

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

AT CHAPEL HILL

SOUTHERN ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**Piedmont Social History Project**

Interview

with

HARRY AND JANIE ADAMS

May 11, 1979

Burlington, N.C.

By Allen Tullos

Transcribed by Stephanie M. Alexander

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The Southern Historical Collection  
Louis Round Wilson Library

## BEGIN TAPE IV SIDE I

AT: Now what kind--what is this machine, that's a Draper?

ADAMS: That's known as the Model L loom for broad sheeting. I worked at that Dan River Mill in Schoolfield, had I believe it was twenty-five of 'em. 'Course I had somebody fill my batteries. But the loom was so wide at that time, people made a remark that the shuttle would go up of a morning and come back that evening. Because the material was so wide. Ninety-one inch material it was running. This is known as a worsted loom here. You run suiting, overcoats, and stuff like that on it you know. Worsted suits.

AT: Worsted doesn't necessarily mean wool does it?

ADAMS: Yeah, it's a combination mix. It's a certain amount of harnesses that had to go in that kind of stuff to run that worsted. You see you got a bunch of harnesses in here. This is known as a harness. This has just two harnesses here, run that sheeting. When you get over in that worsted stuff, you got to have more harness, maybe up to sixteen or maybe twenty harnesses up there, all in a frame, all hanging in a frame. And this dobby head up here works that back and forth.

AT: Now did you ever operate one of these?

ADAMS: No, I never did fool with none of them. But I have--well I have messed with some too with the broad stuff there, but I don't remember it being worsted on it, it was something else. You can run different kinds of stuff on it. But now, we run that suiting stuff down at Danville on a Draper machine. That there is a much heavier machine than this Draper. That's known as a regular worsted loom, modified D. That's with the Model D.

AT: But you did use one of these.

ADAMS: Yeah this is the old fashioned Draper.

AT: And you say you would have twenty-five of those?

ADAMS: Yeah, they'd put twenty-five of 'em on you. That's to run that wide sheeting. Now we have run that narrow sheeting for hospitals on a little bitty little Draper, you know thirty-six inches or forty-two inches wide. But now that little old Draper'd just set there like--I don't see how in the world it stayed on the floor, it run so fast.

AT: Well, if you were running these twenty-five, what would your job be. What would you have to do, how would you have to keep 'em running?

ADAMS: Well, you see, you've got electric stop motions back behind. When a end breaks it stops automatically. Well it's supposed to, when a thread breaks on a filling it's supposed to stop off for you. If they got the electric part working like it ought to be. And all you have to do then is restart it.

AT: Any one of those threads can break?

ADAMS: Yeah, either one of the thread. You got a whole big warp. This back here is your warp. And that's got maybe, it could be 25,000 yards on that one warp see. Just like it's got on here. And so that warp got gears you know, and it run to roll it up here on the front. You got gears to take the cloth up and you run a roll about that big before it's took off. And then you got what they call a cut mark on that cloth, on that yarn, and when it comes up you're supposed to cut it off there where that cut mark comes up. A dark blue cut mark stamped on the warp over where they maked it warp. Well when that comes up. . . . And then if you think it's gone over, you think you done made a mistake and they

ain't found it. Take you a quill and measure six to eight notches on that quill and stick it down there next to your rod your cloths<sup>1</sup> on. And it'll measure that amount of notches and you can roll it back and find your cut mark.

AT: Why would they put the cut marks on there?

ADAMS: In order to take it off at that mark.

AT: They would know that that was so many yards.

ADAMS: In other words, that roll was finished. Yeah, that roll was finished. Now they don't want to run no more than that cut mark says running, that particular roll. So that enables the cloth room man to handle it easier see. A great big full roll would be too heavy. So they run a small roll here and they got a cut mark, take it off.

AT: And would you be moving say, from one of these to the next one?

ADAMS: Oh yes, you have to regularly patrol, they call it. Back and forth you know, to watch 'em. See that you don't got a mat-up or nothing that'd make a bad place. And sometimes you'll have a mat-up and you . . .

