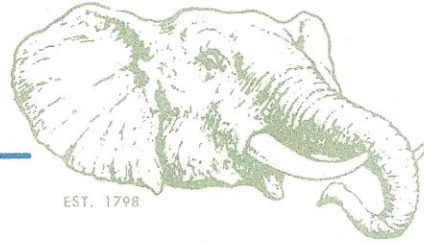


# The Memoirs of *Edith Mary DeForest*

45 Years of Service to  
Pratt, Read & Company, Inc.



Edith began work one week after this photo- July 8, 1937



Edith at her retirement party - June 30, 1982



2009 – Edith at the Stone House Museum

## Introduction

Edith Mary DeForest was born in the Plantsville section of Southington, Connecticut on December 16, 1915, the youngest child of William Sylvester DeForest and Mary Ellen Donoghue DeForest.

Edith's parents, William and Mary Ellen were married November 3, 1902. They had a son, and three daughters:

William Miles [b. 1903-d.1981]

Lillian Dorothy [b.1906-d.2005]

Ethel Evelyn [b.1909-d.1998]

Edith Mary [b.1915]

When she was not yet two years old, in 1917, they moved from Plantsville to New Haven, Connecticut. Her father was offered a job at Winchester Repeating Arms Company in the auger bit division. This was the trade that he and her grandfather, Sylvester DeForest, were employed in. They lived in a six apartment house, across from the factory and about 1921 moved to Thompson Street until 1929, when they moved to Sheffield Avenue into a house owned by Winchesters.

All this time her Poppa had been working in the bit division. When he got older, they moved him to be a night watchman until he got too old for that and they then moved to Starr Street, New Haven.

In 1935, June, Edith's widowed paternal grandmother died. She had lived in the family homestead in Chester, Connecticut. Edith's parents moved to the Chester house as it became her father's upon his mother's death.

Edith was then working for a lawyer and did not want to move to Chester, so she stayed in New Haven. Her father died in December, 1936 from pneumonia. He was only 62 but had a bad heart.

At that time, Edith was ordered by her siblings to come home (to Chester) to live as it was thought her mother (age 61) was too old to live alone. Again, she did not want to move and resisted and stayed in New Haven until July 1, 1937, when she moved to Chester.

Edith resides to this day in her ancestral home.



## Foreword

Edith is Curator at the Stone House, home to the Deep River Historical Society. This is where we first became acquainted. I was researching the 'Charter Oak' piano, part of their collection, in 1979. Being in the piano industry for all of our adult lives, Edith would contact my husband or me, over the years, [or vice-versa] for information relating to pianos.

During a conversation with Edith earlier this year, she mentioned that she had prepared three tapes of her years at Pratt, Read & Company. Having an affinity with Pratt Read, and its history, I said that I would enjoy listening to the tapes and would be happy to transcribe them to paper so this history would be preserved.

My grandfather had worked for many years at Pratt, Read, and in fact it was the verification of his employment they supplied that allowed my British mother and me to come ahead to the United States from England while my father continued his service in the US Army during WWII.

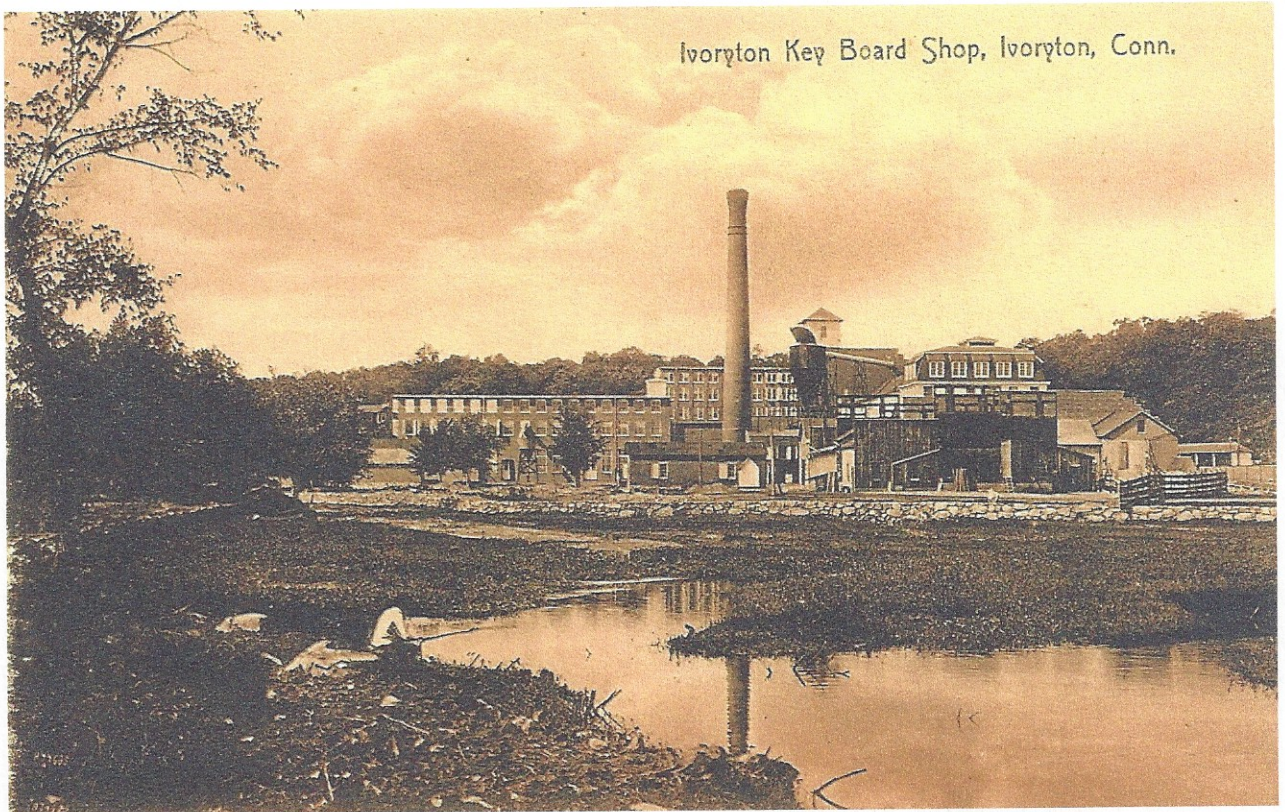
It certainly was my privilege to type these words. From Edith's voice, through the tape player into my ears and finally through my fingers to the page any errors are mine. On occasion I had to change a few words to make complete 'writable' sentences, as we don't speak as we write. The loss in transcribing is the inflection of voice, the twinkle that is sure to be in Edith's eye as she speaks, her lovely little chuckles, and the pauses when sadness overcomes her. You will need to imagine them.

Edith, thank you.

Vivian Ackerman Brooks  
June, 2009



Keyboard Factory, Deep River, Conn.



Ivoryton Key Board Shop, Ivoryton, Conn.

And now, Edith DeForest speaks to us through her tape recorder from her home in Chester, Connecticut:

Today is July 8, 1997. Sixty years ago yesterday on July 7, 1937 I went down to Pratt Read and Company in Deep River, and put in an application for preferably office work, but I would take factory work. The young lady who took my application was Roberta Blanchard.

When I came home my brother drove me to Middletown to the Employment Office to put in an application there. On the way home we had a flat tire which delayed us. When we finally got home my Mother was real agitated. She had gotten a call from Pratt Read & Company and they wanted me down there immediately to talk to me.

So, my brother drove me down and I met Mr. Wilbur C. Holmes who was the office manager. I met Brainerd Smith who was one of the employees. I also met Peter H. Comstock and Alma J. Pearson, also employees. When I left [that day] I met Mr. Gould who was President of the Company.

The job that they had to offer was to operate the electric Remington-Rand bookkeeping machine. Brainerd was now operating it but they wanted someone else to do the payroll on it. The wages were \$65.00 a month and I often said, jokingly, that I was so busy dividing four into \$65.00 to see how much I was going to make a week that I didn't know what I was getting into. But, that was just a joke.

I was told to report to work the next morning which would be July 8, 1937. This happened to be the day that they put up the payroll. Brainerd Smith and Mr. Edward Hilley had gone to the bank with the little black bag. The little black bag had a zipper compartment in it which contained the smoke bomb. When they carried the bag empty the lever would be off – 'on safe' but after they left the bank with all the money for the payroll they turned the lever to 'on' and that way if a crook grabbed the bag the smoke would come pouring out of the bag and they could trace him.

When Brainerd came back he asked Mr. Holmes who would help him put up payroll. Mr. Holmes suggested, "Why don't we break Edith in on it." So, with that Brainerd took me into this little room where this payroll machine was and he locked the door and then he turned and said, "I have to do that." I don't know whether he thought I was afraid he was going to attack me or what but we proceeded to count the money to make sure we had the proper amount. There was a change machine which held quarters, two slots for dimes, nickels, and pennies. The pay envelopes were little small coin envelopes, on which the person's name, social security number and all his pay, the gross, the deductions for social security, the insurance, etc. and came up with the net pay.

Then, Brainerd would take one pay envelope. He would count out the net pay. He would put it on the envelope and put it in front of me. I would recount it put it in the envelope and then into the box. Each department had a box to hold the pay envelopes. When we finished stuffing all of the pay envelopes, if we came out right, we would seal up the envelopes. They would then be put in the vault until Friday which was the day that they got paid.

We had to type up what they call a payroll summary. At that time Social Security had just gone into effect the first part of the year and those people who were 65 years of age and over did not pay any Social Security so part of the information that went on the payroll summary was the total of those people who were over 65 years of age. I was told that I had to add those up. Never having seen an adding machine, I didn't know what they meant, but they led me over to this monstrosity. It was on an iron frame. It was a huge thing that had the full numbers across 'zero up to nine' and it had this handle on and you punched the figures in and crank went the handle. I learned a lot that day.

We were working in both areas – in Deep River and in Ivoryton. The Deep River payroll was the first one that was done and then Ivoryton was done. In Ivoryton, the head of maintenance man and the superintendent would come over to the office and gather up the boxes and go across the street to the factory to give out the payroll envelopes. In case someone came and held them up, the superintendent had a gun in his pocket and he would have it all ready to pull out and shoot the robber.

I gradually was learning how to use the payroll machine but Brainerd was going on vacation in August for two weeks. I hadn't had that much experience on running it. I used to have signs hanging all over the registers to tell me to do this or do that, to remind me or do the next thing. While Brainerd was gone, I had to put up the payroll and I forget who had to sit there with me to put the money up in the envelopes but being inexperienced in using the change machine, I suddenly found out that whenever I had 45 cents in a pay I only got 35 cents. I called Mr. Holmes and told him that something was wrong that when I wanted 45 cents I only got 35 cents. Just about that time Mr. Gould went by the door and said, "Find out who made it and call him up."

I suddenly discovered that there were two slots for dimes and one was empty and that was the reason that I was only getting the one dime instead of the two.

Brainerd was a coin collector, so when we were counting the money we would be looking at all the pennies to see if we could find certain ones. One penny that was very rare was a 1909 with an "nd" on it I believe. We were never lucky enough to find that.

