

**Interview with Lawrence Hood  
Interviewed By Susan Hawes  
Interviewed on June 6-11, 1979  
At 3643 Mauvin Avenue**

**Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project**

**Transcribed by Katie Derr and Jessie Grow  
Anthropology 640, October 2005**

Tape 2 - June 11, 1979

SH = Susan Hawes

LH = Lawrence Hood

SH: [unclear] Heritage Project in the Hampden Woodberry community. The interviewee is Mr. Lawrence Hood. The interviewer is Susan Hawes. Today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1979. We're at 3643 **Mauvin** Avenue<sup>1</sup>.

[Long period of tape silence]

SH: Go ahead. I'm sorry. Would you start by explaining your job again, because we didn't record that last bit.

LH: When starting to make the rubber?

SH: Yeah. How they get the rubber. [unclear]

LH: Well, they come in about three hundred pound blocks. Well, there's so much rubber to a batch. Then you have to cut the rubber. They had a machine – oh, a big machine with big blades on. [Unclear] right straight down to the block and cut it off in oh, I guess maybe eight pieces. That's how it was cut, so it wouldn't be too hard to lay up and put it in batches, you see. Then you put the lampblack, sulfur, and I forget what the other stuff was, two or three other stuff. And they went to a [bambury](#).

SH: What's a **bambury**?

LH: A big machine that mixed it all up. The raw rubber and the lampblack, and everything. Mixed it all in one batch. Then after it was running so long, then they dropped it down on the mill. The mill was right underneath of it. **Bambury** was on the second floor and the mill was on the first floor. They dropped it down, down a chute. It was going to that mill. Then we went around the mill, mixed it up more. Then a feller went down there. He swiped it off a big slab. Then we had a feller we called "dipper." Well, he dipped in this tank with some kind of a powder mixed up in the water. I forget what it's called anymore. Then he opened up one latch so it would cool off, so it wouldn't stick together.

LH: If he didn't it would all stick together and be one big piece again. Then from there he put it on a big orange skid. Take the back pieces, you know and then they marked it "package for tires," make treads for tires. That was all on the first floor. [Laughs] And, uh, they run that on a Monday, they run that on a Monday. They stopped everybody and just ran tread for the tire builders on the third floor.

SH: What they do Tuesday and Wednesday?

LH: Well, we run them up on a Monday, to build tires. Unless it runs short then we run some maybe the last part of the week, but they never did run short, they were always running up for tire builders.

SH: So if you mixed batches on Monday, what did you do for the rest of the week?

LH: Made other batches, for different, like inner tubes. Made wheelbarrow tire and we ran some other stuff there that goes in with the treads of tires. That was clean rubber. Oh, there's a lot. I can't think of all of it, but, my job was a compound man, that's where I worked. It was interesting for them. Then...

SH: Well, I know you said it was dirty, and you didn't like that very much. Besides dirt, what were the conditions like, otherwise? How was safety?

LH: Well, there wasn't too much safety.

SH: How's that?

LH: Because if you got caught in one of them mills, they didn't shut off right away. But I never heard nobody getting hurt in the mill, [unclear] mill. But I worked on a, ooh, what's it called, now. **Fellow** got hurt there with a, uh, I told you about that. He got his arm caught, tore all his skin from the elbow. Off his fingers and all.

SH: And that was while you were working there?

LH: Yeah.

SH: What was he working in? With what?

LH: He was working in the mill room. We covered this nylon, or whatever you call it, with rubber. And he was working with me, and I was telling him, I say, don't get your fingers too close to that roller cause if it grabs a hold of you, too bad. That thing won't stop right away. And it didn't. Before it stopped it was up to his elbow. And when he pulled it out, he pulled all the meat and the skin off his fingers. I went over to the hospital with him. There weren't nobody else.

SH: What did the company do for him?

LH: Oh, he got lots of money out of that. I think he had enough to run a filling station. Bought a filling station.

SH: What about the other conditions? How was the air in there? Was the air alright?

LH: Yeah it wasn't too bad. They had plenty of windows. We opened them up.

SH: Heat?

LH: Oh yeah, heat. Yeah, not as hot as the radiator plant. That was all heat. But after the war was over I went back to my old job. But, uh-

SH: Was there a union at **Chenuet**?

LH: No, not the time I worked there. Afterwards they had a union; after I left there they finally got a union in there.

SH: What about the boss-

LH: Well, they didn't last too long after, after I [unclear]. Oh, maybe a year or two. Then the bottom fell out. Then another company from Pennsylvania took over, after Mr. Schindley died. I don't know what they doing down there now. Some of the parts of it are working. I don't know if they make any tires or not.