AT: What do you call that, a mat-up?

ADAMS: Yeah. It's yarn and stuff get in within your other threads. In other words it's like you throw a bunch or stuff in bunch of other threads. So we call that a mat-up. Well this particular loom here went there, and I didn't know anything of it. I had my experience on this.

AT: Now what kind is that?

ADAMS: That's Jacquard. This is Jacquard here to put your flower in the cloth. But now this is just plain stuff, two harness stuff. But all my life I had worked on this Jacquard stuff see. But when in here and I went on and tied my selvage knots and my warp knot like I did in the old job in South Boston where I come off of. But an old man who'd done

wove his days out, they put him to sweeping see. So he come over there, says, "oh goodnight," says, "that selvage knot you double it. You take the thread and put double in there around the other warp thread, that makes your selvage, and tie your knot there. And never had anymore trouble.

And then on another occasion there, this thing here, every time you started it up it would make a crack in the sheet. And he told me, he said, get you a wet cloth and run right down that crack, it'd draw it up, close that crack, so it wouldn't come back on it. And all them cracks, defects in your cloth, you have to throw it out on the cloth table and the boss man'd show it up to you, where you made bad work. But now this crack was covered up on account of that heavy size closes up when you wet it. Yeah.

AT: So this fellow had worked, he had been . . .

ADAMS: Oh yeah, he done had experience up through the years but done got too old for it now, and they put him to sweeping. He'd come on up and laughed at me you know. I told him I couldn't get them selvage knots through. And he said "well tie it like I tell you." And it was a matter of taking this end of the warp that I had to put back in here see. And put another one double, on the end of that, and tie my knot. And it come on through.

AT: That was a different sort of knot than you had tied before.

ADAMS: No more than the other one.

AT: Would that be, lots of times people who had gotten older, they would move 'em on out to jobs like that?

ADAMS: Well yeah. You've got jobs there that people done give their lives on it see. And then got too old to do anything. Some of 'em are just a child's job there, running quills through a machine and

getting that bunch--we call it--on the quill, all running through a machine. It's got a crack in it for them machines, to dangle through you know. And come in this thing, it's got a little knife thing that goes over the bottom of that quill, skip that thread that's left on there. And all he had to do was set there and feed it see. What they call skinning quills.

Well now, all of this stuff has got a bunch on that bobbin. I don't know whether you've seen the bobbin or not. It's full of notches.

AT: Yeah, you showed me one the other day.

ADAMS: Well, anyway, the machine, the coping machine or whatever makes that yarn, it's supposed to put a bunch on there. In other words a little more on this end than there is the rest of the way see. In other words it's in a bunch. Well when this feeler, you got a feeler there, in this magazine or in that Unifil or whatever it is, when that feeler--the little old thing that got a notch on it--when that feeler hit that quill, it'll slide see and trip it. Put in a new one.

AT: When it hits that bunch?

ADAMS: Yeah, that bunch. In other words you've got a little bunch right on the back side of that quill. Well when this feeler--it'll slide see when it gets to that bunch, and trip it and then automatically change to put a full one.

AT: So in other words you were moving pretty much all the time from one to the other.

ADAMS: Well yes. And then the more the years roll by and the laws change and things you see, your production was stepped up and you had to get with it more.

AT: But how could you do that?

ADAMS: Well you just have to keep walking all the time and doing your work all the time see. When one stops off you got to get down there with it. And if you're patrolling that way. Now some of our jobs, some of our management, they don't want you to go back and get that one that stopped off, just keep patrolling.

AT: Go all the way around first.

ADAMS: Yeah. In other words keep going forward, don't go back and get that one that stopped. But you're going to move around fast enough to get there before it loses anything. And tie that end back in there, and you got a razor to draw that in.

AT: What would be the most number of those kind of looms that you ever ran at one time, twenty-five?

ADAMS: Well, on that narrow stuff--now this is wide, you couldn't have near as many of these as you could those narrow ones. But now that hospital sheeting, they'd give you thirty-six of them.

AT: Where did you do that?