While Brainerd was on vacation, Alma Pearson and Wilbur Holmes were putting up the payroll and they were having one hellava time with it. No one seemed to know how to denominate the envelopes and so they denominated the gross pay instead of the net pay and

that caused quite a problem. They had the petty cash in there and they were making change all over the place. When the payroll was all put up and they were trying to reconcile their petty cash, they weren't coming out right and one was blaming the other and there was some mess. I don't know what happened, but you always had to go over it if you were over a penny or under a penny. It didn't matter you had to go through and recount all of the pays to make sure they were all right.

I remember that there was a young man that worked in Ivoryton. His name was Walter Glidden and during the time that Brainerd was on vacation and Alma and Mr. Holmes put up the pay that Mr. Holmes said that it didn't matter if someone claimed that they were short either in Deep River or in Ivoryton, because they were not short, they came out right. Well, it seems that Mr. Glidden claimed that he was \$10.00 short. Mr. Holmes was very adamant that he was not going to give the money to Mr. Glidden because he couldn't be short. But Mr. Gould came and said "Wilbur, you pay the man. He says he's short, he's short." So Mr. Holmes could do nothing else but pay him and he was not a 'happy camper.'

One thing they told me was that if I had a habit of whistling, which I didn't and couldn't, don't whistle around Mr. Holmes because he would throw you out of the place. Also, I met Mr. George Seeley. Mr. George Seeley was the son-in-law of Benjamin Harwood. He was married to one of Benjamin's twin daughters, Rica. Rica and he didn't live together, they lived separately. If Rica would arrive in Ivoryton. . ."Whoa, I am ahead of myself, I'll finish that later."

They told me that if I saw Mr. Seeley, to watch him closely because suddenly he would look at you with this stare on his face and this stupid grin. Boy, were they right. He always had that.

Brainerd among his other duties, used to deliver the mail around there. Back in those days they used comptometers. A comptometer was something that people used to go to school to learn how to use. It was a square metal box it had a full keyboard and ten rows of keys and the theory was that you used your fingers of both hands. If you were trying to add something up you would operate this with both hands. In the purchasing department we had a Mr. Treat from Middletown. One day he had his comptometer on the left hand side of him and he had a sheet of long figure that he was trying to add on the right hand side. Brainerd came in from the factory with the mail and he stood in the doorway. He slid a piece of mail for Mr. Treat across his desk, and low and behold it landed right square on top of the sheet that he was doing the adding from. There was a dead silence and then there was this, 'God damn, Jesus Christ' and nobody knew what happened, but with that Mr. Treat stood up came out of his office stood by Brainerd's desk and said "God damn You, don't you ever do that again."

And Brainerd said "Do what?"

“Come in and throw a piece of paper over what I’m adding.” Mr. Treat was so mad, because he had to start all over again.

Ebba Anderson, she was the secretary. Just before Brainerd went on vacation, she decided to go on vacation. So they drafted me to do her duties as secretary. I had flunked junior shorthand when I was in high school. I had to repeat junior shorthand and just barely passed it and just barely passed senior shorthand. As a matter of fact, the teacher that taught shorthand told my mother that I could just forget it, that I would never make it in the business world. I often hoped that I could see that lady someday and maybe give her a Bronx cheer.

I was having a terrible time because Mr. Seeley was the one I worked for. I finally told him that I hadn’t had enough practice on running the bookkeeping machine, and with Brainerd going on vacation, I was going to be in serious trouble. They hired someone else temporarily to come and do Ebba’s work and they let me go back to learning the bookkeeping machine. I used to walk back down there from home after supper, just to get the work done because I was very slow at it.

Business got very slack and in the end of November, 1937, I was laid off along with some other people, Mr. Treat, Mr. Hilley and Mrs. Rockwell. I did not bother to go to the unemployment place because, in the first place I did not have enough money in it for them to pay me anything and I knew that they could not get along without me and they would be calling me back.

Sometime in December I happened to be out in the back yard and I looked up and here comes this raccoon coat with this man in it with a cookie cutter hat on his head. It turned out to be Peter Comstock.

He told me he had these two friends, Bruce and Sheridan Fahnstock and their mother Mary Worth and that they had just come back from a sail around the South Sea Islands and they wanted to write a book and they were looking for someone to do the typing of the transcript for them and he wondered if I would like to do it. I said, “Yes. “

Sheridan came and picked me up. We stopped in Prann’s in Deep River and rented a typewriter. They were staying at Commander Rowe’s house down in Essex; it’s called ‘Crosstrees.’ We started out. They had things written out but I was having a terrible time transcribing their handwriting, so we had them change to dictating it to me and then me doing the typing. I forget how much money I earned or how long a time I worked on it but I always thought that when the book was completed they might give me a copy. I never did get a copy. Peter did; he got an autographed copy.



The name of the book was *Stars to Windward*. They lived on Rackets Lane in Essex and when the war broke out; both boys went into the war. Bruce was lost in the South Pacific. I don't know where Sheridan ended up.

On January 19, 1938, they recalled me back to work. I stayed until September 30, 1982 when I retired after 45 years of service with the exception of a month and a half.

In March of 1938 they decided to put the accounts receivable on the bookkeeping machine so Brainerd and I would be operating it together. The machine had what they called the tabulating bar. There was one bar for the payroll and one bar for the accounts receivable. There were all these different registers and each register had these 'cams' that dictated what the register was to do and what the function was. The only thing was that we only had one register to use for the debits and the credits. You would have to post all the debits first, then take the cam off the register, put a new cam on and move the register over into another position to do the credits. The only thing wrong was that half the time we forgot to change the cam. By the end of the month when they went to see what the accounts receivable came to it was one hellava mess. Alma and Mr. Holmes had to go back through all the posting to make sure it came out right. You can well imagine that they bought another register and made some other changes. I did accounts receivable from then on until the war in 1940. There were very little accounts receivable during the war, just for the gliders for the Navy and the Army.

In 1945 after the war I went back to doing payroll and accounts receivable until about 1954 when Brainerd Smith started doing it then. I continued on doing payroll until they sent out to have the payroll done. Shortly after that they went into data processing and in 1968 I was transferred to data processing to do nothing but payroll and was made a payroll accountant.

To introduce those who were there in 1938: Roberta Blanchard, she was a receptionist. Checkerboard Feed came to town and with it a young man named Miles Upson. He and Roberta hit it off and fell in love and wanted to get married. Her father was very very strict, so she was trying to keep it from him. She had her diamond ring she used to carry it in her purse, and every once in a while she would come into the room where I was doing payroll and put it on wear it around for a while. Eventually they did get married. They ran away to someplace in upper New York State and got married. They lived in one of the apartments on Main Street for several years.

The next person was Eva Bohling who did the billing. Eva suddenly let everybody know that she had been married to Lincoln Gilbert from Ivoryton, who she went to school with, for about three years. She was sprouting this big rock on her finger suddenly and poor Roberta felt

very unhappy when she looked at that and then at hers. To make her feel better, I told her the other one looked artificial.

Lillian Gesick worked with Eva. She was her helper. She helped with the billing. She was the daughter of Louie Pratt who was the head ivory cutter and also ran the theater in town. She was divorced and had one daughter.

Then there was Brainerd Smith and I guess he did specifications out in the factory. We also used to have to print up the clock cards and pay stubs. That was done on an addressograph. The Addressograph was downstairs. You cut the plates with the names and social security number and other information that was necessary. In order to punch the clock card you would feed the card in face down and you printed the stub and then you moved it up and you printed on the face of the clock card and then you turned it over and printed on the back of the clock card and printed the name and social security number. For each employee you had three times you had to push the pedal. It was a wonder that at the end of the day you weren't still flopping your feet up and down.

Then also they used to use it to print the payroll sheets. That would be by department the big sheets that would have all the names on and as you did the payroll you would feed the sheet in with a carbon on it and there was an individual card for each person and that card would go in and the information would go on the card and go through the carbon onto the payroll sheet. The names were also printed on the little pay envelopes, but not the information that they filled in which was also done on the addressograph.

One time when they had another job for Brainerd to do, he was supposed to be doing the clock cards, he told Mr. Holmes he had the clock cards to do. So Mr. Holmes told him, "Well, Edith can do them."

I said "well, I don't know how to do them." He said, "You can learn, can't you?" That was the end of that and another duty was added to my duties whenever Brainerd couldn't do it.

Then we had Wilbur Holmes. We used to call him 'Willie'. . . Willie Holmes. He lived in Deep River and was a veteran of WWI. He was kind of a womanizer. He had a son and a daughter. Eventually he and his wife divorced. I don't know if he remarried, but he died down in Georgia.

Next we had George Seeley. He was Secretary of the company and he was in charge of sales and as I said he was the husband of Rica Harwood, one of the twin daughters of Benjamin Harwood, and also was related to the Cheneys of Comstock, Cheney and Company.

Alma Pearson used to do cost work with Willie Holmes and she also did the figuring of people's times. Back in those days the girls in the factory did all the little operations of gluing down the action felt, putting the screws in and the 'spoons on' . . . it was all done by hand. Their base rate was 35 cents an hour but each day as they did each operation it was weighed, tallied up and posted on their account. Then, at the end of the week besides their 40 hours at

35 cents an hour they were given the additional hours at piece rate, so they did make a little more than 35 cents an hour.

Ebba Anderson was the secretary to George Seeley and she also was secretary to Mr. Gould. Of all the people that were there, all that is left now is Eva Bohling Gilbert, Brainerd Smith and myself.

I used to get in there early in the morning as I got a ride down from Chester. One time the telephone rang, and nobody was there so I answered it. The woman said it was Western Union and she had a telegram. I said, "Well there is no one here but me so if you go slowly I will take it down." She did that and gave me the telegram and when she gave me the name of the person that had sent it, I wrote Strawberry and Clover. I typed it up and I put it in on Mr. Seeley's desk.

When they came in, Ebba got there first and she happened to look on his desk and she started to laugh. Everyone hovered around and they were all laughing. So someone said who took this telegram? I said, "I did." They said, "Where did you get this name from?" I said, "That's what they said." They said, "No, it is not Strawberry and Clover, it is Strawbridge & Clothier." But hey, it sounded like Strawberry and Clover to me!

In the yard, the lumber yard there was Steve Beale and Dan O'Shea. Steve was a nice colored man. Dan liked to "nip" and I think he nipped quite a bit while he was driving and I think Dan was a little sweet on Alma. One day he drove the truck around back and there were some pillars there that held up a little porch like thing. He came in to get petty cash at Mr. Holm's desk. Alma came over and she took his glasses, they were really dirty. She said "Dan, how can you see out of those glasses?" She washed the glasses off and put them back on his face and he got the petty cash and down he went got in the truck and backed into the pillars. He missed them on the way in with his dirty glasses, but with the clean ones, he wacked them good.

In September of 1938, we moved the main office to Ivoryton. It was the intention that we would move everything to Ivoryton and close up Deep River because business wasn't that good and we were losing money.

The building in Ivoryton was a two story building. If you came from the outside you came into the vestibule and on the right was the room where I was. I was receptionist, I was telephone operator, I did accounts receivable and I did payroll.

To your left was the vault, the next room to the left was a reception room, it was also the room where Brainerd and I put up the payroll. They had put iron bars on the windows. To your right was the door into my office. Across the hall were the men's room and the ladies room and at the end of the building was the conference room where the directors used to

meet. Up stairs at the top of the stairs, Brainerd sat. You went down a hall to your left and Ebba Anderson's office was there and off of her office was Mr. Gould's office. You went out to your right to Mr. Gould's office and you came into the main room. The main room housed Eva Bohling, Roberta Blanchard Upson, Alma Pearson and continuing on was a small room that looked out on the front street and that was Wilbur Holmes' office. Off that same room, next door to Mr. Holmes' office was Mr. Seeley's office and that comprised all there was to the building.