LH: Whatever they making, I don't know. Cause that one time they was taking a lot of machinery out of there.

SH: Well, how would you compare working at Chenuet to working at the mill? Which job did you like better?

LH: Oh, I liked it more at the mill. I could have a lot more fun. 'Cause you couldn't fool around down there, like you did in a mill.

SH: What about the bosses?

LH: Boss's fair. As long as you done your work they didn't bother ya, but...

SH: At **Chenuet**.

LH: Yeah, that's right. But I got in trouble with one boss, one time. I was on the swing shift. Worked eight hours during the day, then a second shift eight hours, and the last shift eight hours. Couple times I went to work on the last shift and they wouldn't have nothing to do for you. Then you have to come back. Couple times they called me up four o'clock in the morning. I went in, to work, and I said, "What we gonna do today?" "Sweep the floor." Four o'clock and

they had to get somebody out of bed to come in and sweep the floor. Well, I didn't last too long after that. I got out.

SH: So the, they didn't make you stay working there anymore because of the war?

LH: The war was about over then. Then things were getting, what you call it, tight. I liked it at the roller company.

SH: Tell me about it - can you spell that?

LH: **Heragin**?

SH: The roller company. What did -?

LH: Printing the lithograph. Covered rollers, they covered rollers for printing lithograph-

SH: What was your job?

LH: -Like in **eighteen houses**. Huh? I was a compound man there.

SH: How'd that work?

LH: Well, you mixed batches of glue up. Glycerin, glue, [unclear]. Stuff to make the glue for batches of glue up to cover the rollers. Then they started running rubber. Now I ain't been down there for, I guess, forty years now. We was doing most for all rubber, cause in hot weather it, when they run those presses real bad, real fast, rollers would start melting, and then they'd have trouble.

SH: Was there a union there?

LH: No. Not a union.

SH: Not in the whole thirty-five years you were there?

LH: Nope, no union at all.

SH: Did that ever bother you?

LH: Nope, didn't bother me.

SH: Well, what if you had a problem?

LH: If you had a problem how would you take care of it there if there was no union?

LH: If you didn't like it, you just get out, that's all. Same as any place else. Didn't have a union, you didn't like the work, quit. Go get another job. Well, I got along with them alright. I

was made foreman there the last few years that I was there. But I didn't care a whole lot for that either.

SH: Why not?

LH: You had to take all responsibility for the other people. If they didn't really work, you caught the devil for it. I wasn't too good either. And you didn't want to run to the big boss all the time and tell him. They lose their job or something like that. I didn't want to do that. I wasn't gonna do that to another man. Then they started getting **cull** with me over at **Genteel** [unclear]. Alas, I didn't like that either.

SH: Did they ever have colored people working in the mills, at Hoopers?

LH: When I worked there? Nope.

SH: What about **Chenuet**?

LH: Chenuet? I think they had a couple truck drivers and one or two, I think, worked inside the mill. Like a yard gang. But I don't think they worked in making tires or anything like that. I never seen none. [Cough] Most of them were white and while they made inner tubes for tires, airplanes tires. They had girls working. They had some girls making wheelbarrow tires, they were small. Only small tires like that.

SH: What did you like about Harigan's, the roller company?

LH: Well, I liked it. They treated us alright and we got paid for all hollidays. And clean place to work, that's one thing I liked, that it was clean. And they, to make it be clean too, you know what they done?

SH: What?

LH: Around the factory? About that far from the wall out, they painted it all white. All around the building, on each floor and we kept that clean. Same way with toilets. One man had one day, one day a week to keep the dressing room and toilets and all clean.

SH: Everybody had one day that they did that?

LH: Yeah, they each had a turn each day to do it. Went around and it started over again, all the way around. And they never laid you off it got slack. That's one good thing. They give you a paint brush to paint the building, same as I said, paint around the floors. If the paint started wearing off, paint over it when you had time to do it, 'stead of laying you off. That was a nice place. And then you get paid when you was sick, something like a salary. If, if you were sick, you still got your pay. That's one thing I liked about it.

Didn't pay a whole lot of money when I went there, 'cause I went there when I was about nineteen or twenty years old. I was just married.

SH: You must have gone there straight from the mill, right? [unclear] Why did you go from the mill?

LH: More money, yes.

SH: More money?

