and the status quo. Basically, Rosalind Rosenberg argued for Sears that women historically had been conditioned not to apply for the highly-competitive sales jobs at Sears. Alice Kessler-Harris argued that Sears did not give women enough opportunities to attain these positions (Hoff-Wilson 259). The courts have used Rosenberg's "lack of interest" argument to explain why women have not advanced further than they have in non-traditional jobs held by men. In other words, women are not interested in the highly-competitive, cut-throat world of commissioned sales (or other typically male jobs) because they have other interests, such as the needs of their families. "By assuming that women form stable job aspirations before they begin working, courts have missed the ways in which

employers contribute to creating women workers in their images of who 'women' are supposed to be" (Frug 285).

The women interviewed for this project reflect the complexities of the issue: while some of them aspired to men's jobs after seeing they were capable of doing them, others remained content to stay put and do the traditional "women's jobs" that guaranteed them a salary, even if it was less than a man's. Job security appeared more important to the majority of the women interviewed, who had set particular economic goals for their families and did not want to jeopardize those goals by bucking the company and the mores of society. "I am not a fighter," said one of the two African-American women interviewed, who earned enough in her forty plus years at Uniroyal (combined with her husband's salary) to send six children through college. Those who did fight the company and won a victory, don't feel like young women today appreciate the sacrifices they made and worry that women may even lose ground that they worked so hard to gain. "Women still have a long way to go," Betty said. "Many times women are receiving lesser pay and not receiving fair promotions. They have to work twice as hard" (Interview 21 September 1996).

The working women at Uniroyal and the sex discrimination lawsuit mirror the society that we lived in after World War II. Author Nancy F. Gabin, who chronicled women in the United Auto Workers Union, called them a "relatively invisible group of working women from the 1930s to the 1970s." What happened to those women, she continued, gives us "insight into the dynamics of gender hierarchy and inequality in American industry" (4). According to Gabin, characteristics attributed to women such as lesser strength, greater dexterity, and a greater ability to handle monotonous jobs were all "assumptions about physical characteristics of women that underlay the sexual division of labor" (11). These

assumptions, to a lesser degree, are with us today as political leaders argue about the wisdom of women entering military combat duty, for example.

For many of the women interviewed for this project, there was no question that men are stronger than women and jobs should be divided according to gender. Many of them conceded that women should be paid equally if they are doing the same job as a man, but remarked that during their years at Uniroyal, that rarely was the case. While none of them would have turned down a pay increase and admitted that they were working mainly for economic reasons, they still believed in a male-female job hierarchy, mainly based on the assumption that men should perform the physical jobs and should be paid more because these jobs are tougher.

The lawsuit illustrated the difficulty of changing perceptions of women's capabilities as well as the difficulty of convincing women to aspire to a job that traditionally had been held by a man. Despite the legal victories of the 1970s, occupational job segregation by sex remains alive and well. "The experience of sex-segregated work has a decided impact on a woman's sense of who she is and what is possible in the life she leads," writes author Leslie Woodcock Tentler (183). The result of such indoctrination is that "the sex-segregated work experience defines the limits of female power in the work outside the home" (27). It seems highly plausible then that the majority of working-class women who worked at Uniroyal believed strongly in the sexual division of labor as the natural order of things and had been conditioned not to stray outside the rigid boundaries set for them.

The small number of women who took on the company and the union and won this discrimination lawsuit were more rebels than survivors. Tentler notes that women in the early part of the 20th Century who were union organizers were termed "deviant" and "risked hostility" from other women because of their militancy (69). Despite harassment, this small group of women at Uniroyal were able to turn a factory upside down. The fact that women within the UAW fought

separate seniority lists long before the advent of the women's movement indicates that these blue-collar women may have played a part in the "rebirth of feminism" (Gabin 186). "...They not only debated the issue of gender equality in the period known as the doldrums of American feminism, but also significantly shaped the agenda of the new feminist movement and contributed some of its principal victories (231). Likewise, the small number of women employees who filed the discrimination lawsuit at Uniroyal were not willing to concede that men should stand securely on the top rung of the factory ladder -- just because they were men. "This was long past the day when women were chattel," said one of the plaintiffs.

doing their duty, being loyal employees, loyal family members, and being content with that. Accordingly, they were loyal members of the union -- doing what was required and little more. Most of the women interviewed felt strongly about the importance of the union and unions in general and identified more with labor than with feminism. They appeared to view class issues and economic issues as more pressing to them personally than gender differentiations. These women went on strike when required, walked the picket line when required, and even made coffee when required. But like many women union members across the country at the time, they did not try to take charge of this male-dominated group, but rather did their duty and went along with what was proposed by the leadership. Some of them may have complained to each other on the line or disagreed with their husbands, who worked at the same factory, but generally they did not try and become a union steward, for example, even when asked to be one. Only one woman interviewed for this project became involved in union leadership as secretary of the union -- a traditionally acceptable position for a woman.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Women and the Union: Making Coffee and Walking the Line