The stairway . . . you went up two steps and you were on a landing. You went up four more steps and you were on another landing and then up another three steps and you were at the top.

One morning, Mr. Holmes was late and he came rushing up the stairs. When he got to the second landing and going up three steps he stubbed his toe. He was wearing a fedora hat and his head hit the wall and the hat came down over his ears. I heard the noise and went rushing up the stairs. Brainerd jumped up and we both helped pick him up and then we started to laugh. With that Alma came rushing out to see what had happened and she really laced into us for laughing at him, but I guess Brainerd and I have a weird sense of humor, because Mr. Holmes sure did look funny.

I had a similar experience on that stairway. When I did Accounts Receivable I had to go upstairs to get the different books. I would get the sales book and come down and post it and then bring it back upstairs. Then I would bring down the account receivable and accounts disbursements and post those and start back up with them. This particular day I started up with the accounts receivable and payroll book. As I went to go up the stairs, I stubbed my toe. I landed on the landing, rolled over on my back with the books on top of me. I heard someone saying "What was that noise?" All of a sudden I lay there looking up and here are all these heads looking over the banister railing. Some one said "Oh, it's just Edith," and everyone went back to work!

The telephone system -- that was just a telephone. You had all these buttons for the different lines. You had a dial where you could dial somebody's number upstairs. On the wall was a little section that had three lights, a red, green and a white light. We had two lines and as the lines rang a different light would light. If they wanted someone, you pushed down the hold button and you dialed the person and told them who was on such and such a line. If someone came in to see someone, you could dial someone and tell them that 'so and so' was downstairs to see them.

Continuing about George Seeley and his wife. . . His wife Rica lived in New Haven and she used to come over with her colored chauffeur to see George about something. The

chauffer would come in and say, "Mrs. Seeley would like to see Mr. Seeley." She would stay in the car. You would then dial George and tell him that Mrs. Seeley was downstairs and wanted to see him and my God before he hung up the phone he'd almost fall down the stairs to run down there and go outside and talk to her.

Mr. Wormwood who was the treasurer of the company had a big roll top desk in a corner of my office. On occasion he would come down from Deep River and sit there and do some work. He was a large gentleman and had this big beard. If it had been black you would have thought he was Jesus Christ. But anyway he was a nice old gentleman and he would sit there and work. When he was got ready to leave he would lock up his desk and then he would take hold of the handles and practically lift the desk off the floor to check and make sure that it was locked. Upstairs they could hear the commotion and everyone would say "Oh, George is down there locking up his desk."

We had an inventor, his name was William Betts. They let him have space in the big room. Across the hall from me was the men's room. The spring on the door that would automatically shut it when you went in wasn't working very well. This dirty old man would go in there and everyone else would shut the door by hand, but not him. It was very annoying and very embarrassing to me so I called Mr. Hilley and I asked him if he could do something about getting that spring on the door fixed, as this dirty old man refused to shut the door after him and I was very embarrassed and so forth. His answer was, "Well Edith, we'll order some fur-lined funnels."

There was another funny incident concerning the ladies room. Roberta Upson, Eva Bohling Gilbert's helper, came downstairs and went into the ladies room one day. I didn't pay any attention, I was doing my work. Pretty soon, Eva came down and she says, "Is there something wrong with Roberta?"

I said "I don't know, why?"

She said "well, she's been down here quite a while and I wondered if she was sick."

I said "Tell you the truth I haven't paid much attention. Why don't you hammer on the door and ask if she's alright."

So, she did and Roberta said "I'll be right out, I'm soaking my feet."

There was a young man who worked for the telephone company. His name was Spec Morrow and he used to come to Pratt Read and left a box of box of bicarbonate of soda. He'd stop by and make himself a drink of bicarbonate of soda. Sometimes he came and he worked on the telephone equipment. He was quite a character. Upstairs in the office there were these

gratings that led up into the attic. When he had to work on the telephones, he had to go up into the attic where the equipment was. If I happened to have to go upstairs to get the books to do the accounts receivable, he would whistle that tune about . . . *did you ever think as a hearse goes by, it won't be long before it's you and I, etc.* You found yourself whether you wanted to or not walking in that same tone. Of course, Mr. Holmes in his office couldn't hear what was going on, and he wondered why I was walking so funny and trying to keep from laughing.

I've told you how we would put up the money down there and then on pay day, the superintendent and the head of maintenance would be the ones to carry the envelopes across the street to deliver to the foreman so they could deliver them to the employees. Besides having the supervisor have the gun, they wanted extra precaution. So, on the ledge in my office, there was this button and it was connected to a bell up in the action office and over the top they covered it with a piece of buckskin. If I was to see anything suspicious, I was to push the button and in the action office they would immediately alert the state police.

Well, this guy had big eyes and he wanted to know what was under the buckskin. I said there wasn't anything there. He said that it was some kind of a button. I insisted it wasn't but I finally had to tell him what it was because he was about to reach in and push the button.

We had an old gentleman by the name of Mr. Chrystal. He was at Pratt Read fifty years when I was there 25 and he worked in the action division. He had a drinking problem. His wife used to come every Friday when she knew he got paid. He would put his pay envelope in a snuff box and throw it out the window to her. Well this one afternoon, poor Sybil came and all of the men in the action department thought they would have some fun. They all had snuff boxes and when Sherm threw his box out the window they threw theirs out the window too.

There was poor Sybil. We couldn't help but laugh because she looked so funny, but it really wasn't funny. It wasn't a nice thing to do. She'd pick up a snuff box, open it and then throw it to one side. She had one heap of snuff boxes before she found Sherm's.

But Sherm kind of put one over on her. He used to come over after he got his pay and ask to see the paymaster. At that time, the paymaster was Brainerd Smith. He would ask to see the paymaster. I would call Brainerd. Brainerd would come down and Sherm would stand there and say, "Mr. Smith, you know Sybil works awful hard and I'd like to get her a washing machine, but I need \$10.00 for a down payment. Could I please have \$10.00 on my pay?"

Brainerd would say sure and he would go upstairs and get the petty cash \$10.00, and the petty cash slip, fill it out and Sherm would sign it and off he'd go with his \$10.00.

The next week when we did his pay, we would deduct the \$10.00 out of his pay. So, the next Friday he'd be back again looking for the paymaster. It would be, "Mr. Smith my Mother

and father have been dead for a long time and I would like to get a monument, but I need \$10.00 down before I can order the monument, so can I have \$10.00 on my pay?"

This went on week after week after week for as long as we were doing payroll. Of course, when we went back to Deep River during the war, it couldn't happen but when we returned after the war, it started all over again.

When I had my twenty-fifth anniversary, and as I said, Sherm was celebrating his 50<sup>th</sup>, and what did they do but they gave him a bag with fifty silver dollars. I think the tavern in town was overcome with silver dollars.

Peter (Comstock), when I first met him, was out in the factory. He had started at Pratt Read the year before I did. His grandfather, old Archambault W. Comstock, was president of the company at the time of the merger in December of 1936. He told Peter that he was to go into the factory and learn the business; Peter did.

He learned under Charles Frederick Stein who eventually became a consultant for the firm. Peter could go out in the factory and he could do any job out in that factory. He knew his stuff.

They were breaking him in on office work too. He used to talk to the customers. One day, just at the end of lunch he got a call. He was sitting at my desk, talking to whatever customer it was. He never worried too much what his clothes looked like. This particular day he had this long sleeve white shirt with a great big rip all the way down the back. As he was talking to the customer, I came back from lunch. Roberta came from upstairs, went into the ladies room and got a cup of water, and she came in poured it over Peter's head.

There he is, sitting at my desk, soaking wet with the telephone at his ear talking to the customer. My desk, my chair is soaked. Brainerd was there, and said, "by God, if I was him when I got off the phone I'd take her into the men's room and hold her head under the faucet." She thought it was a big joke. She always wanted to do that to someone. I said, "Well, you could have picked a better place than my desk!"

This Roberta Upson had a weird sense of humor.

We moved to Ivoryton the first of September 1938. What greeted us towards the end of September was that big hurricane. Brainerd and I were downstairs in my office. It was pouring rain. The rain was running uphill instead of straight down.

George Seeley had gone across the street to the factory for something. On his way back his hat blew off. We thought it was so funny watching him running up the hill trying to catch his hat. Pretty soon we realized that something was not the way it should be, so we went upstairs and that is when we found out it was a hurricane.

I don't know how we ended up down in the Ivoryton Inn, but that is where we ended.

Brainerd and his family were in Westbrook and his parents had the car. His parents were elderly and he was very upset because he could not get through to them. I was very upset because I could not get through to my mother and she was all by herself in Chester and she was elderly also.

The roof of one of the buildings in the factory happened to be over what was called the 'felt room,' where they kept the felt. Well, the roof kept kind of lifting up a little bit, so the guys, they were great. They tied ropes onto it inside, and every time the wind gave a big gust, they all held on and they managed to keep that roof on the factory.

How I got to Deep River, I don't recall but I was walking up the Main Street, near White Way Laundry near what was Scalia's Grocery store. This huge tree was over the road and I didn't know how I was going to get by. I heard men's voices talking, so I hollered "I'm on this side, please help me through."

Some one said, "Did you hear something?"

I said, "Yes, it's me. I'm on this side, help me through."

So they pulled their way through the trees got a hold of me and they helped me through and I continued on. When I got to School Lane the transformer had come off the pole. It was in the road sparking all over the place. I very gingerly went by it as best I could, far away as I could.

When I got to my house and my Mother greeted me, we couldn't hold on to each other hard enough or long enough. She had been so upset she had gathered up all the spare money she had, sat down at the foot of the stairs with her holy water and her rosary beads and her money. That's where she sat through the whole thing.

My brother was married and living in Chester. They had a small four or five month old son. He wanted to come down and see how my mother was. His wife didn't want him to leave her and her mother. He said well, "You two are together and my mother is alone." Well after it was over he came down. He took one look at all of the trees that had fallen down and his comment was, "Who the hell sneezed?"

When we got to Ivoryton, they decided that I was going to handle the insurance. So, because of that, they gave me a \$5.00 a month increase, so I was then making \$70.00 a month and I was some real happy girl, because my first job had only paid me \$7.50 a week.

I believe it was that Christmas of 1939 we went to the Ivoryton Inn for lunch. It was said if you got drunk, you had to pay for your own lunch. If you didn't drink, you had to pay for your own lunch. Well, I didn't drink. I hadn't had anything to drink in my life and I didn't know what I was going to do, because I didn't have that much money to pay for my lunch.



Off we went and we were sitting at this long table, I forget how many of us. All of the office, some of the factory the superintendent and what not and they started ordering their drinks.

Way down the table was Lillian Gesick and she said she'd have a glass of Muscatel wine. Well, when I heard that I thought, oh, I could have that.

My grandfather used to make dandelion wine and now and again I used to try a sip. I never liked it but I thought, hey, if it pays for my lunch I'd try it. So they brought me a glass and of course, I didn't know anything about drinking wine, so I drank it like a soda.

They ordered a second round.

Ebba Anderson was sitting across from me and so Ebba suddenly looked over to me and said, "What's that under the table?" So, nosy me, I bent over to see what was under the table; a bad thing to do. When I came up, the table and everything was reeling. They took the second glass away from me.

