

**Interview With Loice Foreman
Interviewed By Susan Haws
Interviewed on June 26, 1979
At 3208 Kedwick Road, Baltimore, Maryland**

Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project

**Transcribed and Edited by Miriam Bunow, Meghan Markey, Shaun Dotterer,
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Loice Foreman – LF
Susan Haws – SH
Unidentified Third Person – UTP

SH: Conducted for the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project in the Hampden Woodbury community. The interviewee is Mrs. Charles Foremen. The interviewer is Susan Haws. Today is the 26th of June 1979, and we're at 3204 Keswick Road [unclear background conversation]. Mrs. Foremen, last time we talked, you told me that you lived in Remington when your sister was working in the mills and you were able to quit school so that you could work in the mill. How did that happen? Why did you quit school?

LF: Because I thought I had to work because she went to work. I had a dress on, ready to go. I was supposed to go to school but I didn't go. I went and got a job and went to work.

SH: How were you allowed to do that?

LF: Didn't have to have permits.

SH: What did your mother think about that?

LF: Oh, she didn't want me do it, but I cried, and she let me keep on going. But if I stayed home a while I had to go back to school.

SH: And then later on didn't you have to have a permit?

LF: Yes, later on you had to have a permit. I done went over to the mill; they had a man down there to give you permits. He gave me a permit.

SH: Why didn't you like school?

LF: I just thought I wanted to work because she went to work. I didn't have to go to work.

SH: What was school like? You went for a little while to a school in Remington and then you must have later gone to, did you go to school...

LF: I went to the third grade, that's as far as I went.

SH: What was school like, do you remember if it was good or not?

LF: Same as any other school, it was good. If you didn't listen to the teacher, she'd put you in a chair and send you out until you were able to come back again, I guess, I don't know. It was stricter than what it is now.

SH: What kinds of things did you learn? What did you do with the, the money when you first went to the mills? You must have –

LF: I gave it to my mother.

SH: Were you allowed to have some of it to do some things that you wanted?

LF: Yes, we used to get spending money.

SH: How much?

LF: I made nine dollars and thirty-four cents a month. We got the thirty-four cents and that had to do for the whole month. [Chuckles]

SH: What would you spend it on?

LF: Well, the first movie that ever opened in Hampden was up there right across [Amnakion] on Chestnut Avenue. We used to go up there for a nickel and see the movies. We'd get a piece of hair ribbon, or buy candy, or whatever we wanted.

SH: You told me an interesting story about when you were really young and you were first working in the mills and there was some kind of story that I didn't understand about the world coming to an end?

LF: Oh, I don't want that in there. [Laughs]

SH: Oh, that's a great story. That's a really good story.

LF: Well, it used to be years ago, you remember that, don't you? When they used to pronounce that the world was coming to an end? I ran all the way home to Remington. Then when I got back the next day, the boss said to me, "Where'd you go at?" I said, "I went home. I want to be with my mother when the world comes to an end." He said, "Well, next time you go, you shut them frames off. Because they was running right behind you." I ran out and left everything running, cotton was flying every which way. [Both laugh]

SH: When you first worked in the mills, what kind of work did you do?

LF: I swept up around the alleys after the girls went home.

SH: You worked first for about two years, you said. There must have been lots of different things.

LF: After that you could learn how to run speeders. Run the frames. That's all.

SH: How did you run a speeder?

LF: Just pulled the lever and they'd start off. You'd just watch them and the end comes down if you don't stop them right away it blows the whole thing, cotton flies every which way.

SH: What's a speeder come after in the whole mill? Something happens before you run a speeder? Does the carting happen before the speeders?

LF: Carting room. It does, the cotton comes from the carts, doesn't it? The cotton comes from the carting...carting...whatever they are, and then they take them over to the speeders and stick them in the place. You would have to wind them up and put them there and that goes on to the spool of cotton.

SH: Did you also work in the carting room?

LF: That's where I worked, when I started.

SH: Oh, the speeder was in the carting room?

LF: Yes, they were all in the same room

SH: Did you have friends in the mill? Were there other kids in the mills working there?

LF: Other people were working in there, I was the youngest one, I guess. There were a lot of young people that worked then. My sister wasn't too old. She's only three years older than I am. Lots of people in there were young. That's all that worked there then, young people. No old people.