While a small group of women took on the company in the 1970s by filing the class-action discrimination lawsuit against Uniroyal, such militancy is not evident in the women employees' history with the union. Such militancy was not an ordinary occurrence among these women. What was more ordinary was women doing their duty, being loyal employees, loyal family members, and being content with that. Accordingly, they were loyal members of the union -- doing what was required and little more. Most of the women interviewed felt strongly about the importance of the union and unions in general and identified more with labor than with feminism. They appeared to view class issues and economic issues as more pressing to them personally than gender differentiations. These women went on strike when required, walked the picket line when required, and even made coffee when required. But like many women union members across the country at the time, they did not try to take charge of this male-dominated group, but rather did their duty and went along with what was proposed by the leadership. Some of them may have complained to each other on the line or disagreed with their husbands, who worked at the same factory, but generally they did not try and become a union steward, for example, even when asked to be one. Only one woman interviewed for this project became involved in union leadership as secretary of the union -- a traditionally acceptable position for a woman.

A national survey in 1978 indicated that women in labor leadership positions had reached about 11 percent, compared with 7 percent in the 1970s and

only about 5 percent in the 1950s and 1960s (Koziara 205). Only in the decade of the 1980s to 1990s is it thought that the number of women stewards is on the increase, but exact figures have not been collected (Cobble 364). Because scholarship on women and labor has been neglected for decades, reliable historical information, unfortunately, is not available (Cobble 365, Kessler-Harris 1975, 92). That, in itself, is an indication that not even scholars took women and their relationship with unions very seriously.

This uneasy alliance between women and unions is not a new phenomenon and not something that can be explained simply. There is little debate that women's participation in the work force has increased steadily over the years, becoming one of the most significant social developments of the last part of the century. And as their job participation has increased, so has their union participation, while simultaneously the power of unions, due to loss of industrial jobs, has waned in the United States. Author Diane Balser writes that today, despite rough relationships with the union in the past, women are the fastest growing segment of the union population (25). About 19 percent of union members were women in 1956, growing to 24.2 percent in 1978 (26). A record number of women were members of a union in 1997, according to The Institute on Policy Research. The group reported women make up more than 37 percent of organized labor's membership -- higher than any previous time in our country's history. The AFL-CIO has 5.5 million women members -- or 40 percent of its membership. "More women have organized into unions than men in recent years," according to Karen Nussbaum, director of the Working Women's Department of the AFL-CIO. "They see that joining and working together is more important than working individually" (*Chicago Tribune*, February 23, 1997). She also noted that women in unions earn 30 percent more than non-union women.

The "gender gap" between men and women union members also is closing, with 29 percent of men and 12 percent of women belonging to unions in the late 1970s, and about 20 percent of men and 15 percent of women in 1990 (Cobble 6). While leadership positions for women may have been rare during the time the women interviewed here worked at Uniroyal, leadership for women today is on the increase across the country. And women's growth in labor union participation "represent(s) the potential for new strength and resurgence for unions" (Balsler 212). While the "glass ceiling" exists in this arena as it does in other public arenas, women are gaining ground in local unions, labor councils, and on the local and international level (Cobble 10). The changing feminization of unions has had a powerful effect on women. "Their sensitivity toward and surprisingly successful advocacy of women's issues have gone a long way toward undermining the long-standing feminist critique of union as bastions of male power and privilege" (10).

But while these figures indicate that women are participating in unions at a greater rate than ever, why have women been so reluctant to become leaders within the union? Why did women at Uniroyal join the union, pay their dues and regularly attend meetings, but never became more involved? Nancy J. Gabin, who writes about women and the United Auto Workers, notes that women in labor in the 1950s were more or less invisible, with scholars concentrating their research more on the wives of blue-collar workers, rather than women blue-collar workers themselves. "The idea of domesticity and its middle class bias not only masked the ever-increasing numbers of women in the labor force, but especially obscured women in blue collar jobs that were deemed both unfeminine and lower-class" (180). Part of the explanation for the paucity of union leadership positions, of course, is that this "invisibility" was a part of the way that women viewed themselves: women were not accustomed to seeing themselves as "leaders" in the 50s, 60s, and perhaps even into the 70s. While those interviewed did not recall feeling the pull of the media

blitz to get women back home with their children, at the same time, society was not encouraging women to march up to the front of the line and take charge. With all-male union leadership at Uniroyal, there were no role models for women and thus no one encouraging them to take positions of leadership. Fighting such an entrenched male institution would have been a difficult task, as witnessed by those who filed the discrimination lawsuit. When Norma Rae finally had enough and jumped atop a piece of machinery to start a union in her southern mill in the 1979 movie, everyone cheered, but that kind of protest was more a product of the climate of the 1970s and generally did not extend back to earlier generations. Author Elaine Taylor May writes, "The legendary family of the 1950s...was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last gasp of 'traditional' family life with deep roots in the past. Rather, it was the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life "(11). While women may have wanted to get a better job within the factory, their primary concern was earning enough money to help support their families. During that period, according to May, life revolved around this idea of the family and nothing else mattered nearly so much. Certainly, obtaining a leadership position within the union would not have been a top priority, even if there had been other women in those positions to serve as role models. Because union leadership is such an accidental occurrence, it is not surprising that women have not become union leaders (Cobble 381). Women have fewer opportunities to advance through family relationships than men, and few have founded unions -- a path used by top male union leaders in the past (382). Roadblocks to leadership include discrimination, sexual harassment, and views held by women themselves, including passivity, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge of union procedures, and a belief that they can't handle leadership responsibilities within the union (Cobble 385).