ADAMS: At the Riverside, that was down near Schoolfield.

AT: So both at the same place?

ADAMS: Both of 'em at the same company. But they had wide and narrow, and then they had another one there they called a bedspread. Ran a crinkley bedspread. This here is just sheeting. And J. P. Steven's got a mess of 'em down in Greenville, S.C.

AT: In Greenville.

(Interruption)

ADAMS: Your name put in 'em and all that stuff. These guys who make them things make as much money doing that as they did working in the plant.

AT: The reed hook.

ADAMS: Oh lord yeah. They went as far as down here to even take a load of 'em to Danville and South Boston to sell 'em. Leave 'em at certain places.

AT: Is that right?

ADAMS: Pay 'em for it. (Wife: Yeah they made the . . .) Sell it for two dollars and a half. You see this here celluloid comes in a block. Well he's gone to Sears and Roebuck and got his machinery and stuff you see. To bore his holes, he's got bits and all there to bore his holes, in this block. And put it on a section at a time see. And then they have to get this square block on there. He takes the emory wheel he's got and dress it down.

AT: Well how long have people been making those?

ADAMS: Oh ever since there's been a weaving room I reckon.

AT: Is that right?

ADAMS: Yeah. And now . . . (Wife: Well they have to have 'em in weaving rooms. . . .) Now a hook like that is what they call a leno hook, run curtain material . . . .

AT: Leno, how do you spell that?

ADAMS: I don't know.

AT: L-Y-N-O, L-E-N-O?

ADAMS: I reckon that's the way you'd spell it. (Wife: How would you spell leno Deb? Deb: Spell what? Wife: Leno.) You see these here harness here has got eyes in 'em just like this here harness here has. But now you've got to get up on there and reach over this harness and put that reed hook through that eye and bring it through there. And now that's a fine, fine eye there, where the fine material come through.



See notice how narrow it is to what this one is. Got that one narrow and it'd go through.

AT: Do they have like size numbers or anything like that?

ADAMS: No, no. The help has done learned what it takes.

AT: Now the people that are making these, they'd make the whole thing.

ADAMS: Yeah, they buy their stainless steel. Now some of 'em are made out of bicycle spokes. And then they buy a lot of this here stainless steel and then if they can't buy the spoke, can't get them, they got this other to fall back on. And they put threads on the end of that thing. And they'll brad it of course you know, so it won't come off.

AT: Now how long have you had those?

ADAMS: Oh, I've been had them for years.

AT: Really?

ADAMS: Yeah. Now this here roll of cloth here I was telling you about, that cut mark come up on. When it get to a certain mark, you take it off and you have to turn your clock back. Now some of 'em in our later days, when that cut mark comes up, this clock will stop the loom off. And you got to go down and take this key and run in your clock and run it back to nothing in order to start your loom back up.

AT: That's what they call a pick clock?

ADAMS: Yeah. Well no, it's not the pick clock, but it's a yardage clock. Now your pick clock gives your amount of picks you've run that day. And that would be in a different position. But they've spent a lot of money putting that stop clock on there.

AT: Why would they want that on there?

ADAMS: Well so it won't run over. You see you've got a customer come in there with so many yards, coming out of New York. You've got that salesman up there done sold a million yards in so many cut rolls see. One or two cut rolls. Well if his order calls for a one cut roll, well the cloth room takes care of that part, and then you've got to sift 'em out. A man stays with that order until your customer gets it you see.

AT: What's the difference between a one cut and a two cut roll?

ADAMS: Well there's more of it. You got a small, a certain amount of yards, say fifty yards. Well, you want a hundred yards to get that two cut roll. Now you can run 'em just one--fifty yard cuts or a hundred yard cuts or two hundred yard cuts. But the way they work it, after the big strike in Danville, they never did run over one cut on that particular loom. But after the strike they run it up to two cuts--a hundred yards instead of fifty. And if you had a defect in one of them there cuts, you've wove two of them rolls for nothing. Now they moved it from one to three cuts, and if you had a defect in one with three cuts, you've wove two of them cuts for nothing, that's the way they docked you.