SH: Did you ever have fun together? Could you...take free time together, or-- ?

LF: Sure.

SH: What did you do during lunch hour?

LF: We all sat together and ate.

SH: Was that kind of fun?

LF: Yes.

SH: Did you ever play games together after work or during free time? One lady told me she used to go make sure her frames were okay, and then she'd go sledding. [Laughs]

LF: I never knew you could go out of the mill and go sleigh riding, did you?

SH: That's what they said.

LF: After you got in there, you couldn't go out and sleigh ride, no.

UTP: She might have after she'd done the work.

SH: What about the bosses? Did you like the bosses when you first worked there?

LF: Mr. Abbot, he was a good boss.

SH: What was good about him?

LF: He was good to everybody. If you wanted to know anything, he'd listen to you.

SH: Did you think there was any way you could make more money when you first started there? Were there ways that other people made more money, or improved themselves?

LF: Oh, those who ran machines made more money, sure. But just starting, that's what I made a month.

SH: Did you see anyone get fired for any reason when you were...did people get fired in those days?

LF: Not that I know of, no. It used to be like a family affair, wasn't it, Hallie? Everybody was agreeable.

UTP: I wasn't there. I wasn't there. Don't ask me.

LF: It worked in the mill. Well, you know what it was in the weaving room.

SH: Was it different because you were from Remington? Did anyone treat you differently because you weren't from Hampden when you first started?

LF: No, no. Plenty of Remington people work there.

SH: You said your mother was a really nice person.

Comment [SD1]:

Comment [SD2]: End Point 1

LF: You couldn't find anybody better than my mother.

SH: Would you describe what you remember about your mother?

LF: I remember she was a mother to everybody. She raised three sets of children. When my aunt died, she raised her children. My uncle died and she raised his. And my mother, she can tell you about my mother, my mother was a good woman.

SH: What were some of the rules that she tried to teach you all, to help you get along? To help you learn?

LF: She made us go to Sunday School, and she made us do what we had to do. We never behaved like kids do now. We knew what you had to do.

SH: You said she helped a lot of other people in the neighborhood.

LF: She did, if anybody needed anything, she'd help them.

SH: Did she cook differently from the way a mother would cook now?

LF: No...

SH: Did she have to do things differently?

LF: She just cooked whatever she wanted to cook.

SH: Did she put things up? And bake things?

LF: Yes.

SH: What about your dad?

LF: Well he was all right too, he worked, he was a carpenter. We knew what we had to do so we'd do what we had to do. We weren't out on the street until nine, ten, eleven o'clock like kids are now. We had to be in. Yes, I had a good mother and father.

SH: You went to the Roland Baptist Church, your whole family?

LF: No, not the whole family, mother and we girls used to go there.

SH: What kinds of things did you do at church?

LF: Same as any other church. Sing, pray, and if you joined church you got baptized.

SH: Was it very important to your family?

LF: It was important to my mother, my father never went but my mother used to go with us.

SH: You said you thought your father had his church with him...

LF: Yeah...

SH: Some people do. Then you moved to Brick Hill about when you were still working in the mill, and your sister was working in the mill--

LF: Living on Brick Hill.

SH: Could you describe Brick Hill to me, what it was like to live there?

LF: Sure, it was good, everybody got along good down on Brick Hill, it used to be like a family affair, there were no carryings on down there.

SH: Do you remember where most of the neighbors worked?

LF: Most of them worked in the mill.

SH: Which mills?

LF: I don't know some in the first, some in the lower mill. I worked in the lower mill.

SH: How did people get together and have a social time around Brick Hill?

LF: We used to jump rope, play games, and skate, the same as any other place.

SH: What about the adults, did they ever have parties, or socials?

LF: Birthdays, and somebody got married. Yes.

SH: Were there ever funerals, I guess there were funerals--

LF: Sure, when people died there--

SH: What was that like?

LF: Well they used to have hacks then, they didn't have automobiles like we have now, the hearse would come down, take them out and the hacks would take them to the graveyard. My aunt from Remington, was buried...she had a funeral car.

SH: A streetcar, you mean?

UTP: I've heard of it...

LF: It was a great big black car and they put the corpse in after the people got in they just pulled out something and slid the corpse in there.