LH: It wasn't a lot more, but nobody made any great money when I was a kid anywhere around here, till later on, years when they started the union stuff. And the other place, they had to pay a little bit more money when the union down in one place, the other place, they all flocked to there to get another job to be in the union and get more money. So, they raised your pay up. Sometimes you get five, ten dollar a week raise, when I worked at the roller company.

SH: How could you better yourself in the roller company, if you wanted to?

LH: I was made foreman.

SH: How did you do that? Why do you think they made you a foreman?

LH: Well, I caught on to the work pretty good, and the fellow who was boss, foreman, he died, and they gave me his job. When I left, when I retired, well, another young fellow took my place.

SH: Did you think you were gonna be the foreman? Did you try to be a foreman?

LH: Oh, yeah. I knew I was gonna be one when this feller got sick. They told me if anything happened to him, I'd be next in line for it.

SH: Did you have good times at the roller company, with the other people you worked with?

LH: Oh, yeah.

SH: How was it-

LH: We used to go out different places, fishing trips and, out around the park, gang of us and go down to the ocean, for a couple days.

SH: Were there a lot of people from here who worked at the roller company?

LH: There was four or five worked from out here at the roller company. Then the rest of them was in town. It was scattered around.

SH: Roller company was in town?

LH: Roller company was on Guilford Avenue and Saratoga Street, where I told you **Wealthie's** Black Bottle was, it's still there. They tore everything down but that, now. Even tore the whole

[unclear] out we used to run over. Number one street car used to run over to [unclear]. The man that owned the roller company, Mr. Ford, he worked on that, and when they tore that down, that's all he done was sat and stare, at a big door. Oh, why'd [unclear]. Used to open it up, air in. He sat there watch them tear old build, old stacks and all down cause he helped them build it. Yeah, he was a good old man, Mr. Ford. Well, after he died, then, it wasn't so hot working there. Boy took it over.

SH: The roller company?

LH: He pushed you too much. Yep.

SH: So you knew Mr. Ford?

LH: Oh yeah.

SH: How'd that happen? How did you meet him?

LH: He the boss that I worked for. He used to live right down here on Old Woodbury Avenue, that it was called before they changed it.

SH: Your boss or Ford?

LH: Yeah. No, **Gepheart** was my foreman.

SH: **Gepheart**?

LH: **Gepheart**. He moved out. He lived down on Druid Park Drive. It was called Old Woodbury Avenue then. Now when I, when I went to work, I used to go down to **Bellmore [Baltimore?]** and catch the, catch the train and go to **Calvert** Street station, then walk two blocks down and go to work. Now he might get off on time, come back on the train, but I had walk from **Calvert** station up here, cause there wasn't no buses or nothin'.

SH: Was it a big place, the roller company? Were there a lot of men working there? How many-

LH: No, wasn't too many. Let's see. One, two, three, four, five, six, about eight of us.

SH: In the whole company?

LH: That's with two girls working in the office and Mr. Ford and his two sons worked in the office. I mean in the factory that's about all it was. 'Bout eight of us. And the two truck drivers, you don't count them 'cause they drove trucks. But they never worked inside. They delivered the rollers and bring the old ones back to be trimmed off and redone over again. They never threw them away, none of the rollers, they never threw none away, unless they was all bent up or something, you couldn't straighten them or nothin'.

SH: Did you feel good about what you were making there? Did you feel like your-

LH: At that time?

SH: Mm-hmm.

LH: Yeah, oh yeah.

SH: And, you worked at the radiator company sometime, right?

LH: I worked there not too long.

SH: Why didn't you stay there very long?

LH: Too many hours of hard work.

SH: What made it hard? The radiator company is right down here.

LH: You know where the Pepsi-cola building is, that's where it used to be. That's all new building now. Used to be a rag factory in there too. It burnt out. The radiator plant was in there first, then the rag, after they got out, I don't know what happened to them, that was an out of town concern, too, from Pennsylvania.

And they moved, then the rag factory moved in. I don't know how that ever caught on fire, don't know whether somebody was smoking, or how, but they caught on fire and it burnt it all out. Then Pepsi-cola come along and bought it and put their building up.

SH: What about the-

LH: The **Chenuet** was burnt out too-

SH: It did-

LH: -at one time.

SH: Not while you were there.

LH: No, it was 'fore I was there.

SH: What made the radiator work hard?

LH: Well, that was all hard work there, anyway. You know how heavy these radiators are. They built small ones like this, up to that high and some of 'em were long as this couch.

SH: So you had to lift them and carry them around.