Historian Alice Kessler-Harris examined women's participation rates in unions back to the turn of the century and concluded that an emphasis on the family and a woman's central role within the family has indeed affected union activism throughout the years. An official of the Boston Labor Union said in 1897: The demand for female labor "is an insidious assault upon the home...it is the knife of the assassin, aimed at the family circle" (Kessler-Harris 1975, 97). Such sentiments also were expressed by male union leaders, who feared that women would take away jobs that should be filled by men.

While Kessler-Harris mentioned many examples of union militancy on the part of women, including a comment by one union president in 1905 that women were more likely to "hold out to the bitter end," (94) women historically have not participated in unions because they were discouraged from doing so. Protective legislation, supposedly aimed at making women's work lives easier and protecting them for motherhood, actually removed them from the rest of the workers (105). "...These tendencies confirmed traditional women's roles, already nurtured by many ethnic groups and sustained by previous American norms," Kessler-Harris writes. These tactics translated into "special behavior for women...isolating them further from male workers" (105). She said employers did everything possible, including spying on women, firing them if they aspired to other jobs, and playing them against various ethnic or racial groups. She writes that although women did not simply wait around for union organizing, they did not have much success when they tried to unionize (92). One of the results of the backlash to women in unions was that eventually women moved from blue-collar factory jobs to secretarial and office jobs, where they thought they would be able to be promoted at a faster rate (105-6).

With this kind of historic negativity towards women in unions, it is not surprising that women have not made much progress toward the attainment of

leadership positions. Top union leadership positions today still remain male, according to Balser, despite the fact that the growth of women in the workplace has resulted in growth in women's union participation and despite the fact that one-third of all union members are women (Cobble 378). "Women have the vision and skills to provide the kind of leadership needed," Balser writes. "And women leaders are needed if the union movement is to grow, and women are to take charge of their economic lives" (214-215). This growth in women's union participation means that instead of trying to keep women out of male jobs, unions today have been forced to address issues such as child care, occupational segregation and comparable worth, issues which would not have made it onto the union meeting floor in the 1950s or 1960s.

Economics played an important part in the lives of the women interviewed for this project and any discussion of women and unions would not be complete without a look at how the United States economy affected the workplace and the unions during the period being studied. In her book, *Caught in the Crisis: Women and the U.S. Economy Today*, Theresa Amott looks at how changes in the country's economic situations affect women. "...because much of women's work is both unnoticed and unpaid -- or under appreciated and underpaid -- it is difficult to measure these costs," she writes ( 9-10). Obviously, the post-World War II economic boom had a tremendous impact on industry, which in turn translated into jobs. During that time period, three million women were union members (Koziara 187). Amott writes that if that post-W.W.II economic boom had continued into the 1970s, when the U.S. economy disintegrated into inflation and high unemployment, women (of all colors ) would have continued benefiting from the economic growth experienced after the war. "Instead, women became caught in an economic crisis that affected the United States and the world" (23).

Amott notes that during the economic boom after the war, unions worked with management in a kind of "truce" in which business was allowed to grow to increase wages and productivity while labor agreed to keep protest to a minimum (26). But when profits began to decline in the 1970s, Amott said that this truce ended and management began "union busting" techniques such as moving plants to other parts of the country where labor was cheaper, lobbying the government for pro-business legislation and keeping wages low with full knowledge that workers were fearful if they protested they would lose their jobs and thus reluctantly accepted concessions (31, 34). Amott said the techniques used constituted "old fashioned intimidation" (35) and were quite effective coming on the heels of the air traffic controller strike in 1981 in which 10,000 union members lost their jobs. She writes that the efforts of former Presidents Reagan and Bush as well as the tactics used by industry served to "demoralize the labor movement" (39).

Uniroyal was affected by these national economic trends. The discrimination lawsuit discussed in the previous chapter occurred when the company made the decision to move its footwear division to Naugatuck, Connecticut, and thus initiated massive layoffs of women, who previously had been concentrated in the footwear division. Amott writes that employers played on "false fears" and claimed that unions would threaten workers' jobs (35). In the case of Uniroyal, though, the company appeared to work together with the union in intimidating the women who had signed on to the class-action lawsuit, claiming that if they continued with the suit, the company would lose government contracts and the remaining employees would lose their jobs. In doing so, the company made the decision to ignore new government regulations concerning sex discrimination as a part of the Civil Rights Act. According to Amott, capital flight, or the loss of manufacturing jobs to other parts of the country or other countries all together, resulted in the loss of five million workers between 1979 and 1983 (58). Several of the women interviewed

commented that they thought the downfall of the company was the decision to move the shoe division, which they claimed was profitable at the time and produced a good quality product. Some might dispute whether the shoe division was profitable (Smith 111). Nevertheless, the lawsuit did not destroy the company, which survived, in one form or another, for nearly 20 more years.