Mr. Seeley told me that all I kept saying was "mustn't tell, mustn't tell" and shaking my finger across my mouth.

Mr. Seeley told me when we got back to the office he had some specifications that he wanted me to type. He said I said, "Mr. Seeley you can type your own damn specifolutions!"

I don't remember what I even had to eat. I know I didn't have anything more to drink. I didn't have to pay for my lunch and I had ridden down with Brainard because I didn't have a car or know how to drive.

When we got into the car I asked him to take me up to Blake Street so I could wish my little nephews a Merry Christmas and he said, "Well I don't think they want to see you now."

Anyway, he took me back to the office helped me off with my coat. For a while there, I was kind of looking one way and walking the other.

We had a man named Johnson. He had the canteen. He came over and he said he wanted to give the men cigars and the girls ice cream cups. So, he said, "how many of these do I need?"

Well, of course I'm there trying to count. I get all counted and I'm just ready to give him the count, and he said, "Well, maybe I'll give everybody ice cream cups."

I said, "Hey, make up your mind; I'm having a problem here."

When we got ready to go home, I put my hands in my pockets, as was my habit when I put my coat on. Well, when I did, I thought the cat had had kittens in my pockets. I pulled out my hands and they were full of these little fishes! Everybody was so upset because they knew about it and they were supposed to take them out of my coat when they got back to the office.

The fish man was outside the Ivoryton Inn, and Mr. Seeley had gone over and bought these little fishes and put them in my pocket as a joke intending to remove them. Well, they wouldn't tell me how they got there or whose idea it was and I tell you I had that coat cleaned, I

had it dyed and finally give it away to somebody because cats were sniffing at me wherever I went.

They finally told me it was Seeley. When we came back after the holiday my first trip upstairs, he was 'tee-heeing' about the fish and I told him that it was a good thing I didn't know where they came from because he wouldn't be sitting in his office then, because they would have been in his top drawer.

We started a little group whereby we would put 25 cents a week each aside and when we had enough, we would go out to eat and then go to the movies. Of course, we considered Brainerd one of the girls and he'd put his money in too.

Well, we had this one lady, her name was Celeste Pelton, and she was really kind of a tight wad (she'll never hear this, so I can say that!). She ordered from the money side of the menu. She made sure she only spent just so much so that she had enough for the movies and her food. If some of the rest of us went over, which I never did because of my peculiar diet, and if we all had to chip in a little something to go to the movies, she never did because she said she didn't spend all of hers and she wasn't going to contribute.

Another Christmas while we were in Ivoryton, the girls were going to the Pease House. Mr. Jopson came over. He was going to go with us and said he was going pay. We told him no.

He used to get booze from the truck drivers and different ones. He sent this Celeste Pelton down to get a couple bottles. So, she brought back some booze and some blackberry brandy. We all had drinks there; I guess I was drinking by then. When we all got ready to leave, he was looking for the bottles. He said, "Where is the blackberry brandy?"

Well, she had a sheepish look on her face, because she thought he was so drunk he wouldn't miss it, and she was going to take it home. Well, drunk or otherwise he had his wits about him, so she had to give up the blackberry brandy.

They had cockroaches down there. [The Ivoryton Office] Oh, my God the cockroaches were big! Old Rob Rankin said they beat you to the drinking fountain. He said they could almost harness them up and let them pull the trucks with the wood from the mill on them.

One time we were there sitting around Alma's desk eating lunch, when we heard this noise in the waste paper basket. We looked down and there were these cockroaches with their feet up in the air.

It was 1939. The girls decided we'd like to go to New York for a weekend. We thought the company should pay some of the expense. So, Alma spoke to Mr. Holmes and asked him if the company would pay our way to New York and buy us tickets to see this ice show, Hellsa Poppin.

Mr. Holmes said okay, they'd take it out of petty cash. There were six of us going to go. Mr. Gould gave us \$10 to go to the Hotel Astor and have cocktails. We took the ten dollars.

At the end, only five of us went. There was Alma, Ebba, myself, Lillian Gesick and Roberta Blanchard. Eva Bohling would have been the sixth. She did not go. We invited my sister Lillian who lived in New York to come to the Hellsa Poppin ice show.

We stayed at the Hotel Lexington and walked in one door of the Hotel Astor and out another just so we could tell Mr. Gould that we went to the Hotel Astor, but we used the money to help pay for our room.

In the afternoon we decided to go to a movie. The movie was Jimmy Stewart and Carol Lombard in the *First Year*. The theater was packed and we couldn't find seats. We had to separate. We stood up during most of the movie and when we saw an empty seat, why one of us would grab it. When I finally saw an empty seat, I should have forgotten it because all I saw was a side view. The book that was opened up when Jimmy and Carl were getting married, I could see the verse sideways. I could see the sleek ends of the leaves of the book.

When we went to see Hellsa Poppin, they kind of picked on Ebba and got her all upset. We had dinner that night in the Rainbow Room and I ordered applejack. Everybody else ordered what they wanted. When we got ready to leave, they hadn't bought my applejack so we started out and one of us saw the waiter and said, "Hey, you didn't bring her her applejack."

So, he brought me the applejack. I drank it and started up the stairs and the first thing I knew I swirled around and sat down. I don't know, I guess I just didn't have the stomach for anything that was a little alcoholic.

We had a good time and of course, some of us brought home souvenirs. Roberta Blanchard Upton was one that brought one back.

There was a newspaper, a type of scandal sheet called The Waterbury Herald. Mr. Holmes had been missing for a few days and the first thing we knew this issue of the Waterbury Herald comes out. They picked him up somewhere over Bridgeport or over that way with some blonde. That was quite a scandal. Everybody got quite a kick out of that.

That New Years, after our Christmas episode, I went to New York. On the train I met Alma. I was going to spend New Year's Day with my sister. Alma was going to visit a friend so she invited me to join her. Instead of going to my sisters I stayed at the hotel with Alma. Well, what Alma was doing was looking to see where Willie Holmes was. So, stupid us, we were standing outside the hotel where we knew he was staying looking way up. I don't know what we thought we'd see.

We went to visit a friend of Alma's and she was telling of my experience with the Muscatel wine, so I didn't drink any wine down there. I stayed sober.

I don't recall anything very spectacular happening for the next two or three years until 1942. In April of 1942 we moved back to Deep River. With that they were going into a different system of doing payroll so in the beginning my job was in the office downstairs and I was in charge of the vault that had all the supplies in it. Eventually I ended up in the office section of the factory building. Most of my job was to do insurance. We had Remington Rand tabulating equipment.

I believe it was in 1943 that my mother went down South to visit my sister. She did not want me to stay alone in the house, so I was staying nights with Nora and David Lund who lived next door to me.

At that time I was doing insurance there was this other girl, Anna Cappellini, who was doing bonds. We also helped out in payroll. The payroll slips would come off the tabulating machine and we had to make sure everything was alright.

Grace and Louie Thomas were in charge and went to the bank. They used to put the payroll up in cash and on Friday they would come with their little cart they made and they would go out through the factory and hand out the paychecks and do their deposits and cash and check, all their bank business.

Well, one day they were having a problem with all the tabulating equipment and were running way behind in printing up the payroll summaries. We were sent home about six o'clock and were asked to come back again within an hour to wait for the payroll summaries. I didn't happen to tell Nora and David that I was going back and was going to stay there until the summaries were done.

We got back there and there was Dick Griswold who was in charge, Anna Cappellini and me. I don't know if there was anyone else or not. But we got so silly. It got late. We got Coke bottles and were writing notes and sticking them in everybody's top drawer.

Louie and Grace Thomas were there and they were champing at the bit because the payroll summaries and payroll slips weren't ready. I think we got home at six o'clock in the morning. I went up to bed and just about was in bed when Nora knocked on the door and said, "Edith time to get up."

I said, "Nora, it isn't. I just got home." I'm sure they would have had a hemorrhage if they knew they slept all night long with the front door unlocked.

Well, as they say, 'the shit hit the fan.' Mr. Gould called us all in and said, "no more of this."

Didn't matter what our bosses asked us to do there was no more staying overtime like that and if he did, we would be fired. Well, needless to say, nobody ever stayed over after that because we did not want to lose our jobs.

We went off salary basis and we were on an hourly basis. Our rate at the beginning was 75 cents an hour. The wages were frozen and eventually the freeze was off and the supervisors were supposed to put in for their employees.

It so happened that Anna and I worked for Mr. Ross. He wasn't a very well-liked person. I didn't particularly like him because I didn't like the way he did things. He made no effort what so ever to hand in a classification for Anna and me so we could get a raise. So, Dick Griswold who was in charge of payroll put in for us so when the freeze went off we were getting 85 cents an hour and we were called clerks #2.

Eventually besides doing insurance, I was doing bonds. Mr. Holmes was still there at that time as comptroller.

This Dave Ross, now deceased and I'm sure, as my mother would say, "He's probably picking cinders with old Nick." He did his best to undermine Mr. Holmes to such a point that Wilbur finally quit.

He went to work for Ludington-Griswold. When Willy quit, Alma quit. She went to work for Ludington-Griswold too. Eventually Mr. Holmes opened a bowling alley, but then disappeared . . . went South, I'm not sure if he remarried or not. He died in the South and is buried there. I believe it was Georgia.

Mr. Ross went on to become comptroller. But, it was a funny situation. They had not only one comptroller, they actually had four. They had Mr. Strand, Mr. Cornell, and Mr. Roundy.

Orrin Roundy was a strange man. He used to say he was a 'T'-man. He had all these calendars on the wall with these women with their bosoms exposed.

I was back doing accounts receivable and I was having a problem with a Mr. Duncan who was in accounting. This one day I went over to make a complaint to Mr. Roundy. I had this two piece navy blue dress with little artificial pockets up above the breasts with little white buttons on. I got over to his desk and said, "I'd like to talk to you Mr. Roundy."

With that he looked up at me and said, "Oh, you voluptuous creature, etc."

I got flustered and went over and sat down at my desk. I was so embarrassed I couldn't even tell him what my complaint was about, because I was very shy back in those days. It's hard to believe, but I was.

I eventually was moved out of the office and into the factory building. I worked for a man named Vincent Mallet. He was in charge of accounting. I was doing accounts receivable.

When I finished the accounts receivable, I went across the isle to the other side of the building where Mr. Mallet was. I would ask Mr. Freeburg, who was also an accountant, if there

was anything I could do to help him. Generally he would have some filing, which was alright with me, until I overheard in the ladies room one day Norma Arnold telling the other gals, "Hey, if you have any filing just let it pile up in the basket, don't sort it or anything because Edith will do it."

Well, the next time I didn't have anything to do I went over to Mr. Freeburg and I asked him if there was anything I could do. He called to the girls and said, "Do you have anything Edith can help you with?"

They said, "Oh, we've got this filing."

I said, "Sorry, I can't do filing, it bothers my fingers. It makes the flesh peel back. So if there is anything else you have for me to do, just come over and let me know, but filing, no, I can't do filing." I thought pooh on you, you thought you were pulling something over on this gal, but no way.

I finally went back in the latter part of 1945. I went back to Ivoryton. With me went accounts receivable. We weren't doing payroll at that time. Eventually we did go back to the old method of payroll which was on the bookkeeping machine and whatnot.

On the first of January 1946, we moved from the office building over into what we called the 'Kaman' building which is where they built parts for Kaman Helicopters during the war.