SH: You didn't use a funeral parlor in those days, did you?

LF: No, you used to generally lay them out in their home.

SH: Were there any special things people did, if they laid a body out at home, did they--

LF: Just come see them.

SH: Would the neighbors do anything to help?

LF: Well, we didn't ask the neighbors so I don't know whether they would or not, but I guess they would. They were all friendly people, everybody got along mostly on Brick Hill, like one big family, then. I don't know what it is now.

SH: What about the mills around then, did they ever do anything for people? Did they ever have any kind of excursions, or sort of fringe benefits?

LF: No...

SH: Outings?

LF: No, not when I worked.

SH: Give people anything on holidays, or--

LF: Just holidays, they stayed home that day that's all. (Laughs)

SH: Were you living in a company house in Brick Hill?

LF: Yes.

SH: Did they take the rent out of your pay or your sister's pay?

LF: I don't remember, do you?

UTP: Took it out of your pay, didn't they?

LF: Yes.

SH: Did you ever use the company store?

LF: Yes, that's the only store that was around, then.

SH: Did they take that out of your pay too?

LF: Yeah, most all of your money went to the country store.

SH: What kinds of things could you get there, could you get--

LF: The same as you get now. Only you get butter or eggs for what, twelve cents a dozen or something like that, stuff was cheap then, but it isn't now.

SH: You said you got married about 1910. How did you meet your husband?

LF: On Brick Hill, across the street.

SH: He lived across the street?

LF: Yes.

SH: Could you tell the story of how you got to like your husband?

LF: Well, he wanted me but I didn't want him at first. He just kept coming, and I used to have a lot of boyfriends, but he just kept coming so I just kept him. [Chuckles]

SH: What could a girl do with a beau in those days?

LF: Sit in the front room. Where your parents can hear what's going on. [Laughs]

SH: I guess you couldn't sit there until midnight.

LF: No sir.

SH: Could you go anywhere?

LF: Nine-thirty was time to go home. You could go to the movies for five cents up on the avenue. Just the avenue...no, wasn't nothing like you can now.

SH: You said you had some rules for your own daughters about that kind of thing.

LF: Yes, when my daughters were courting they court right here in this front room and ten o'clock they had to get out, go home.

SH: Could they go somewhere though, could they go to a movie?

LF: Their boyfriend would take them to the movies, or just take a walk or something, but they generally sat in the front room.

SH: You lived at home when you got married for the first twelve--

LF: Twelve years.

SH: How was that, living with your whole family? How did you arrange things, you must have been squashed for space.

LF: No, those houses have a lot of room in them, those three story houses.

SH: How did you all manage together?

LF: We all got along good together.

SH: Did you get together with the neighbors then?

LF: Well everybody was neighbors. Neighbors were all alike.

SH: You said about two years after you got married you went back to the mills again. What mill did you go back to that time?

LF: The upper mill.

SH: What kind of work did they give you?

LF: I worked in the spinning room, and then I used to take work to the spoolers, ain't that what you call it?

(UTP) Sister: Yes spoolers, I guess so, I don't know, spoolers and spinners.

SH: Did you consider that a good job?

LF: Yes.

SH: What made it good?

LF: Well you made more money, and just the same you had to work, so it all works the same to me. When you did your work that's all you had to do, you didn't have to do anything else.

SH: Were there any fires while you were there?

LF: I don't remember, no.

SH: Did you think that the conditions were good or bad?

LF: Well they were good, everybody got along good, made a good living. As good as you could expect then, they--

SH: What about safety?

LF: Well the safety was alright to.

SH: Did you ever hear of anybody getting hurt?

LF: No.

SH: What about the air in the mill itself? I heard some people say it was pretty hard to breathe.

LF: Well it might have been something the matter with you, but I never had any trouble breathing.

SH: Did you chew gum or something to help you--

LF: No.

SH: Was there anything that you remember that you didn't like about the mills? Something that you thought was unpleasant or--

LF: No. I got along alright while I was working.

SH: What did you like the best about it?

LF: Well I had to work so I just had to like the mill, that's all. [Laughs]

UTP: There weren't too many places to go.

LF: There was no place else to go. It wasn't like it is now.

SH: Then you moved to Singer Avenue?

LF: Yes.

SH: What was Singer Avenue like then?