Uniroyal employees took wage and benefit cuts in 1980, 1982 and 1983 as the company attempted to recover from the disastrous 1970s and return to some profitability in the 1980s (Smith 112). After a series of complicated mergers and buyouts, in 1986 the company was sold to a Connecticut corporation, which went bankrupt and caused workers to fear again that the new owners would move out of Mishawaka. Further concessions were required by workers, who were hostile after making so many concessions in the past. "The union's hostility to contract concessions...can be explained in large part by the sense of betrayal that resulted when top management...took huge bonuses when they broke the company up and sold off the various divisions" (Smith 119). The next time the company asked for concessions, in 1987, the president of the union was found guilty of malfeasance for opening the contract for a vote before the contract had expired. Although he narrowly escaped impeachment, he was not re-elected. The man who was elected the next time as president, is now working for the company. This man is intensely disliked by several of the women interviewed, and was called a "rotten egg" who "sold the company down the river." Some of the women who were strong union supporters lost faith in the union during this difficult period in the 1980s. Sue, the union secretary for six years who even went back to school in labor studies, was disillusioned with what unions had become. "The unions started out being good. But they ended up being corrupt," she said. "It was like the retirees never existed" (Interview 17 October 1996). "Nobody did the employees justice. We worked with a lot of chemicals, we took concessions, we lost insurance." She said the last eight

to ten years she worked there was more "back stabbing" and "stress" than in the previous years. Several women, like Sue, have their own opinions about the downfall of the plant and were not reluctant to offer them as explanations for the plant closing this year.

Many of the women commented that while they believed in the union and participated in the union in the early years, they did not have time for anything more because of the demands required by their families. Even Sue did not get involved as a union leader earlier because of her children. She said her brother was vice president of the union and tried to get her involved, but she said she attended meetings for about six years before she ran for secretary. "I was too busy with the children," she said (Interview 17 October 1996).

The two African-American women interviewed had particularly strong feelings about the union, and one of them, Alma, who never married and did not have children, is one of two women interviewed who remains active today in dealing with complicated retiree issues. She now is on the trustee board for the retirees and goes to the union hall twice a month. Those who were in the union and get together now she calls part of her "extended family." She said that people claim Roosevelt got everyone back on their feet, but she credits the NAACP and the unions. "A lot of people don't care for unions, but it's the best thing for you. You have somebody to speak for you...If you have a problem the steward would try and work it out for you" (Interview 25 November 1996). Gloria, the other African-American woman interviewed, was raising six children and did not have time for more than the meetings. Although she had a car, she said meetings took place after work so that she didn't have to go home and then go back out again. That made attending meetings more convenient for her. "I feel like the union represented us well, was behind us. Not for me as an individual, but for the whole body"

(Interview 3 March 1997). She said she didn't hold office or do anything extra "because I had too much to do with the kids."

African-American women and unions also have had a difficult relationship. If white women were discouraged from union activism, black women and black men were excluded even more often. Like white women, instances can be singled out when black women organized and demonstrated an ability to fight back. Sylvia Woods, a black woman from New Orleans who had moved to Chicago, said she learned from her CIO activities that white workers wanted what she wanted. "I learned who the enemy was. It was the man who owned the plant and kept us separated" (Jones 1992, 235). In 1943, black women led a strike at the Reynolds Tobacco Company that closed the plant and improved working conditions (Giddings 234). But success stories are limited because of the prejudice faced by blacks. "Unions continued largely to exclude both Blacks and women." Mary Anderson, director of the Women's Bureau in the 1940s, said that unions were "the greatest obstacle to women in the labor force" (Giddings 234).

Another obstacle to union participation always has been the difficulty of combining work and family. That difficulty continues today. "If the under representation of women among union officers and staff is to be overcome, the question of how women and husbands of working women are to handle both family and union responsibilities in addition to full-time jobs must be addressed" (Cobble 365). Studies done in 1985 and 1986 indicate that women union members participated equally with men in terms of attending union meetings, for example, but "rarely reported doing steward work outside of working hours" (Cobble 366). Single women stewards were much more active than women stewards with families and more active than single male stewards. Interestingly enough, or possibly predictably, married men with children were able to take on more union activities than married women with children (367).