While we were over in the office building, this Ed Duncan who was the accountant was moved there. They had set up offices in what was always used as a conference room; the big room at the back of the building. Dick Griswold was there. He was in charge of payroll.

In the office that I had had prior to the war was another lady, off hand, I can't think of her name, maybe I will. She was doing the switchboard and was receptionist. My payroll machine was in there. I was doing payroll and accounts receivable and every time the phone would ring, she wanted me to stop because she couldn't hear what was going on when she was talking to somebody as receptionist. So a lot of times I was there waiting for her to finish talking on the phone or talking to someone through the window.

Ed Duncan wanted two desks. He ordered a desk that was to come from Deep River and Dick Griswold said there was no room for two desks, so don't bring down any desks. Well, the first thing you know, the truck comes down and there's another desk for Ed Duncan and he's telling him to put it right here. So, he's sitting there in-between the two desks.

Dick came down and saw the desks. He said, "I told you, there isn't room here for two desks." Well, he was so mad.

At the back of the room was the addressograph equipment for doing the clock cards and everything else and supplies of clock cards which were in big heavy boxes.

Well, one day all of a sudden we heard this . . . God Damn I told you . . . we heard this bang, bang, bang. Everybody upstairs was standing on the stairs saying, that's Dick. He's mad about something. Well, he was so damn mad that Duncan didn't pay any attention to him that he loaded up the top of the desk with all these boxes of clock cards, so poor Duncan, he couldn't use his desk at all, all he had was the drawers. He couldn't talk to Dick he was so mad.

In the payroll department was Cabby Hesser, Brainerd Smith, Dick Griswold and myself. I was doing payroll and accounts receivable. Brainerd . . . I don't know what Brainerd was doing. Cabby was doing bonds. Dick was in charge.

The way they had it set up, was like one room after another with partitions in between with a walkway that went right along through the offices. Mr. Duncan was in the office next door. I would be doing accounts receivable in the office next to him.

I would do the sales and then I would go in there to get the cash disbursements. Well, he was using them so I said well, when you're finished with them would you give me a call, because I could not go any further until I finished that day. Anyway, I could hear him in there. He was gabbing to somebody; meanwhile I'm waiting and waiting.

Finally, he hollered over the partition, "You can come get the cash receipts now if you want, Edith."

Just about then I was kind of cross with him because he just did it deliberately. So, I hollered back over to him "What do you think, I've got kinky hair?"

Dick heard this and got up and went into him and said, "God Damn you, you held her up, the least you could do is have the courtesy to bring the sheets in to her." So, Dick grabbed the sheets and brought them in.

Along about the end of that year, Mr. Gould said we were going to have a Christmas Party. Everybody was bringing something in. It was going to be all the offices there.

We had these trolleys that were fireproof with two box-like things; one for payroll and one for accounts receivable. You could lift out the section that had the account cards or payroll cards. They took that out and they put the booze in there. Out the window in the snow, they put the soda and whatever with it.

So, it came time and we started to party. They made us a drink. Dick went on ahead of us. Brainerd and Cabby Hesser and I weren't feeling too bad. Brainerd has his arm around each of us and we were trying to go through the door and we couldn't make it. Just about that time, Ernie Oliver, who was new then and was head of lumber, came in. We invited him to the party.

Well, he got really drunk. He was supposed to go to Schenectady that night. When he left he was so drunk. Somebody had made potato salad and he thought that was so great that

he took the platter home with him. He had it under his arm. They found it the next morning down by the lumber yard gate. He had gone home and never did get to Schenectady.

Three or four years later I met his wife for the first time. She greeted me with, "Oh, you're the one that got my husband drunk."

I don't know why she thought I did, but Cabby got drunk. I didn't drink and still didn't drink, but she (Cabby) was in the ladies room and she was so drunk. Dick told me to bring her out. If she didn't come out, he would go in and get her.

Well, he was driving her around in his car trying to sober her up. I was around with the rest of them. Finally I thought I'd better go and see what's what, because she was the one that had to give me the ride home. So I went riding with them. Oh my god, could she throw up. Finally we got her to the point where she wasn't so bad she couldn't drive. So I rode with her to her house with Dick following. He picked me up and brought me home. She had a date that night with her fiancé, but I don't think she made it.

The years may skip around as it isn't like it was in the beginning . . .

In 1947 we moved out of that building and into what finally became the office. It was an old machine shop and at one time the payroll department was along the street side, and eventually we ended up at the end of the building where the cost department had started off. The building was all portioned off with space for all the different departments. I was still doing payroll.

I remember I came down with this awful itch on my finger on a Friday night. It bothered and bothered me so that I went over to the doctor's and he said, "I think you've got the hives."

I said "I can't have. "

"Well," he said, "I think you do. I'll see you in the morning."

So, in the morning he came over. Oh, my god, they were across the edges of my ears, across my eyebrows, all over me. I was one big mess, I was one big itch.

It so happened that Brainerd was leaving to go on vacation for two weeks. I said, "No way can I go in that office and do any payroll looking and feeling the way I do."

I remember Dick came up to see what I looked like and I didn't get to hide soon enough. Oh, I was just a mess. In the end, Brainerd went in on Sunday and did most of the payroll and I agreed to go in on Monday night and finish it. Oh, what an itchy itchy mess. I was taking baths with bicarbonate of soda and everything else. I was taking milk of magnesia and one thing and another. I never saw such a mess in my life.

Mr. Ross's office was across the way from our office. We had no air conditioning there in the office. All we had was midway in the partitions we had this big fan. Dick would put the



fan on and the first thing you know, the fan would be shut off. So, he'd come down and turn it back on again, and it would be off again. It seemed that it blew on Mr. Ross' head. So, we told him to sit with his hat on.

At the Christmas party that year, everybody drew a name to give somebody a gift. As a joke, I knitted, out of different colored yarns, a hat with ear flappers. Nobody knew it but Brainerd, Dick, my girlfriend and I. I made the ear flappers to tie under the chin. We wrapped it up and we put Dave Ross' name on it. A fellow from engineering was going to play Santa Clause. We asked him to call out Ross' name and hand him the gift.

Well, wouldn't you know Alma Pearson had his name, and she shouted out, "That isn't his; I had his name, that's not his!"

Well, he was some ticked off when he got that hat. He never knew who gave it to him but one of the other men figured out who did.

When he (Ross) got ready to go home and was leaving the hat, the guy said, "No, you got to take the hat home; Helen will get a big kick out of it."

I had put a little sign on it. It said, "When the winds of the fan do blow, don't this cap instead of turning off the fan."

Dave had a Remington Rand desk light on his desk. One day we decided to play a trick on him. We went down and told Peter what we were going to do. So, we plugged the light into this other socket that we knew had a problem. And we waited. He sat down, turned on his light and started to work. The light went off. So, he turned it off, and turned it back on again. He started to work again and the light went off again. So, he stamped his foot and the light went on and then it went off. So, he shut it off and he went down to Peter's (Comstock).

We looked up and we ran over and removed the funny socket and plugged it back into the wall. He came down, sat at his desk and said, "Now you watch Peter."

He stamped his feet like mad. Peter said, "Why Dave, I don't see that there is anything wrong with that light," and off he went back to his office.

Ross didn't know what the hell it was all about.

In 1947, we moved over into what was the old machine shop, turned office building. The factory was on strike. Everybody had been laid off. I didn't get laid off because I was busy making out termination slips which we had to file so that the employees could collect unemployment.

Finally we got to the point where things were at a standstill and I took two weeks vacation to go and visit my sister out in Washington State.

Sometime prior to that we went to National Cash Register bookkeeping machine and then we were doing checks on that. We stayed in that building until 1954.

Then, we moved upstairs second floor of the building next door. On the first floor they were setting up data processing and other offices. Brainerd was no longer in payroll, but was in sales.

While we were in that office on the second floor, Pratt Read tried to diversify. They tried to get a lot of different businesses. Unfortunately, they were never very successful with that, but they did have this one plastic company and they rented them the third floor. Because of the condition of the building and the floor you could be sitting there and suddenly all these little plastic pellets would hit you on the head.

I remember engineering, production control, superintendent of the Factory and the cost departments were all on that floor.

I remember Tess Carini; she worked for engineering. She was getting tired of all this plastic hitting her on the head and going into her typewriter and what not. She rigged up this thing of big piece of cardboard or something over the top her section. They used to laugh and call it the 'Surrey with the Fringe' on top.

They were told they were not supposed to sweep up there. One Saturday morning, I was in there by myself working. All of a sudden I could hear the sweeping, and all these pellets coming down hitting me on the head. Knowing me, I went right up there and told them, "God damn it you were told not to sweep, so knock it off, I don't want all those pellets in my hair!"

They didn't dare not do what I told them so they 'ceased and desisted' we should say.

Dick Griswold was over-worked, very upset and unhappy with the way things were going. He was going to resign. But, he talked to Peter, he talked to Don Good, and he talked to the Personnel Manager. They finally persuaded him to go and work in charge of receiving, which he did. That left me to do the entire payroll while I was also doing this other job for accounting; matching up invoices with receiving slips. I also was called for jury duty. I had to spend one whole day up there before they got me excused.

I had to come back at night and work. In the meantime they were looking into data processing with IBM. We had two men; Charlie Shumway, who worked in costs, and Bud Lawton. They sent both of them over to IBM School to learn what there was to learn about data processing. One day, their instructor had to leave the room. He said he'd be back soon. Bud Lawton got up and led the class. That gave him the nickname, "AOA," Authority on Anything." When they came to choose to who would be in charge, he of course won out.

Prior to 1968, we ceased doing our own payroll. We were sending the payroll out to be done. That meant that there was a time limit to get the entire payroll together and all set so the courier could pick it up at the allotted time. I, again, was there by myself, doing all of this.

In 1968 they transferred me down into data processing. I was supposed to do just payroll, which I did. We used to have these Friden calculators that we used to calculate the payroll from the clock cards. When I moved in, Jack Klevecz, who was in charge of costs asked me if I needed my calculator. I said yes I did. So when they brought it in Mr. Lawton said, "Put it right on my desk."

Well, I never did see the calculator. Someone said, "how come he's got the calculator?"

I said, "Well, he told them to put it there, who am I?"

They said "What did he do before?"

I said, "I don't know, maybe he used wooden beads."

He was a very strange man, tall and skinny. He wore this black gabardine rain coat and had this peculiar stride, so I nick-named him 'Digger O'Dell, the friendly undertaker,' from the radio program *Fibber McGee and Molly*. If he got a cold, he'd keep blowing his nose on his handkerchief and it got so saturated he'd open up his bottom drawer and hang right over it; cripes, germs all over the place.

When I moved in there was Bud, Sandy McLean, and this Brad (I can't remember Brad's last name.) Well, Sandy and Brad, all they did was fight. They were always fighting about something. I was there awhile, about three or four months, and all the time this fighting is going on between the two of them. Bud was sitting over there in the corner totally oblivious to what is going on.

I'm supposed to learn how to do key punch and what not, and nobody is doing much to teach me. They taught me one operation and that was all. Well, this one day something happened to the attendants' cards. They got punched wrong or something was wrong with them. So, they had a problem. I don't remember if Brad blamed Sandy or Sandy blamed Brad, but anyway, Brad got really mad and he hollered and shouted and used some not very nice names about Sandy. So, Sandy went over to Bud and said, "Are you going to let him get away with that? If you don't do something about it, I will."