AT: Every fifty yards there was one of those marks on it?

ADAMS: Yup.

AT: On the warp.

ADAMS: Yes, a blue chalk mark, put on in slasher so the weaver--the loom attender some people would call it--would see it or roll it back and find it and cut it off at that place. Now you've got a system, some of 'em, that you won't have to take that cloth off but you go put it on a board. And that cloth man goes to the board and goes to this number and take that cloth off. Now this here is the Jacquard.

AT: And you did work on that when you were in South Boston?

ADAMS: That's where I learned it, at South Boston, on the Jacquard. Well I had the experience. Now this is a long twine harness. It's a different harness altogether than what this--this harness here is in a frame. It's made in a frame, and you got your wheels to turn on top here to work 'em up and down. In other words you got to go up and down. Now this one here, what's known as Jacquard, you got a Jacquard head up there. Bolt is on this steel frame see. Well you've got a pattern that puts your flower in there. And they can put your picture in there. But this pattern has got holes in the cards, and this needle in here, the one that lifts up, don't go in the hole. The one that lets off is in the hole. And when this cylinder goes over see and against these bunch of needles, a cylinder going in that a way, one on one side, one on the other, one at a time of course. Goes in a lifts that harness up and down like this, to let your shuttle through what we call the warp. Your shuttle goes through there to run that cloth. Well now this is putting your flowers in there for you. Now I understand that Aiken-Collins got a bunch of this here. . . .

AT: It's probably in there whatever . . .

ADAMS: I done seen it, I done seen one of 'em. But it's a German loom, we worked on that. But anyway this harness'll either drop off or lift up in order to put your flower in there. You got any of that flowery stuff Janie? But without that Jacquard head, you couldn't put your flower there. It'd just be plain stuff. In other words you've got a designer that knows how to cut these patterns, in other words you give him a pattern to cut his cards by and his flowers all in them cards. And then you can cut a different--it just depends on what kind you want see, the amount of holes and so forth. There's some of that upholstery stuff.

AT: Yeah, I think you showed me that once.

ADAMS: Yeah. Well now this here loom is running up and down through these needles all in this head . . .

JANIE: This is mattress covering over it, isn't it? Isn't that what that is?

ADAMS: That's drapery.

JANIE: Or is it drapes.

ADAMS: This here is your upholstery.

JANIE: Yeah, I know that.

AT: Both of them would have been done on that.

ADAMS: Yeah, on this Jacquard loom. But now you couldn't put that on there unless you--well you couldn't do it with a dobbie head.

AT: Well how many of those, of the Jacquard looms did you ever run at once?

ADAMS: Well Burlington Industry decided one time we could run fifty-two of 'em. But sixteen, sixteen was all we got to. But we had a fast boss man, wanted a name in his crown, he would put it through the help's brain that they could go to fifty-two. Well you couldn't do it. There just ain't no way. Now this stuff, there's a whole lot more money in it than this. In other words you've got two dollars to one in this, which you have one dollar in that sheeting.

JANIE: That's my daughter.

ADAMS: Well now . . .

AT: My name's Allen.

ADAMS: This stuffs got to be made right.

JANIE: This is my granddaughter.

ADAMS: This just can't get put on the market in rags. Because your customer would find it, see, and he wouldn't buy it. Soon put you out of business if you didn't.

AT: Well so you went from these L models back to the Jacquards when you came to Burlington Industries?

ADAMS: Yeah, yeah. Now this Roxboro stuff, I saw it here.

AT: It may be the other . . .

ADAMS: That's the Draper corporation there.

AT: What's the name of the company?

ADAMS: Aiken, Collin Aikens.

AT: We can look it up in the . . .

ADAMS: I saw it here awhile ago, I don't know what. . . . Those head were a little more plain up on that gantry. But now some of 'em got a head, oh my lord, big as wide across as that sink. But now that's a small looking head there. That's a cotton blanket loom it say.

AT: We can look it up here in the index.

ADAMS: I saw it there awhile ago. I wished I hadn't ever went in the mill and done something like you're doing.