While women may not have been in the forefront of union leadership, they did a lot of the behind-the-scenes work and the "dirty work" necessary during the many strikes that occurred at Ball Band and Uniroyal over the years. Union leadership certainly took advantage of their numbers and organizational abilities in making sure that everything ran smoothly during a work stoppage. A 1931 demonstration by 4,000 men and women workers in Mishawaka is called "the greatest protest in the company's history" with an estimated 15,000 people lining the streets of the city (*South Bend Tribune*, May 24, 1931). A meeting between striker delegates and the company did list the name of one woman as a part of the delegation. A strike in 1943 apparently took place, in part, because a woman steward was dismissed after she said "go to hell" to a third party as she was trying to sign a woman up for the union (*South Bend Tribune*, April 23, 1943). Because that incident occurred during the war, it was reported that the War Production Board had to intervene. Another strike in 1948 involved the 800 employees of the fuel cell department, which was made up of about 75 percent women (*South Bend Tribune*, June 8, 1948). Strikes and walkouts were reported in the local newspaper in 1950, 1952, and 1953. A woman was given three days off work for getting a cup of coffee, according to another article (*South Bend Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1954) and a steward apparently was dismissed when she attempted to cause a work stoppage. Another reported that 18 to 20 employees of the stitching department walked out and idled 400 women employees over a dispute about incentive pay. According to the article, the walkout was called illegal by both the management and the union (*South Bend Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1954). While exact details of these incidents were not reported, they seem to suggest that at least a few women in the plant over the years were union activists or possibly advocates for women's concerns. Were these isolated incidents? These protests do demonstrate more union activity on the part of women than has been assumed in the past. The few details related also underscore

the "uneasy alliance" between women and the union. Just as the union and management appeared to work together regarding the discrimination suit, in the stitching labor dispute, for example, both were unified against the women's concerns.

Other strikes are noted by the newspaper over the years and in many cases women are shown picketing, although only rarely are they identified. The women interviewed for this project remember going on strike and having to live with the consequences of not receiving a paycheck for weeks and possibly months on end. Many of them remember a protracted 11-week strike in 1967, but they also said they do not remember it being too difficult to survive, with a monthly house payment of only \$69, for example. Some of them remember enjoying the time spent at home with their families. Rose said during that long strike her husband was working, so it wasn't too bad. She said there was a rotation for picketing and she recalls going about three to four times during that walkout. "One time we wouldn't let the bosses in during the day," she said, remembering they all got in a bunch to prevent them from entering. She said the bosses all just kind of stood there and stared at them (Interview 9 November, 1996).

A few women said that tensions were a little bit higher at home during strikes, particularly in the cases of non-union wives with union husbands. Joyce, who became a member of management when she got a job as a supervisor after she went back to school and completed her high school education, said the strike of 1976 was a tough one. "My husband and I didn't speak much," she said. "He was at the union hall all night. I was sympathetic with them (the strikers), but I was not giving up my job after 30 years" (Interview 17 September 1996). She said that during the strike she was given "dirty jobs" to do so that she would go home and complain to her husband to get the strike over in a hurry. "A guy told me to get in this big cement tank and cut the gum out of there. I said, 'this is one time you and I

are on the same level. I'll get in one and you get in one.' " Instead, she said they brought up a girl from the office who had never done anything like that before.

Mary, who was a secretary in the office, which is a non-unionized position, mentioned having a few problems with her husband during strikes. "We didn't always agree because he was union then and I wasn't," she said. When strikes did occur, she said that office personnel got put in different positions within the plant, including working Saturdays and Sundays and overtime. "Heck, I wasn't good at it, but gosh they never said anything about how bad I was or how good I was. My boss would come up to me to see that I wasn't given anything to do that was too hard. I always got along with my bosses" (Interview 1 October 1996). She said the times that she and her husband disagreed during strikes were few and insignificant considering how much they gained financially from their years at the plant.

Although she couldn't join the union, she said the family profited from what it accomplished in terms of insurance and benefits. She said office workers were paid more so that they wouldn't be tempted to join the union. "I never thought of joining the union," she said. "I loved my job."

The labor union experiences of the Mexican-American women cannery workers in California during the 1930s and 1940s provide an interesting contrast to the limited union experiences of the women at Uniroyal. While there might have been more female union activism than suspected during a few periods of heightened union activism, overall women have not stood out as militants at Ball Band or Uniroyal. The example of the cannery women is appropriate in this study of women and unions because it demonstrates a brief success: that women are able to work together to achieve common goals.

In her book *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, Vicki L. Ruiz uses oral history methods to examine a relatively brief period of time when Mexican-American women effectively formed local unions and joined with the United Cannery,

Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), giving them a means to "demonstrate their shrewdness and dedication to a common cause" (Ruiz xviii). Because 75 percent of all food processing workers in California were women, Ruiz writes that women were able to organize women, at both the national and local levels, and were given new-found power and confidence (xvii).

Unfortunately, this empowerment did not last. In the early 1950s, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters took over control of the UCAPAWA.

Probably, the cannery women succeeded because conditions were ripe for change. Ruiz writes that the cannery culture was a "receptive environment" for UCAPAWA organizers, while that was not the case for the women employed at Ball Band when the union began in 1937. However, it should be noted that during this time, immigrant women were welcomed by unions, whose female ranks increased from 500,000 in 1937 to 3.5 million by 1944 (87). All across the country, the UCAPAWA established a reputation for including all sorts of groups of women not included in great numbers previously in labor organizations, such as Blacks, Italians, Polish, Asians, and Alaskan natives (120). "The UCAPAWA/FTA provided an American model of union democracy. It was the first organization to incorporate minorities and women as both officers and members" (118). Through local successes, the cannery women felt encouraged to continue their activism.