Well, with that Bud got up and he called Brad and they went out. Pretty soon, Bud came back all himself and said, "Brad won't be with us anymore."

Evidentially they fired Brad. He got a certain length of time to pack his things up and go. So then they were scouting around for someone to take Brad's place. Here this lady had come to work only a short while before and was working out in the factory, but had experience and knowledge in data processing. Her name was Jean Maynard. Jean joined the data processing department. Eventually she went on to be second underneath the head honcho that ran it. Bud ended up somewhere else and we ended up with this other guy named Phil Einsman. I used to call him the 'Commandant of Stalag 18.' I don't think he liked me and I didn't like him.

I never did become a wiz-bang at data processing. I guess I did alright at some of the jobs they gave me. I did the payroll, did the checking it and whatnot.

Through the time that I worked in Data Processing, we had many different people work there. We had one weirdo, Melinda. She really was some cookie. My niece, Alicia DeForest worked there, Perkins, (can't remember her first name) Marge Anderson, Belle Kiley, Bea Cochran, Doreen, Joanna Preston, a little bitty short thing; I asked her what size dress she wore and she said four. I asked "Toddler size?"

Let's not forget Hat Winslow. Hat, Jean and I became good friends and remained so. Finally in 1982, I said I'd had enough and I retired. I had a great retirement party. Everybody said it was the best damn party that anybody ever had at Pratt Read.

They had one of these 'Man-O-Grams'. The guy came in with his big cowboy hat on and his tight-fitting pants and wrap-around top. He had his boom box, a tray with a glass of wine, a rose and a scroll. Everybody was just standing there with their mouths hanging open; they didn't know what to expect, I didn't either. I wasn't aware of it but that was a gift from the data processing girls, Jean, Harriet, and Bea Cochran.

I had been going to retire in July 1982, but in June we had the great flood that practically wiped out the place, so I agreed to stay on until such time as things got straightened out. I did continue on until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.

Dick Barber, the young man that worked in accounting, took over my job. He gave me this big album. Steve Earl, who was then personnel manager, put all these pictures in it that were taken at my retirement party. There are some wiz-bangs in there and then I decided that I would put that to the back of the album and I decided that I would fill the front of the album with pictures of my life. Almost 16 years after I retired, I finally got the album finished, well not quite yet!

I am sure there is a lot more that I could say. One little incident that I thought was funny was that on one of my anniversaries I went over to see Peter. Peter and I were very good friends. Peter started work a month and a year before I did and he retired two weeks after I did. So I went over to see him on this one anniversary. I told him this was the day 'I backed in to get my reward.' I said, "You know when I was hired I was so busy that I divided 65 by 4 to see how much I was going to get a week. I didn't know what I was getting into."

He said, "Is that what you started at, \$65.00 a month?"

I said yes. He said so did I. I said, "Yeah, but some difference now."

"Yeah, you know Charlotte (his wife) can't get anybody to come in and clean, they want \$25.00."

I said, "Who's talking about that? I'm talking about some difference with what I'm getting and what you're getting! Ha, Ha, Ha!!" Did he laugh.

He had approached me a year or so before and wanted to know when I retired if I would come up and work with him in his museum that he had started on the third floor. It grew to be called the *Pratt Read Ivory Museum*. I told him that I'd think about it.

Some of the people there said, why do you want to go and work for him for? You could write a book with the stories that had happened here. We'd back you up. I said, no, I don't think so.

In October of 1982 I started working in the museum. They gave me the title of Curator. I worked there until 1989 in January when the museum was closed.

Prior to November, 1988, Pratt Read had sold the building to Sohmer (Piano Company). They had to pay rent for offices and museum space and they could not afford it. Peter was no longer President; he was just a retiree like I was. His nephew, Woody (Harwood B.), Comstock, was President and in charge. He just didn't have the money or wouldn't spend the money. We tried different people to keep it in tact but no one could afford to build a place for it or keep it that way.

Quite by accident, a gentleman from the Smithsonian was in the area, looking at museums and he had heard about the Ivory Museum. He did not know that we were looking for a home. It wasn't until I was taking him on a tour and I mentioned we were disposing of the museum.

When he heard this, I said "Maybe I could get some ivory for the Smithsonian." With that he was down the stairs like a flash, talking to Woody. In two weeks time, they had signed an agreement.

So, the museum was packed up and given to the Smithsonian. It was not a very pleasant experience to deal with the Smithsonian. Four of them converged upon me. They were all over the place. They were in places they shouldn't have been and made themselves not that much welcome. As a matter of fact, on one occasion I made the remark, "those Smithsonians were something else. Don't open your mouth or they'll take the filling right out of your teeth."

I said it; I meant it, and today I would say it all over again. I guess it is a good place for the stuff to be but they don't know how to handle things, they are just like vultures.

So, I ended up as Curator of the Deep River Historical Society, and, oh, kind of nuts over that, but it keeps the cobwebs out of my head, keeps me young. Wahoo!

I'm going to finish this tape, and possibly another one. I would like to recall some of those people who played a part in my years at Pratt Read, some with pleasant memories, some with not.

As I said, one of the first people I met was Brainerd Smith. Brainerd and I got along very well together. We're still friends today, though we don't see that much of each other. But he had the same weird sense of humor that I had and we got on very well.

I met Dick Griswold in 1938 when we moved to Ivoryton. He was an old Comstock Cheney employee, about ten years older than me. He was in charge of shipping.

In the factory building across the street there was this large factory office. Mr. Jopson, superintendent of the factory, had his office there. Dick's office was there. Harry Tomlinson who was in charge of maintenance had his office there and Rob Rankin was there a lot even though his office was in the Crow's Nest, as we called it, on the same floor of the same building.

Rob was a funny man, a nice man, but he was a big tease. On one occasion just as noon hour ended I went over to the factory office. I don't remember who I was going to see. Rob grabbed me and sat me on his knee. He wouldn't let me go and I was frantic. I knew it was about time for Mr. Jopson to return from lunch and I figured when he saw that, I'd be fired on the spot. Finally, Rob let me go before Jopson got there. Rob was an engineer.

They had hired an efficiency expert. His name was Renfu Stevenson. They called him 'Renfu the Mounted.' He did come from Canada. He was a funny man. On one occasion he was out in the mill with a sheet with all rates of all the men who worked in the mill. He dropped it on the floor and before he could pick it up, one of the fellows from the mill picked it up.

Well, he requested it back, and they would not give it to him. It got passed all around and all hell broke loose because then everybody knew what everybody else was getting. Here, they'd hired him to get everything to be efficient and save them money and almost off the bat he almost caused a riot.

He was also located in this big area where Dick, and Harry were. He was building some kind of boxes to put cards or something in. When he'd be out of the room, Dick and Harry would go over there and they'd fish around with these boxes making them into birdhouses and everything else. Of course, he got very annoyed and very upset. He couldn't do much about it because he didn't know who did it.

Over there, there was another gentleman named Mr. Gaylord. He was a big tall man. I don't remember why he was there, he wasn't a regular employee, but evidentially he was working on some project. He would sit at his desk and if other people were in there talking, he would sit with his back towards them with his elbows propped up and he'd have his hands cupping his ears so that he could hear what was going on in back of him. They used to get the

biggest charge out of that. They would say all kinds of things to him, so he would hear it just as a joke.

Harry also served as our 'nurse.' I remember one time I caught my thumb in the safe door where we used to put the payroll envelopes prior to being stuffed with pay to get ready for payroll. I ran over to Harry and said, "Do something! "

"What can I do, he said, I can't do anything, you've already done it, you'll have to go to the doctor."

I did go to the doctor and he said I would loose the nail, which I did, and today I still have a mark right there on the left-hand thumb where it got caught in the door. I also, on the same hand on the middle finger, have another indentation. That came during the war when I almost shut the vault door on my finger. I guess I'm a little accident prone.

Another person that I got a big charge out of was Truman Dengler. Truman used to work in the action department; after the war, he was in quality control.

He was married and had two sons and a daughter, but I guess Truman got to drinking and his wife divorced him. I think he continued on with his drinking. The story is that he would be sitting in his office with his feet up on his desk with his head back on the chair and be sound asleep because, I guess, he'd been out drinking the night before.

They decided that they were going to move his office to another office. They just picked him up, chair and all; somebody held his feet and moved him. He never woke up at all until he was ready to go home; here he was in another office.

During the early to mid 50s, we had these office picnics at Cedar Lake. Everybody in the office would go there.

They would have hamburgers, hotdogs and of course, drink. Those that wanted to could go swimming.

There was a gentleman down the road that had a big corn field that went all the way down the road. The guys would go down there, park the car there, and walk up. They were helping themselves through the fence that was by the road to the corn. The dog would be barking, the farmer would tell the dog to shut up, there was nothing going on, and here were the guys stealing him blind!

Brainerd and I would prefer to have a little food. He'd start cooking the hamburgers. On occasion, Truman would help him, but of course, Truman liked to drink and we finally had to stop him because he was dropping the hamburgers into the ashes and getting to have to eat all the hamburgers!

We had another man who worked there, Pooch Crivelli. His name was Aldo but everyone called him Pooch. He was married to Winnie Hilley who was the daughter of Ed Hilley who was in charge of purchasing when we were in Ivoryton.

When the picnic was over, Pooch would look around and clean up and wherever he saw a liquor bottle with just some liquor in it, he'd pack it in his car and take it home. On this one occasion, we had an empty gin bottle and we went down and filled it between a quarter and a half with Cedar Lake water. Of course, he didn't know and he picked it up and took it home.

A few months later, he came in one day and said, "God damn you."

We said "What is the matter?"

He said, "Remember that bottle of gin that was there left over from the picnic?"

We said, "Yeah."

He said, "Well, I took that home and I was mowing the lawn and getting hot and sweaty. I thought oh boy, I'll go and make myself a gin and tonic; Jesus, Cedar Lake water!"

We said, "That's what you get for grabbing everything."

I liked Truman. Truman was fun. I enjoyed Pooch; he was also a lot of fun. Truman is deceased, Pooch is deceased, Peter is gone, and Dick Griswold is gone. We had another young man, Granny Young. He worked in accounting. He was the most fun that anyone could ask for. He was a riot. Unfortunately, Granny died very unexpectedly the end of the year that Peter died. He died December 1994.

We also had another fellow, George Waido. I think George did time study. George was a great big tall string bean.

We had this other young man, named Bill Roberts. Bill was a little bitty short man. Many a time there's pictures of George and Bill and George had got his hands sticking out over Bill's head to show the spaces in between them.

Another man was Paul Orlando. Paul is Italian. He used to sign things on occasion 'GG.' I never asked what the 'G.G.' stood for, but one day he said to me "Do you know what 'G.G.' stands for?" I said "No."

He said, "Well, George Waido gave me that nickname. He says 'Gallopig Guinea'!"

And then there was the personnel manager, Don Morrison. Don was getting bald and George named him 'Chrome Dome.' We had another man who really was bald . . . he named him 'Chrome Dome II.'

Some of the girls in the office used to put a quarter a week away. When they got two or three dollars they'd go out to lunch. They'd go from twelve to one o'clock; we only had a half hour lunch. On one occasion they decided to stay longer . . . it got to be 1:30 and on to quarter to two.

