Carrie Fornwalt

My mom worked at H. D. Bob in Montgomery setting pockets in army shirts. She also sewed at home. She taught me to sew and taught my 3 sisters. One of my sisters worked in a sewing factory. She worked for Bobby Brooks. She still sews and I still sew at home.

I started at Weldon in Muncy in 1956. When shop closed Weldon provided 2 buses to take employees to the Williamsport factory. We were not welcomed with open arms by the Williamsport workers who feared we would take away their jobs. The women from Muncy were trained to work hard and not goof off. Some of the city girls would simply leave their jobs in the afternoon and go downtown to shop and some were fired. Eventually it all settled down and we all got used to each other. While we all socialized at work, we did not do so after work hours. We were too tired after a long day of work and a long bus ride home.

I started sewing in the trouser department. The factory in Williamsport had 5 floors. First floor was offices, the cafeteria and the warehouse. Second floor was shipping. Third floor was trousers. Fourth floor was sewing, pressing and samples. The cutters and patternmakers were on the fifth floor – they were men – and the embroidery machines, which were run by women. The engineers and mechanics were men of course.

Elmer, the supervisor, put me on the floor in the trouser department. First I was a floor lady, then an assistant supervisor and then a supervisor for the whole floor. There were probably 100 machines on the floor. I had to learn all the operations because I had to train the operators. I would watch and figure out who was the best worker on each job and then I would watch them carefully. At night when everyone went home, I’d sit down at a machine and learn the jobs.

Over the years Weldon plants in Dushore, Lopez, and Muncy closed. The managers always watched the workers to see who had good ‘people’ skills – getting along well with people and getting the job done. I fit the bill. When the company decided to close the Williamsport shop, I was chosen to help close the plant. I was very good at this job and in 1983 I went the parent company plant in Virginia and in 1987 I helped close the three plants there. Then I went to work in one of their plants in Costa Rica for a few years.