"Unionization gave an activist edge to the cannery culture as people joined together to improve their working conditions" (121). As a contrast, several women interviewed for this project labeled themselves as someone who is "not a fighter." Yet, within this very traditional Mishawaka factory, several fighters did emerge when confronted with blatant sexual discrimination -- but that took years to happen.

Another example of union activism can be found among the textile and tobacco workers who organized in Durham, North Carolina, in the 1930s. In her book about that time period in the South, *Sisterhood Denied*, Delores Janiewski

looks at the ways in which women, both black and white, participated or did not participate in unionization. She reports the activism among women that did occur, but notes the apathy, too. She writes that the title of the book "affirms women's resistance but also describes their acceptance of subordination" (7). The story that emerges in Durham is not a simple one to describe because it involves the intersection of the forces of race, sex and class. Some of the black women interviewed were bitter for many complicated reasons, such as the fact that they were excluded by the white union or because the black union failed. While unions were formed for the first time in this area of the South, the racism that further divided the women workers cannot be ignored.

While racial differences in the composition of the plants in Durham and the Uniroyal plant in Mishawaka are striking, the 1930s southern experience is similar in that women did not emerge as union leaders -- but still played a crucial part in the emerging labor history of the time. Women in both instances were quoted as being proud of their union achievements and union reform which resulted in better pay, better benefits, more job security and better working conditions. Both groups of women also illustrate the difficulty of achieving more activism among women union members. Janiewski contends that one of the reasons is that "unions almost never link the personal and the political, the private to the public work spaces" (177). "A union becomes a formal, bureaucratic structure, an instrument for collective bargaining, an organization apart from daily life" (177). Until major structural changes occur within a union and within society to wipe away the vestiges of sexism and racism, she writes that real change is impossible (178). She comments that instead of asking "why aren't women more involved in unions?" it would be more appropriate to ask "why are unions irrelevant to women?"

The history of women's union involvement at Uniroyal reflects women's participation in society. It demonstrates women's dedication, commitment and perseverance -- if not leadership. They were loyal to their union during long-term strikes and minor skirmishes. They continued to walk the picket line and make the coffee, despite pressing needs at home. They gave the only way they knew how because they were "union women" and would not consider doing anything less. Yet, there is little, if anything, to indicate that they fought for the rights of the few black women and men who were employed there. Like the cannery women, they were actors in a drama -- maybe not the lead characters -- but still active participants. In the introduction to Ruiz's book, Sara Evans refers to the cannery experience as "women-centered history," which "does not bypass the realities of oppression, but it also accords women the dignity of being historical actors, of having survived and created and shaped the way change occurred" (xviii). This statement could easily have been made about the women union members at Uniroyal.

Whether they realized it or not, these women were a part of a huge movement in our American history: the shift of women into the labor market. While author after author notes that women, particularly poor women, have always worked in this country, it is only since World War II that we see such great increases. The majority of the women interviewed here -- now in their 60s, 70s and 80s -- began working at the Mishawaka factory mainly for economic reasons: their families desperately needed the money and they had to work to help out. Many of them felt persuaded by the patriotic call to duty during World War II, but remained working after the war ended. Very few of them were enticed to go home and work full-time in their kitchens, despite the media propaganda so prevalent at the time.

## Conclusion

The women at Ball Band -- just like the women in our society -- do not fit into any neat categories. They are not strictly union sympathizers, "women's libbers," "mothers," "troublemakers," "wives," "Italians," or "friends". The only unifying factor found among the sixteen women interviewed for this project is that they all worked at the Ball Band plant either during World War II or soon after. Their diversity is astounding: some had many children, several had none. Many had husbands who worked in the same factory or another local factory, a few did not marry. Several reminisced about their years at the plant nostalgically, almost wishing they could be back there now, while a few expressed contempt for the way women were treated. Most were white, some were daughters of immigrants, and just a few were black. They all had housework to do when they returned home from work, but some had husbands who helped out with the children, making their lives easier.

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While these women were not the *original* working women of our country, they still played a significant role in this huge movement into the American workplace. Just like other women around the country, they went to work in the factories that made the items everyone needed. At Ball Band, they made rubber products such as shoes, fuel cells and auto mats. While the work might not be viewed as challenging to the outsider unfamiliar with factory work, on the whole these women liked their jobs and liked the women they worked with on the assembly line. Their lined faces eased into contented smiles as they recalled the small incidents at work that made them happy: a baby shower for a friend, a sandwich in the cafeteria, even a boss they weren't crazy about.