I did not belong to the group because as I was working in payroll I couldn't take the extra time. Well, this time, Peter was looking for a girl to take some dictation and he was very very upset so the directive came down that if they wanted to go out, they'd have to go out after



work. They could no longer go out at lunch time because they had abused the privilege. Well, George nicknamed them the 'Broom-riders.' Some of us are still around. We've had one ride already and hopefully we'll have our last ride October, 1998, if we can get them together.

I mentioned Ernie Oliver in 1947 at the Christmas party. Ernie thought he was a ladies man. Well, he wasn't. Unfortunately Ernie had a speaking problem. But, he still thought he was God's gift to women. Even though he wasn't, he was a good egg. He was a lot of fun when he wasn't trying to be a ladies' man. Ernie had a speech impediment, he kind of stuttered. Right off the top of my head I can't remember what I was going to say about Ernie. But, he's gone too.

So many of them have died; when you look back and you reminisce, you miss them all. Dick Barber who was a very good friend of Granny Young and also Bill Roberts. Granny used to make this eggnog, I think it was a Swedish recipe, and one time it almost exploded on him.

Dick Barber, he's down South now working. I hear from him at Christmas time. He always says it's time for him to make Granny's eggnog. He toasts Granny every year, and last year he had Bill to toast, if the eggnog didn't blow up. I haven't heard from him, so I don't know if the eggnog blew up or not.

Alma Pearson was a good soul. She was bossy, and thought she owned and ran the place. If she overheard any comments even if they were made to someone else confidentially, she was running to Peter, Mr. Holmes or someone to report what she heard. Her mouth got a lot of people into trouble. She died at almost the age of 96 years old.

Ebba Anderson was Dick Griswold's sister-in-law. I liked Ebba. She was down to earth, and a good egg. It was said that she was having an affair with Mr. Jopson who was superintendent. Maybe she was, maybe she wasn't, but I figured it was none of my business what she did outside of the office. She died in 1980; we used to have good times with her too.

We had one episode that kind of put an end to our picnics. We had this huge big picnic out at Cockaponset Forrest. There were a bunch of us there. There was a new fellow that worked in engineering, his name was Dave Simpson. There was Tony LoCastro; I don't know exactly what his job was. There was Jack Klevecz who was in charge of the cost department. Judge Sposato also Costa was there, along with Dick Griswold, me, and several of the girls.

There was one girl there, Harriet Kosky, she'd brought her bathing suit, and she was going in for a swim. So, David Simpson said, "gee I'd like to go in for a swim, but I don't have a suit."

Bob Neff said, "Well, I've got a suit, you can borrow it."

He went and got the suit. Of course, there had been some liquor there and some drinking and what not. Simpson was a short chubby little man and Bob Neff was not of that

shape, but the guy got into the trunks. They were really straining. He went in for a swim and he came out. Harriet had gone in for a swim and she came out. He was standing there talking and the first thing you know, Jack Klevecz, who as I say had been drinking, got out his jackknife and he just clipped the string in the back. Thank God it was the back of the bathing trunks and of course because of the fact that this guy was really tucked in there, they just separated. He was embarrassed, grabbed them and ran. Everybody was amazed and they were mad.

The party broke up. That was the last picnic we had. As Judge Sposato says, if this story got out or somebody saw something, he'd be in serious trouble that this kind of stuff was going on in a state park. That was the grand finale of our picnics. It was too bad, because we really did have a good time.

However, there was one other small picnic after that.

We had this girl that did the billing. Her name was Lina Clark. Lina had a bad drinking problem. Her husband died very suddenly. She was at the picnic; Pooch was at the picnic, Brainerd, me, Charlie Shumway, Leroy Carter, Jack Heinzman who was new and a foreman in the drill department, Eleanor Lintleman, Betty Forrest, and a few others.

Leroy and Lina went down into the center of Chester; we were out at Cockaponset, to buy some more booze. They came back and we were eating and everything and finally, Lina says, "Why don't you come back to my house, I've got a record player, that might need a little something done to it, but we can get it playing and we can have music and dancing."

So, everybody said yes, in a half-hearted fashion. Well, I asked Brainerd if he would give me a ride home, which he did; I didn't drive. Leroy Carter took Betty home. Pooch took Lina.

The next morning Pooch comes down and says "Where the hells were you guys?"

We said, "Why, what's the matter?"

He said, "Well, I thought we were all going to Lina's.

I went to Lina's and we get into the house and she says, "I'll be right back down, I want to go put clean sheets on the bed."

He said, "With no body showing up, I got the hell out of there as fast as I could!"

We said chuckling, "Well, we'd didn't say we were going to Lina's." We felt so sorry for poor Pooch, he was so upset.

For about 26 years there was no one but my Mother and I together. My older sister used to come every other week for the weekend. My brother was married and had his own problems. My other sister was married and living in the South. My Mother hung on to me for dear life because she did not want to be alone, so she and I lived together for 26 years.

After she died, I kind of came out of my cocoon. I'm telling you we had some real good times. The girls in the office used to go out quite a bit. The girls had their own Christmas parties and different occasions. The data processing girls, 3 or 4 of them, used to go out to

dinner; we had good times. Jean and Hat and I still meet at least three times a year at least for birthdays. We go down to the Griswold Inn and the other two girls will buy the 'Birthday Girl' a couple of drinks and then we go, have another drink and something to eat. Then we go home, generally that's about all we see each other.

Occasionally we might get together in between, but not that often. We'll reminisce about the different parties and things that we did. I remember one St. Patrick's Day that happened to be on a Thursday; the day we got paid. We all used to send our check to the bank to get cashed, so we would all have our cash. We decided we were going to go over to the Steak Club over in Waterford or Groton, somewhere over there. We had our drink, we had dinner then we wanted to go somewhere where there was some St. Patrick's Day stuff going on.

So, we went over to Ramada Inn and got in to the cocktail lounge and realized that they had a bunch of Spaniards performing there but we were there so we had another drink. I was the one that was driving. I guess God must have been on one of my shoulders. I was alright, but I think if I had to have made a quick decision we might have been in trouble.

From there we went to this little place in Saybrook, next to the Saybrook Convalescent Home. It was a little Irish restaurant and we had another drink. Some guy came up wanted to know if I'd do the Charleston with him. I said yes, but of course I wasn't that good at doing the Charleston, but I don't know what the hell he thought the Charleston was because we were not doing that!

From there we left and went to McNulty's which is in Ames. By then I wasn't drinking. I was alert enough that I realized I had all my pay in my pocketbook so I was just hanging around there half alive hanging onto my pocketbook for dear life. We got ready to go home, my niece, Jean, Harriet and I. Hat's husband had shown up at McNulty's so she was going home with him. So Jean, as we came out said, "I'll drive" and Alicia said "I'll drive," and I said it's alright, "I'll drive."

Well they put me in the back seat. Alicia and Jean were in the front. They gave me the bucket there in case I needed it. They dropped off Jean; I don't remember them dropping off Jean. I don't even remember getting into the house and into bed.

When I woke up the next morning, oh boy, my clothes were all over the floor in the bathroom. I was alright, but when I got to work I was in sad shape.

Jerry, who I didn't like and he didn't particularly like me, kept watching as I kept running upstairs to the bathroom and taking aspirin. Jean said, "Why don't you go home?"

Well, I came down after one of my trips and decided that that was what I needed to do. But Jerry was there, so I went over to Jean hacking and coughing and putting on a good act, and said. "Oh, Jean, oh, this cold is really getting me, I think I'll go home."

And home I went to sober up. That was the last time that anything like that ever happened. God Bless us.

Another time Alicia and 'adorable Marge Anderson,' Jean, Hat and I went over to Wallingford to the Yankee Silversmith Inn. I was driving but I would have one little drink and that was all. We went into the car where they served the liquor. There was some guy there playing the piano. Hat had had a couple of drinks so she went over and sat down. She was singing and trying to play. He was singing a song to her and everything. Finally, he said to her "Well, I'm over at the Yale Inn (which was next door), why don't you come over and I'll buy you a drink." Off he went.

Hat told us about it, so we said okay, and all of us trooped over there. He was in the cocktail lounge and here we all come in. There was nothing he could do but buy all of us a drink and then he disappeared! I think he thought he was going to get Hat all by herself but here come all her protectors.

One particular time, I don't know whether it was Christmas or what, but we were all going to go to the Griswold, all of us girls. Marge Anderson came up to the house so she could clean up and change her clothes. I had just bought these new towels, green ones and pink ones. I happened to put the green ones out. Marge is in the bathroom washing up and when she came out. Her face was all green. I don't know what was wrong with the towels, but all the color came out. I got her an old towel and she cleaned up again.

I was riding with Marge and we picked up Alma Pearson. We had something to eat. I forget what I had but I was drinking Grasshoppers. I was fine until I got into the backseat of the car and suddenly I got deathly sick.

I remember that Lina had gotten married again and Alma had gone to her wedding and had shown the pictures around. She gave them to me to take to show to the ones that didn't come and the men. I thought I had put them in my little evening purse – thank God, they were not – they were in my pocket.

We had Alma sitting in the front seat of Marge's car; I was sitting in the back. Well, my God as soon as she started the car, I started and oh, I was upchucking. I got so deathly sick. Thank God the pictures were not in the evening purse because that poor thing is a mess even today. I tried to clean it up but it was one mess.

Alma had crocheted me this little poodle. You take its head off and inside is a little bottle of Southern Comfort. I gave it to her niece, Sally.

Marge dropped me off, I don't remember going in the house or anything but about 3 o'clock in the morning the first thing I thought of was where were those pictures. I remembered how sick I was and how I was heaving so. I looked and my underwear was on the floor, but

nothing else. I came downstairs and my coat was in the hallway stretched out, my dress was in the kitchen.

Apparently the iron had been on the table and that was on the floor with the plastic table cloth. But, underneath my coat in the pocket were the pictures. So, thank god, nothing had happened to them, but I couldn't find my poodle.

The next day I went to see somebody else that had been there and said, "You know, somebody stole my poodle."

Well, when I came back to my desk, there was the poodle. I said, "Where did that come from?"

Marge said "You dropped it."

I said, "I dropped it where?"

She said, "You dropped it when you got out of the car at your house, and I picked it up. You were in no shape to take it, so I took it home with me."

That was another total disaster. I blamed it on the food but I think it was the Grasshoppers.

Another incident I remember was that a couple of times we went out either on New Years or the last day of work before New Years or Christmas. We went down to Howard Johnson's. I think this time happened to be before New Years.

We would have a couple of drinks and then on our way. No one would get drunk or anything as far as I know. But this one time I had a party that I was going to that night and I wanted to get out of there.

I started out but it was icy. We had had a lot of ice and snow and the ice was still there. I slipped on the ice. I didn't hurt myself, but I couldn't get up. I was trying to crawl towards my car and get on my feet, but I couldn't. Finally, I crawled back to the doorway and I hitched myself up. I open the door and said, "Could somebody please come out here and help me get to my car?"

Well, a couple of guys came out, I don't know whether they had better shoes than I had on, but they each got me under the elbow and they practically carried me and put me in the car. So that was another episode to remember.

Mary Rayner is a very dear friend. I met her back around 1950. When I got my driver's license in 1954 she was the only one that would drive with me that day when they came to the office to deliver the car. She's been riding with me ever since. We are very dear dear friends. She was with me when my mother died and if it had not been for her I do not know how I would have survived.