AT: Then I couldn't come and ask you all these questions. They don't seem to have--they don't have Collins Aikens by that name here.

ADAMS: Oh their company moved down to where they get it cheap. Where they pay you \$125.00 up north they'd get it down to fourteen or fifteen down here. Oh, I'll come to it after awhile. There's your bobbins. Now this here yardage, if you think it done gone over, just count so many of them--six or eight--or them notches in that bobbin and stick it down there in your rod and count to it. And nine time out of ten, it'll be right there.

AT: I see, that's just a little trick that you learned.

ADAMS: Yeah, that you've learned during the process of time and all.

AT: Maybe on over this other way.

ADAMS: I don't know, it could be.

AT: If you see any of these other things.

ADAMS: Now, that's a carding machine there.

AT: Yup. Do you all know about these machines we're talking about.

DAUGHTER: I've heard him talking about but I don't know nothing but sewing. (chuckle)

ADAMS: That's the old spinning frame. In other words you put this bobbin I was telling you, empty on there, you got a doffer. You got somebody come around and creel, you got a section for him to creel that thing before he let that guide down there you know, the bottom. A doffer come along and take them full ones off and put on a empty one to fill 'em up again. In other words, these here spools right here, that come from the spooling room, put up there and put on that bobbin.

DAUGHTER: Do you know any of it, Daddy?

ADAMS: Know any of this stuff. I know the loom. Looking for that other German loom here.

AT: Yeah they have 'em.

ADAMS: There's that putting that yarn on that warp I was telling you about. That runs into the weave.

AT: We'll have to make a note on page thirty-seven here okay.

ADAMS: But now that's what they call a warper. All them racks there hold the kind of yarn they want on 'em. And they put it on a big spool here and make what you call a warp. And put it back yonder behind that loom in the frame of the loom, and that loom's got gears on it that move

it--take it up--take it down we call it. And as it's wove it rolls up in the front.

AT: Now is all of the thread that's coming off here coming on here and like each thread has a particular spot.

ADAMS: Yeah, you've got to have 'em uniformly smooth. Just a smooth beam. That beam is filled up. Now that was what you call that magazine. You see you got a different thing there from a battery. Now here's your battery. There's your battery and this here's your magazine, see the difference. You've got a shuttle there, you fill the shuttles. And that could be a Stafford automatic, it says. That's Stafford. But now when that one runs out, that bobbin gets empty, the loom will stop off and put the empty shell in here and take on a full one. The full one will drop down in the loom. But if you go in that box and get that out of the box and refill it, see, and put a new bobbin in it.

AT: Those didn't come along until later on.

ADAMS: Oh no, I run thirty-six of 'em back then.

AT: Is that right. Now did they have people sooner or later to come along and do that for you, or fill these?

ADAMS: No you had to do all that yourself.

DAUGHTER: They do now.

ADAMS: They've changed it then.

DAUGHTER: They have battery fillers and magazine fillers.

ADAMS: That was a battery on matting. That's two harness stuff too.

JANIE: You're going to put your two cents worth in, ain't you? (laughter)

ADAMS: That was a worsted loom. See you got a head up there. Making changes up and down that harness just like a Jacquard. That's what you call a slubber. Draw-in frames, so forth. And this is a roving frame. In other words you put all your spools on that and run a big



spool and then carry it to another machine and run it down to finer, put it on a bobbin. That's some more of what they call spinning frames. Creel, they call creel, and that'd let this frame go down out of your way. Plumb out of the way, your bobbin is clear. That's some more of that warp. What they call a slasher machine. We done passed that thing. But now this one that I'm talking about run two at the same time, one under the other one. Run this what they call a German plush. You don't see very much of it like you used to. Now if you buy a living room suite with this Jacquard plush on it, you pay for that stuff now.

JANIE: You don't see plush no more, like you used to.

ADAMS: But they used to put it in automobiles. You know, cover the interior. Just as soft and fuzzy.

JANIE: Something similar to velvet like.