LH: After they poured 'em, that what I'd say was a hard job, and hot!

SH: Mmm.

LH: They'd pour it in sand. They had these forms that make the radiators, and they had sand after you - roll it in the sand and after they poured it, so many hours after that, you have to dig 'em out and shake 'em out and get all the sand out of 'em. That was a really hot job. Burn yourself.

SH: Why did you take it in the beginning?

LH: Well, I was running the oven for **corers** to make radiators. Of course that was a easy job compared to shakin' out, but, they had a hard time keeping men on that shift at night, cause it was all night work, shakin' out. They'd pour all this in the daytime and by the time the men come to work at nighttime, it'd be cooled down enough they could shake 'em out, see.

SH: Were there a lot of people--from here who worked there?

LH: At times-yeah, was right smart of fellows who worked from here, not from here, some of 'em worked from here but most of them was from Hampden and out of town. They had a right smart men [cough] working at the radiator.

SH: Was that a big place?

LH: Big as Pepsi-cola, you seen that building?

SH: How many people do you think worked there?

LH: Oh, I don't know. They had two shifts. They two shifts workin' there.

SH: You say fifty?

LH: Fifty to a clip? Oh, they had more than fifty at a clip.

SH: Maybe a hundred or so?

LH: I imagine seventy-five to a hundred on each shift. 'Cause, yes, they had to have men unload cars, pig iron and all that stuff. It come in and it melted and it - They used big bores and melt it and it come out real white, that's how hot it was. And they had tracks. After it come out at [unclear] below, in that pipe and a man had to push that thing around the track. That's why I tell you when I seen that fellow get burned, that was enough for me.

SH: You saw somebody get burned?

LH: He stumbled over something and that pile of hot stuff went all over him. I don't know whether he lived or not.

SH: They have fringe benefits there?

LH: I couldn't tell you whether they did or not, at that time.

SH: Was there a union there?

LH: No union, nope. I was never worked at a place they had a union. After I got away from them they start a union. Well, I don't believe in unions anyway.

SH: Oh? How's that?

LH: I don't know, tell you the truth. One thing, poor people don't belong to a union. They're the ones that suffer. They make the money, that's true they have to pay dues, but they make money and go on a strike and how long on the strikes sometime? You see how long some of 'em are on strike and then they raise the price and the poor people have to pay, me and you, the same as a man making twelve dollars an hour. You make three dollars an hour. You got pay the same price for a loaf of bread and meat, stuff you got to pay the same price. And there's a lot of poor people who couldn't do that work and couldn't get any meat. So they was out of luck, that's why I don't believe in a union. I don't believe in 'em now. 'Cause there are a lot of people right now on strike, like truckers now, on strike. Well, they too much after more money but they're after [unclear] runner truck. Whatever striking farmer is out of luck. I heard last night where if they don't soon go off with fields of stuff, gonna go to waste. Tomatoes and all down, down, way down along Virginia, they can't even ship 'em.

For the money part, that ain't no good. Not only poor people they, when they go on strike the other people have to strike, like the steel company. When they went on strike, **Dozen** Steel laid thousands and thousands of men off, and they belonged to a union too, but they still had to pay their dues and didn't get no benefits, less you went, what do you call it, unemployment? Who pays for that? The poor people. Union didn't pay, see, that's what I mean. Union does no good anyway. They ought to cut everybody back equal, all of 'em. And everybody would get along. Not this man makes thirty dollars a day and the other man will make ten, that, that ain't right.  
[background siren noises]

SH: Well, tell me something. After all your jobs, you know, you had a lot of chance to try different things, what do you think makes a job a good job for you?

LH: Good job for me right now?

SH: Or, in, what do you think makes a job good for anybody, but, you know, you're the person who's saying this so, it's for you, but, you know, what makes a job something that you really like?

LH: Depends what kind of job you got and if you like it, you'll stick to it. But if you go into a factory and boss gives you a job, you don't like it, he ain't gonna worry about it. And he sees you ain't gonna do it, so he's gonna lay you off.

LH: That's the same way down at the toothbrush factory. They got women working there, they getting colored in there, my wife tells me now, they got colored in there. And they don't care, they ruin more brushes than they do make 'em. So what.

SH: Well, what-

LH: If you like a job, it's alright-

SH: What makes you like a job?

LH: I liked the job.

SH: What makes you like a job or not like a job, do you think?

[End of Tape 2]

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<sup>i</sup> There is no Mauvin Avenue in Baltimore, nor is there any street in Hampden that sounds like Mauvin.