We often went on vacations, eventually taking her sister Hazel along with us. Mary had one of these kits where you carried your liquor and the stuff that went with it, the cups and all. The first thing we would do when she and I went on vacation was to get ice. She always brought a bottle of champagne and we'd put the bottle to cool.

The first time that we went for a couple of days to Vermont, my mother was still alive and my sister came to stay with her. We were looking all around for a liquor store. We asked someone and they said, "The state liquor store? It's right in back of you."

Well, we had a drink and Mary got into bed and fell asleep, and I thought gee you don't want the maid to know we're drinking. So, I was washing the glasses, putting the liquor away, locking it up so no one would know that we were drinking.

When we took her sister Hazel with us, Mary made this little sign and it said "HEM Bar" that was for Hazel, Edith and Mary and everywhere we went we'd set up the little sign on the writing table and put out all the booze and everything.

We had a very good time. We saw lots of places, we went to Williamsburg (I drove), and we went to Niagara Falls right after I retired. Peter was kidding because he knew we were going, and said "Why don't you push her right over the falls?"

Mary said, "Well, I'll do the best I can."

We got there and here was this place where you could go and get in the barrel and could have your picture taken and look as though you were going over the falls. It was five dollars and they would put it on a post card and you could mail it. I said, "Let's just do that."

Mary and Hazel got on either side of me and they posed with frightened looks on their faces as though they were trying to hold the barrel back. When the woman said, when she counted three, for me to open my mouth and scream just as loud as I could. Well, I did and damn it if the picture didn't come out great, but I said I'm not going to mail it through the mail he'll probably keep it. I waited until I got back and I showed it to him and he got some big kick out of it. I said, "Well, Mary tried to do what you wanted but I fooled her."

I started in the museum in October, I may have previously said December, but it was October. The next year, 1983 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my high school graduation and I was going to go. Jimmy Tucker worked up in the museum with Peter and me. The two of them were like a couple of clowns, kidding me about my "50<sup>th</sup> graduation" and all this stuff.

At the same time, we were planning in November, Mary Hazel and I, to go to Bermuda. It seem that there was this one gentlemen down in Bermuda that everybody seem to know and so Peter said to me, "When you get down there, you go and see this person," and he gave me the man's name. He said, "It's all set up, he's going to give you the name of some restaurants down there and you check them out and you see which one you like, then you let him know

and he'll take care of making all the arrangements, for you, Hazel and Mary to go out to dinner on me."

We thought that was very nice of him to do that. It was Halloween when we went there. We looked up this man and we picked out this Russian restaurant. It was very nice, everything, even the chairs and linens were red. We had a drink and a very nice meal and everything and really enjoyed it. We thanked him very much. I would have loved knowing what it had cost, but I don't think I did.

But, it was funny one day, a while after we were back, because he (Peter) was in another office talking on the phone and we heard him say to this person, "Now how much did you say that was?" He repeated a figure, right now the figure doesn't come to me but it was pretty substantial figure. He said, "Well, okay," and he said the name of the man who made the arrangements, "I'll put a check in the mail." I thought, oh my god is that how much that cost? But we had a very lovely time and enjoyed it.

#### AT THIS POINT A DIFFERENT VOICE COMES ON THE TAPE

My two friends, Jean and Hat are with me on my front porch. . . Hat begins:

"Today is September 30, 1999. It is Edie's celebration of 17 years of retirement after working 45 years at good old Pratt Read. Wow. Jean and I are here enjoying the sun porch and having a drink of course. Edie is our story teller; her memory is phenomenal. Our get togethers are always fun. Wish I could tell a story as well, but one thing I can say always tickled me. Paul Orlando always called me Hazel and still does. Oh, Edie help me."

That was Hat Winslow. I wanted Jean and Hat to each tell some little funny incident they had because some of them I don't remember. They're going to come back another day and we'll record a conversation. We'll probably hop around all over the place, but at least we can get it down for posterity.

Of course, I don't know who's going to be around in posterity to want to listen to it but hey it should be fun. I've enjoyed doing it, and I enjoy reminiscing. I can't say the last 17 years have been anything but pleasant. I've enjoyed my retirement. I've kept busy and that's the most you can say and I hope I have a few more, but that is up to the good Lord, and not to me or anybody else.

I want to go back and tell about when Mary and I started going on little trips by ourselves. The first one we made to Williamsburg. We went beyond Washington into Virginia and stayed over night. We stopped at this motel and after we got our room, we went to the restaurant to eat. I hadn't gotten to the drinking because I'm not quite sure whether that was

while my mother was still alive or not. Mary ordered a bottle of wine and we each had a drink. Of course, the rest of the wine was left there . . .wanna bet?

When we got ready to leave Mary said, "Well, I'm not going to leave this for them." So, she just put it up her sleeve and walked out with the bottle up her sleeve. Of course, when we got back to the motel we had another drink, and I'm sure we had a couple more before we finished the wine.

One funny incident was that there were busses that you go into Williamsburg and you ride around and get off at the different exhibits or interesting things to see.

We got quite a kick out of it because on television there was an advertisement for Haley's MO (milk of magnesia). There was this old lady with this very prissy look on her face. We got to giggling so because on the bus down there, because this lady that sat down and she was a dead image of this one here that advertised the Haley's MO!

On another one of our trips, Hazel was with us and we drove up to go and spend a day at Nantucket. I think then we only stayed for weekends. We stopped at Woods Hole overnight.

Of course as I said we had all the different types of booze with us and whether I was sampling different ones or not, I don't know. But, I got a little bit inebriated and we went for dinner. They told us that it would be a little wait and that we could wait in the cocktail lounge. We said, "No, we'd wait elsewhere."

Their idea was to get you into the cocktail lounges so you could buy all this booze and maybe you never ever did make it to dinner. Well, that's what almost happened to us except that Mary was a little bit smarter than Hazel and I. She finally figured we'd waited long enough. She kept seeing people leaving and so she went to investigate to see if she could find any seats. She did find a table so she came back and got us.

Well, they weren't too happy about that but there was nothing they could do. We had our dinner and the next day we got up in the morning and got on the ferry that took us over to Nantucket for the day.

A few years before, my sister and I had spent a two week vacation on Nantucket. We had rented a bicycle and I think that we had an English one with the brake on the handle bars; the American one was where you reversed the pedals, but I'm not sure. Anyway, the one without the brake on the handle bar was \$5 a week and the other was \$7.50.

Lillian being the thrifty person she is and was and always will be decided we only needed the \$5 one, so that's what we rented. We went to this little dead end street to practice. She got on the bike and started down, and I was getting on mine when I heard this commotion and this "HELP!" and she's on the ground.

I pedaled down there to see what's wrong and she wants to know how to stop the bike. I said, "Well, you reverse the pedals."



“Well, the hell with this,” she says, so we go back we go with the bike and we give them \$2.50 more for each one and we get the ones with the brake on the handle bar. We had quite a time. We used to ride every day to the beach. It was quite a long ride and we really enjoyed it.

So, when Mary, Hazel and I went, I thought I would have no problems when we rented a bike to ride around for the time we were on the island. Apparently the bike they rented me the seat was too high. I’m kind of short legged and so I was having kind of a problem; I was on the ground more than I was on the bike.

Even so we had a very good time. We always did when we went together.

I haven’t done much on this tape, just reviewing it. Probably this part does not belong on this tape because this was a tape of life begins at 48 – good times.

And now, the sad times. . . Jean Maynard, Hat Winslow and I; we three worked together at Pratt Read in data processing. I retired in 1982, Jean retired in 1986, I’m not sure exactly when Hat did but it was in between. We used to get together the three of us for our birthdays. We would go to the Griswold about 4 o’clock on a Thursday nearest our birthday. We would have a couple of drinks. The two others would buy the birthday girl her drinks. We would talk, laugh and reminisce. Then we would go either to the Black Seal or Oliver’s to have a bite to eat and that was the end of our celebration. We did see each other occasionally in between.

Previously on this tape, you heard about some of our talks on my front porch. On May 8<sup>th</sup> this year, 2001 I was getting ready to go to a Pratt Read white collar reunion at the Elks in Westbrook. It was about 11 o’clock in the morning. I received this call from Ledyard Maynard. He said, “Edie, I have some sad news to give you he said Jeannie died this morning.”

It seems she had gotten up, had breakfast, got dressed went into living room, sat down on the couch and keeled over. They called 911. I don’t know whether they took her to the clinic or the hospital, but she died of a massive heart attack. Her calling hours were on Thursday and her funeral on Friday.

We will miss her; Hat and I will try to continue with our birthdays, it won’t be the same.

There’s an old saying and it applies two ways. One is when you hear of a death, you’re going to hear of another, three all together. It also applied on the street. If there was one death on the street, there were going to be three. I was hoping that I wouldn’t hear of any more right away. But on May 22, Betty Vincent, who lived on Ingram Hill Road and worked with me at Pratt Read, in fact she was working there when she and Earl got married in 1955. She retired or left in 1960 to stay at home and being a homemaker. She died of cancer. That was my second death.

Then, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, also 2001, I received my call for my third death. That was my childhood friend, Roberta Meinsen Dinnean. I first met her in New Haven in 1924 when I was 9 years old. She married and I didn't. She had three children. Her husband Vincent died of cancer in 1981. I could not go to her funeral. I'm too nervous about driving in New Haven now, even though I lived there for years. Everything has changed around, so many one way streets. I would have been with her at the end but I couldn't. I shall miss her but I figured it was for the best because she was very very sick and it broke my heart to see her so pathetically thin.

I moved into the neighborhood in 1924 (New Haven). There were six of us, at least in the summertime there were six because one of my playmates came from Hartford and spent the summer with his grandmother who lived next door to me. Those are all gone. There's just the youngest one and myself, the oldest left. Roberta was the oldest, I was next, because my birthday was December and hers was October and then there were brother and sister, William Pollack and Margaret Pollack, they were both red heads and fought like cats and dogs. Whenever William would beat-up on Margaret, the rest of us would jump all over him. There was Danny Tullock. Danny was the one that spent summers there. He's gone, the Pollacks are gone, and Roberta's gone. All that's left is Betty Birney who now lives in California. She was the youngest I believe. She was five years younger than Roberta and I. Oh, dear, how time does go on . . . all this sadness.

That was not to be the end when I lost Roberta. The next sad thing that was to happen was in November I got a call from Betty Smith, Brainerd's wife. She called to tell me that Brainerd had died that day. I had not known that he was so sick. He and I were very good friends all through the years. He was the first one I met when I started at Pratt Read. He was next to the last. . . I am the only one left of that group there. And, it is sad.

Just to end this tape, there were twelve of us in that office: Roberta Blanchard, she died in 1995, Ed Hilley, he died in 1963, George Seeley, he died in 1973, I already told you about Ebba dying in 1980 and Alma dying in 1995, and Brainerd in 2001. There was a Laura Rockwell, I don't know her date. Eva Bohling Gilbert died in 2001. Lillian died in 1984. Mr. Gould died in 1973 and Wilbur, or Willie as we called him, Holmes died in 1948.

That should bring this tape to an end because there is only me and nobody will probably want to add me on. Thank you for listening. This has been a big treat to do this and it means a lot to me. I decided the tapes belonged to Pratt, Read and Company. I gave them to President Woody Comstock on June 19, 2007. It is December 28, 2007. On December 16, I reached 92 years of age.

I hope people who listen to them in the future enjoy them as much as I enjoyed making them and can really visualize what it was like to be an employee of Pratt, Read and Company for forty-five years.