ADAMS: This machine I'm talking about. . . . Now there's your carding machine I was talking about. Put that repeater cards in there. See them cards has got holes in it. And whoever operates this is making a pattern. And he's got something to go by to put the flowers in this cardboard card. Well now, this cylinder on one side of the head, when this comes in the other one goes out. When that one comes in this one's out. In other words it's turning over their square cylinders. In other words these needles all in here--there's your cylinder. You see your cylinder under there, it's got a little spring to hold the cards down so it won't jump up and down. Well this turns over. Well this head is full of needles and it'll either go in a hole or won't be no hole there for it, see. It'll pick it up or let it off, put that cloth--let the shuttle go through it.



(Brief blank space)

AT: Well now, the draper equipment, that was pretty . . .

ADAMS: That was a filler. See this thing here, the notch is in it. When you come to that bunch it'll slide down that quill to transfer your bobbin to get you a new stuff, new full one. But that's in order to fill that. You got to rig that up on the machine here so it'll fit in to the side of this little hole in the shuttle. It'll go in that hole, and the slide on that bobbin, transfer it to get a full one.

AT: Well now what were some things that could go wrong in the looms?

ADAMS: Well lord, there's a thousand and one things. That there what's known as a picker stick. That's got a little old block of wood under that thing, that can go out and cause it to slam off. That picker stick can break, that picker head can bust, throw what they call a high-low shuttle, knock your warps out and all that stuff you know, and you got more of 'em to put in with that reed hook. Every time one breaks you got to go back there and tie a weaver's knot. From back here, here's your warp, here's your cloth rolling up here you see, coming off of being wove. Well it's rolled up on that roller right there. Well you go back there and get you a extra end, extra thread, and tie on that one that broke and get 'em right here and put it through there in a harness with this thing and pull it back through and start your loom up again. But it's done stopped off waiting on you. And there's so many of 'em can break, you know what I mean, keep you busy.

Well now, they brought a loom in here made in Switzerland that didn't have no shuttles. Had a arm. One arm meet the other one in the middle and get that thread. And then they had the big bobbins on a rack over there would select it's own colors. Beat anything I ever see in my life. That wouldn't be in the Crompton-Knowles bracket because that's a German made . . .

JANIE: Where'd you say you got that book?

AT: I found that over in the library there at Carolina. An old catalogue. It has all the different companies that made the machines.

ADAMS: Now here you are making another warp. Just a great big spool of thread. Well I ain't run across that thing yet.

AT: Well there's not a picture of that small size one that you were working on, anywhere's there. Not the model at all.

ADAMS: Not the Draper. There's one with a magazine. See how narrow it is. But not that like I run. All these is dooby heads.

AT: Well now would they figure out how much a particular machine could put out in one day, how much if it was running all the time?

ADAMS: Yeah, they got that thing timed. They got a pick gear down here taking that thing down at how many picks to put per inch, in that cloth, and they won't put no more. Well now that order might call for that many picks in that cloth. Well this pick wheel puts that pick in that cloth. And then you can take some of 'em out and put less picks in there, and you got to tie 'em down . . .

BEGIN TAPE IV SIDE II

AT: Then would you be expected to make 90 per cent of what the plant could do all day, or how does that work, how would they figure that out?

ADAMS: I wouldn't know altogether right off how they figure that out, but they got a time study man that figures that stuff out. And he figures out how long it'll take you to do so and so and he knows just about what you can put out in that day. In other words you got a man following you with a pencil and paper and marking down every thing that you do, how long it'd take you to tie in each end.

AT: When did they start to do that?

ADAMS: Well, when they quit docking 'em. They used to dock 'em. They'd get a whole lot of money back off of 'em and have to pay it in wages. Well now, when that disappeared off of the market, they put these time study men, put a man there with you three hours of every week see.

AT: Where were you when you saw the first one of those, time study people?

ADAMS: Danville, they started that in Danville, yeah.

AT: So that would've been back . . .