LF: That was right back on my back gate. That was just the one... I believe it had twelve houses on it. It was as good as anywhere else. It was nice. The cow field was right in front of us. It was a nice place, all right.

SH: Do you know where your neighbors on Singer avenue worked, most of them, what kind of jobs they--

LF: Most everybody in Hampden worked in the mills.

SH: That was no exception?

LF: No.

SH: You must have started working at Noxzema when you were living on Singer Avenue?

LF: No, I lived here.

SH: Then you moved here around 1928?

LF: I moved here while I was working at Singer Avenue.

SH: What was this neighborhood like? What was right in front of the other one?

LF: This neighborhood was good.

SH: What about the neighbors? You mentioned they had lots of different kinds of jobs.

LF: Well everyone around didn't work in the mills. They worked different places. This man that used to live next-door worked at [unclear] and different places. Everybody didn't work in the mill.

SH: Did anybody around here work on the railroad that you know of?

LF: No.

UTP: Mr. King...

LF: Mr. King, but I don't think those houses...were they built when we lived there?

UTP: Sure [unclear] of course Mr. King didn't live there then.

LF: No, Mr. Marsden did, didn't he? Yes, Mr. King, he was a friend of ours who worked on the railroad.

UTP: Mr. Eaton, next-door to him.

LF: Yes, not this house but the next house. Mr. Eaton used to work on the railroad.

SH: So quite a few. Did anybody around here work for Noxzema or just you?

LF: No, plenty of people worked at Noxzema. My son worked there, two boys worked there, my husband worked there.

SH: What about Maryland Casualty?

LF: That wasn't there then, I don't think. I don't know how long that's been there.

SH: What was Noxzema like when you first went there? What job did they give you to do?

LF: I learned on the belt.

SH: What's that?

LF: Well that jars come down with Noxzema and you would have to catch them and put them in boxes as they came by.

SH: Was that difficult?

LF: It was when you first started, but you got used to it.

SH: How would you describe the conditions there?

LF: It was a wonderful place to work.

SH: Did you like it better than the mill? Why?

LF: Yes. Well, it was cleaner, it didn't have that cotton, everybody was nice to you, and the people that owned Noxzema couldn't have been any better to anybody.

SH: Did you meet the owners?

LF: Yeah, Dr. Bunny. His son's picture is in the paper; you ought to get that, that has the history of Noxzema, Wednesday's paper. I threw mine out or I'd give it to you, he's retired now, Lloyd Bunny, he's given it all to his son.

SH: How did you happen to meet him? Mr. Bunny..

LF: He'd come out and talk to all of his employees.

SH: Was it a big place?

LF: No, it was started over here on...what's that, Falls Road?

UTP: I don't know, I guess you'd call it--

LF: 33rd...33rd and Ellen Avenue...Yes, it started there.

UTP: I think it was around on Fall's Cliff.

LF: Yes, that's what they all called it, Falls Cliff.

SH: Were there a lot of employees compared to the mill, or would you say less?

LF: Oh no, it wasn't as big as the mill but they had plenty of employees and they were good to their employees.

SH: What kind of benefits did you get?

LF: Well they paid your insurance, and if you needed anything they'd see that you got it. They were good to you.

SH: Was there a union ever there?

LF: No. They always wanted one but they'd never have a union.

SH: Did anybody there try to organize?

LF: Yes, for a while there every dinner time they'd come and try to get you to join a union but they said they didn't need a union because when they wanted anything they went in and they generally got it. They were wonderful people to work for.

SH: What were the bosses like?

LF: Good. They only had one boss in there and it was good. You knew what you had to do so you did it.

SH: Did they have any excursions for Noxzema? Any kind of special...?

LF: Yes, they used to have dancing once a month. They'd have big parties and have dancing.

SH: How did your whole family end up working there? Did you all speak for each other?

LF: No I went over and asked him for a job, and he looked at me and he told my husband, "You can tell your wife to come to work tomorrow."

SH: What did your husband do?

LF: He was like a policeman. He was a watchman at nighttime. He had to be sworn in by the police.

SH: Both sons worked there too?

LF: Chester and Charlie.

SH: What did they do?