For many of the women who entered the factory during high school as part of the war effort, they literally grew up at Ball Band. Rosa, an immigrant woman who scrubbed floors at the Chicago Commons, expressed well how a *place* can become something much more personal, despite the backbreaking work done there. "Forty or fifty years I've been scrubbing the floors, cleaning the rooms, doing the cooking, and telling the stories in the commons. I grew old in that building. I loved it like another home" (Sellers 197). Many of these former factory workers enjoyed looking back on the early years at the plant -- not the later years marked by unrest and instability -- but the years when they were getting married, having children, and making lifelong friendships. They are not ashamed to say they liked their work and they took pride in the products they produced with their own hands. With the decline in industrialization and the inevitable shutting down of Uniroyal in Mishawaka just this year, these voices need to be heard.

But just as these women were a part of an immense labor movement, they also were a part of other societal forces that were not so positive, such as racism, sexism, job segregation, sexual harassment, and discrimination. These were the forces that divided our country during the volatile sixties and seventies and, not

surprisingly, found their way into the Ball Band plant. Where the immigrant woman in the early part of the 20th century might have been ridiculed for her European accent, later the black woman admitted to the assembly line after the war was ostracized, sometimes by white women, and a black man might have found himself in the sanitation department as a janitor. These women did not describe their experiences in words such as racism and sexism, or express their concerns in terms of gender or class, yet they experienced all these forces in one way or another.

The way that all these factors intersected becomes more difficult to analyze. The small group of women interviewed prevents many generalizations, but certainly some conclusions can be drawn, particularly from comments made over and over again by various women. For example, the majority of the women interviewed had very strong feelings about the class-action sex discrimination lawsuit filed in the 1970s against the company. Most felt that the lawsuit was wrong and that men and women each have a place in the job market and the two should not try to do each other's jobs. These highly-traditional feelings about men and women's roles reflected the society they lived in and the values that each of them held. Even the two black women, who were very concerned about racial injustice, indicated that men and women each had their own jobs to do and the two should not mix. "That's why God made us," commented one of the women. So, on this issue, challenging the company on the basis of sex discrimination, the majority of these working-class black and white women were united in their desire to have traditional male/female relationships continue. In this way, they did not challenge the occupational segregation that was commonplace at the factory and even spoke in favor of it -- despite the lower wages women earned. The women who filed the lawsuit appeared to constitute a small minority of women who were fed up with the inequality they saw around them in the workplace and were willing to come forward and file a

complaint through the legal system. But this small group of women did not just help themselves; they helped the whole group in terms of pay equality and a more just division of labor.

Racial issues were not so clear-cut, possibly because in this age of political correctness it is not acceptable to speak negatively about people of different races. Yet it became clear that a few of the women, at least, held prejudices about black people, some of them based on work experiences that they had in later years when younger blacks were hired and threatened the way things had been done. It would not be fair to term any of these women as "racists," but prejudice in various forms was apparent in a few cases. While some of the women said they made good friends who were black, only Joyce expressed indignation about the way that blacks were treated at the factory. She mentioned the potato salad story as a way of indicating that she was more open-minded about racial issues than were some of the other women, particularly the immigrant women. The two black women appeared to disregard gender issues and focus more on race. One mentioned the difficulty black men had at the plant and their apparent lack of any kind of upward mobility.

An unwillingness to come forward and take leadership positions in the local union also was widespread among the women. Like other women factory workers at the time, they attended meetings and helped when they needed to, but did not ever consider taking charge. Many of them mentioned that their family responsibilities precluded more involvement. But based on their feelings about the proper roles of men and women in society it would also follow that they did not see women as union leaders. That attitude is not surprising since unions themselves historically treated women more as temporary workers who belonged at home and at times "obstruct(ed) rather than facilitate(d) working women's collective action" (Gabin 4). Historically, both blacks and immigrants have been excluded or neglected by organized labor.

In many ways, the voices of these sixteen women presented more paradoxes than conclusions. Their self-confidence and pride concerning their workplace accomplishments and work history and their simultaneous willingness to accept a lower status based strictly on gender appeared paradoxical. Perhaps it would be paradoxical in the workplace of the 1990s, but would be perfectly compatible with the workplace of the 1950s and 60s because their traditional views were so widespread in those decades. Also, they held strong views about the importance of the union, yet with the exception of one woman, did not choose to become more involved in decision-making that could affect their futures.

While not ground breakers overall, these women's lives deserve attention because as author Kay Deaux writes, blue-collar women have been invisible for many years (vii-viii). They were not considered glamorous or newsworthy, yet they were reliable workers who did their part when needed by either the government or business leaders. They were exploited along the way, but that does not lessen their contribution to our country's history and women's history. Several authors noted that our society's obsession with the nearly mythical "traditional family" has resulted in obscuring the lives of those women who did not fit within this traditional pattern (Coontz, 14, Gabin, 180 ). While many middle-class women were home with the children while their husbands worked, blue-collar women achieved a sense of independence prior to the beginning of the women's movement. They might have earned less than their male co-workers at the factory, but they were a vital part of their family's economic situation. They might have been just ordinary women in some ways, but in many other ways they were quite extraordinary. These factory women struggled with the difficulty of juggling work and home long before it became an issue featured in every women's magazine. They chose their jobs, in many cases, *because* they could have more flexibility in terms of their children. Office work did not appeal to them because there was no flexibility and the money

was less than they could earn in a factory. They were, and still are, tough, hard-nosed, determined and creative.