LF: Well my son, when he first went there, Charlie, he worked in the factory then they put him in what they call the mailroom. And then the other boy he worked in the where...in the mailroom to. What they call the mailroom or storage room or something, I don't know what. You won't find another place like Noxzema.

SH: Would you say of all your jobs that you liked that the best?

LF: Yes.

SH: What do you think makes a job a good job?

LF: Well it depends on what you got to do if you do it right. That's all I know.

SH: Being able to do it right?

LF: Same as anything else, when you go there you have to learn how to pack those jars in boxes, you have so many to catch at one time and you have to catch your share and put them in boxes.

SH: Do you know if Noxzema ever did anything for the community, if they ever gave anything to the community?

LF: They're always giving something to the community. It was in the paper not long ago where they give to different places. There was always...you never had to want for anything because at Noxzema all you had to do was ask them and you would get it. It was a good place to work.

SH: You had you had four children. Is that right?

LF: Yes.

SH: Could you tell me a little bit about what was difficult about having children and what your childbirth was like? Did you have your children at home?

LF: I had all my children at home.

SH: And who helped you?

LF: Doctor.

UTP: And your mother.

LF: My mother. My mother washed and dressed them, but I had a doctor with all of them.

SH: What's difficult about having a baby?

LF: HMM! You wait and find out, that's all I can tell you. [Laughs]. It ain't like the hospital now, as soon as you start they give you something to numb you and they say you don't know, but I knew when I had mine.

SH: You knew it.

LF: Yes. You'll know it when the time comes.

SH: Did your husband help you?

LF: He was there. Wasn't anything he could do. Ha.

UTP: In those days husbands didn't.

SH: What could he do? Did he pace around and worry?

LF: Who my husband? Well he sat right there, I had to hold his hand and wouldn't let go. He had to suffer same as I did.

SH: What kinds of ideas did you raise your own children with? What was important to you to teach them?

LF: Well they had to listen to what you told them and they would know what time to come in--

[Long silence on the tape, interview resumes on Side B]

SH: I wonder what you wanted for your kids' education?

LF: Well, I wanted them to go to school, but when they got big enough they were like me. They wanted to go to work so they went to work.

SH: Why do you think they did the same thing you did? They wanted to go to work; I've heard that said a lot...

UTP: Because you're poor, what else? [Unclear]

LF: They wanted to help their family I guess, all my children wanted to go to work. Only my girl, she only worked about two months, I never made her quit because she didn't like the job.

SH: Both you and your mother wanted them to stay on, go to school.

LF: Yes.

SH: What would you have had them go to school to learn?

LF: Whatever they could learn. The same as they do now.

SH: You said you were a member of the Mother's Club? Is that--

LF: Senior Citizen, and I belong to the Eastern Star.

SH: Why do you belong to those organizations? What do they do?

LF: Just a friendly organization, mm-hmm.

SH: What about the Eastern Star, I've talked to a lot of people who--

LF: Well the Eastern Stars are right strict, you have to have somebody in the Masons to get into the Eastern Star and if you ain't got a good reputation you can't get in there.

SH: What kinds of things do they do?

LF: Well they have different things, outings and meetings, same as anything else. Now Wednesday we went up to Friendly Farms. Eastern Star is a wonderful organization. Nobody can get in there unless they're a mason, or have got a father, or mother, or brother, or something.

SH: And your Mother's Club?

LF: No, the Mother's Club, that's all together different, I've belonged to that for about fifteen years, but they have bingos, and parties, and different things, just sociable...

SH: Did you belong to that when you were a mother?

LF: Yes.

SH: You told me a little bit about World War II, I wonder if you could just describe what that did to your family and what you think it did to...

LF: It took my son, that's what it did. That was the worst thing they could have done, to anybody, to me anyhow.

SH: You told me a story about the Mount Vernon Monument.

LF: Well Mount Vernon Church here had a plaque, the churches used to put up plaques, I don't know whether they've still got it, with his name on it or not. That's where he used to go, Mt. Vernon Church.

SH: You said there was an organization that got together and got money for that.

LF: Yes, we took up a collection around the neighborhood, and got that monument put up in remembrance of the boys that got killed.

SH: Were there a lot of activities along this street when you first moved here, a lot of things happening?

LF: We used to have parades Fourth of July, and different things, that's all.

SH: Do you think that anything changed after the war? Did you...notice anything different around here?