APPENDIX A

Author Nancy Mandell writes that for many women, work and family have always been intertwined (249). So it was with the women at Ball Band. One could not separate the two areas: they did not define themselves strictly by their jobs or strictly by their families. The black women, the immigrant's daughters, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit -- they all created their own unique "family portraits" (Ribbens 44).

Mary, Oct. 1, 1996, in her Mishawaka home

Marjorie and Martha, Oct. 11, 1996, in Marjorie's South Bend home

Sue, Oct. 17, 1996, in her South Bend home

Anna, Oct. 21, 1996, in her Mishawaka home

Jean, Oct. 29, 1996, in her South Bend home

Rose, Nov. 9, 1996, in her Mishawaka home

Alice, Nov. 13, 1996, in her Mishawaka home

Jane, Nov. 13, 1996, in Alice's Mishawaka home

Irma, Nov. 19, 1996, in her Mishawaka home

Alma, Nov. 25, 1996, in her South Bend home

Virginia, Nov. 27, 1996, in her South Bend home

Gloria, March 3, 1997, in her South Bend home

## APPENDIX A

### List of oral interviews:

- Sylvia, Sept. 4, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Joyce, Sept. 17, 1996, in her Mishawaka home and Nov. 13, 1996, in her home  
and in her friend Alice's Mishawaka home
- Betty, Sept. 21, 1996, in her South Bend home, and Oct. 21, also in her home
- Mary, Oct. 1, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Marjorie and Martha, Oct. 11, 1996, in Marjorie's South Bend home
- Sue, Oct. 17, 1996, in her South Bend home
- Anna, Oct. 21, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Jean, Oct. 29, 1996, in her South Bend home
- Rose, Nov. 9, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Alice, Nov. 13, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Jane, Nov. 13, 1996, in Alice's Mishawaka home
- Irma, Nov. 19, 1996, in her Mishawaka home
- Alma, Nov. 25, 1996, in her South Bend home
- Virginia, Nov. 27, 1996, in her South Bend home
- Gloria, March 3, 1997, in her South Bend home

## APPENDIX B

The sixteen women were interviewed in their homes and most of them were tape recorded, with the exception of those who did not wish to be recorded, but requested hand written notes only. While I went into the interviews with a set of questions, I deviated from those questions when the interviewee broached another subject not covered by the list of questions. This occurred quite frequently, but I tried to cover all of the pre-determined questions at some time during the interview or interviews. Most of the interviews lasted approximately an hour, while some went on longer.

### List of questions:

Work history: When did you begin working at Ball-Band-Uniroyal? How long did you work there? Why did you go there for a job? Where did you work at the factory? For how long? Describe the early years at the plant. Did you enjoy your job? What made it enjoyable or not? What shifts did you work? How did you get along with your co-workers? Describe the friendships you made. Were you promoted? To what position? What was your relationship with your boss? Where did you eat lunch? Did you socialize with co-workers outside of work? Did you work during W.W.II? What was that like? What were you making for the war effort? Did you have any relatives serving in the war? What happened after the war was over? Did you lose your job or were you moved to another job?

Family history: Where were you born? Describe your parents. How many brothers and sisters did you have? What was your childhood like? What memories do you have about your upbringing? Describe your parents' work history. What other relatives worked at the factory? Where did you go to school? How much education did you receive? Did your family speak English? If not, how difficult was life here in the United States? What does your nationality mean to you? How important was it to become Americanized? What pressures did you feel? How important was it to retain your ethnic identity? How did your family do that?

**Work and family:** How did you manage to combine work and family? How difficult was it? What child care arrangements did you have? Did relatives help you with the children? How did your husband help with children or housework? What was the feeling toward women who worked in the 1940s, 50s and 60s? How important was it that your house was clean? Did your husband work at Ball Band, at another factory, or at another job?

**The union and the lawsuit:** Did you belong to the union? What union activities did you participate in? Did you try to become a steward at any time? Why or why not? Did you consider running for a union office? Why or why not? What does the union mean to you? Did your image of the union change over the years? In what ways? What did the union accomplish for you? What complaints do you have about the union? Did you participate in the sex discrimination lawsuit? Why or why not? What did you think of the lawsuit? What did you think of the women who filed the lawsuit? What was it like at the plant during the time when the lawsuit was in the court system? What was it like after the settlement? What did the lawsuit mean to you?

**Working women:** Why did you go to work in the first place? Was it a necessity? How did you feel about the women's movement of the 1970s? Was it important to you or relevant? Why or why not? Did you feel included in that movement? How do you feel about equal rights? Equal pay for equal work? Should men earn more than women? Did you want to stay home with your children or not? Did you feel any discrimination because you were a woman? Did you encounter any sexual harassment?

**Racial issues:** Did you feel discriminated against at Uniroyal because of your color? How many other blacks worked there? Why so few? What was it like being a minority in this particular factory setting? Were you promoted the same as white women? Did you feel excluded from social events? How important was the union to you?

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