LF: No, everybody seems to get along all right around here. We don't have any carryings on.

SH: Do you think that this neighborhood here has changed at all?

LF: Some say it is but I don't know because, I know mining changed anyhow, so I don't know what, nothing about the rest. But some say the neighborhoods changed a lot but I don't know.

SH: What about Hampden? Do you think Hampden's changed?

LF: Well, Hampden's built up more; it's changed a lot because its got a lot more things than it used to have. Used to have old [unclear] service where [unclear] store is, used to go there and...it's just different things, that's all. It's built up more, more business in Hampden than it used to be.

SH: What do you like about Hampden?

LF: Oh, I like it because it's the only place I know [laughs].

SH: Is there anything special that you can think of that, that makes it a nice place to live or...

LF: No, it's just nice place, that's all. There ain't no colored people around here, but I wouldn't say that on there.

SH: Is there anything that you don't like about Hampden?

UTP: [Unclear] snatching your pocketbooks every time you go out.

LF: They don't snatch your pocketbooks, no. It's safe to walk along the street. I've got a nice playground over in front of me and a park there for the children to play in, I'm satisfied.

SH: What would you like for your kids? What do you want for your children?

UTP: They're all grown.

LF: They're all their own, they can get what they want now. They've all got their own homes, it's a living, and they all get along good together.

SH: What do you want for your grandchildren? What would you like for your grandchildren if you could wish the world to be the way you want it for them?

LF: Well my grandchildren are all grown up, some of them are going to college, and they're all having a good time.

SH: So they've got what you want for them?

LF: Yes. My grandchildren are right well fixed, the same as I am.

SH: Would you say, would you say looking back and thinking about your whole life, would you say that you've had a hard life or an easy life?

LF: Well, when I first got married it wasn't so easy, but as times got better it got better. But everybody had hard times then because there was nothing paying much money or anything else, but everybody got along. I don't know anybody who starved to death or didn't get along unless they didn't want to work.

SH: Is there one thing that you think you've learned that's helped you when times are hard? Can you think of one thing that might be good for other people to hear? That they might learn from?

LF: Well, the only thing I know is if they work and try to get along they can get along, but if they don't run out the [unclear] and spend all their money you can't expect to get along. But we always got along, might not have as much as you ought to have had, but we got along.

SH: Can you think of one thing in your life that's made you really happy and really glad to be alive.

LF: I'm glad I lived to be as old as I am, and had a good life of it, as much as I was married, it was 61 years when he died, so I must have had a good life or I wouldn't have been with him.

SH: What about if you had the chance to live your whole life again, some one says, 'Mrs. Foreman, we grant you one more lifetime,' would you do anything differently?

LF: No, I don't think I would. No.

SH: Is there anything that you didn't get to do that you might do?

LF: No. We used to go to Riverview and Gwynne Oak Park, we had good times out there.

UTP: Wouldn't you like to be young again? You could use your legs and get where you wanted to go.

LF: Oh, I probably wouldn't go, well I never was one to run around and do anything, so I wouldn't, I'd be satisfied with anything. If I had a do over...course you wouldn't have as much as you have now, but what we did have we had a good time on. But I never was one, I was more like a...

UTP: Wouldn't you like to have Charlie here, and be going again in your car like you used to do?

LF: Oh, we used to go to Atlantic City and--

UTP: Everything.

SH: Sounds like they did it all. [Laughs]

UTP: Yeah.

LF: We used to go to Atlantic City and everywhere we used to go together. If I had a do over again, if I had him I'd do it, but I don't know...

SH: Is there anything that you'd rather not do that you did?

LF: No.

SH: Wouldn't become a movie star?

[Laughter]

LF: I'd never have that much money. I wouldn't want to be one anyhow. You see too much that on television.

SH: Is there one thing that you remember about Hampden that you'd like to be remembered on this tape, that you think people ought to know about Hampden?

LF: No.

SH: Think you've said it?

LF: I think I've said enough.

SH: Good, I think this is very good information. So let me ask you one more question. Why do you think it's important for people to talk about the past, or do you think it's important for people to talk about the past?

LF: Well, it's right interesting to some people. What they've been through and how they've got it now. What it used to be. So that's all I know.

SH: Thank you very much.