ADAMS: Just as soon as the government begin to make the laws that they made then. You see something had to be done for the American worker. In other words the economy of America was down so low, something had to be done. Well the committees began to go in to Roosevelt, that'd be labor and what not. They had to go in and find out what the score was. Well Roosevelt began to ask questions about the bank, what about that. Well they were closing all over the land. And no reason for it, some somebody getting rich. And so the man's money had to be insured from then out you see. Somebody had to carry insurance on it to insure that money, if it wasn't but five dollars or five million. But his money had to be insured. And then along come--the old age stuff had to be took care of, and between jobs had to be took care of, and all that stuff you know. Well, they said well, you've made the law, you're going to operate the law and we've got to abide by it. But the workers going to earn it. So he come back, and where he was making small beams, he'd make bigger beams. In other words, your labor paid maybe three in that day. Now your labor pays five plus you, see. The budget's figured that way.

AT: So this would've been, I forget when you said you came to Burlington, it was when?

JANIE: That counting Danville, so what year was it?

ADAMS: What?

JANIE: When you was working over there.

ADAMS: I went to work over there in '29.

AT: So this would've been in the early 1930's?

ADAMS: Oh they started that before then.

AT: They had time . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, they started that right after that big strike. I don't know now when that big strike was, whether it was '27, '28.

JANIE: Probably so, I don't remember exactly.

ADAMS: They began to study every move that you made.

AT: And would they tell you how to change some of your moves?

ADAMS: Well no more than preach to you or, we've got to learn to do it a better way. In other words when they didn't think you were quite satisfactory you know, and they said, come let's go to the office, I want to talk to you a little bit. And there where they'd show you, tell you they wanted you to learn to do it a better way.

AT: Would they actually show you a picture or draw or tell you . . .

ADAMS: No, unless your pick sheet, how low you had been. In other words your production is put down every week, every day see, what you made today and tomorrow and on through the week. Five days a week, six days a week, it's on that big sheet. Well if you done fell down a number of weeks, then your production--they really get with you then. They want to know why, seeing what's happening. Why you can't pick up there and get 'em better production, get 'em more of it. And then if you

can't get 'em production they make a change see. But all this was brought on by the changes of the laws of the land to cope with it. Now North Carolina is going to have to fast now, begin to study to make laws to cope with labor. You can see it yourself, I don't have to tell you about it now. But now in my vicinity it's poison to even talk about what I'm talking about now. In other words, if they think you're thinking that, you're gone, you got no job.

AT: When would they, or would they ever have made these time studies and suggested to people changes that they could make in the way they move around or moved on the loom, or leave out certain motions, and things like that. Did they ever tell people things like that?

ADAMS: No, you got training jobs now on most of 'em. And you've got to put that in in so many seconds. In other words if you're slow, they want a faster man. In other words, you take it through that training, if you can fulfill this training, this class, to start up that loom quick enough you know. 'Course that means they'll give you more machines to run. Now back in the olden days, you had to run one loom, and a man asked for another one because he was fast and he could make a little more than the other guys. So that began to ruin the job see. He'd expect everybody to run two, if you hadn't had but one. But anyway, they study you and time you with this clock on their wrist, how long it'd take you to put that end in, how long it'd take you to do this, do that, whatever during the day.

AT: When somebody's there watching you, do you get used to them doing that?

ADAMS: Well, they just want you to be yourself when that's happening.

AT: Can you do that?

ADAMS: Well, you don't want to speed up of true, because you hurt yourself, but nevertheless they've done learned that too you know. Whether you're slowing down, dragging your feet or what, see.

AT: And when you came over to Burlington Mill, did they have people here to do that regularly, when you got here?

ADAMS: Yeah, they put ten men. Then when the laws began to change faster, they began to put more of 'em on the job, see.

AT: Now the people who would be doing those sorts of time and efficiency studies, would they people who had worked in the mills?

ADAMS: Not necessarily, they had a group to bring in if they wanted to. And after you got a worker there that's qualified to carry it out on their terms, they'd put him on. You know what I mean.

AT: Did you have to fix a lot of the things that went wrong with your loom yourself?

ADAMS: Well some odds and ends you would. You wouldn't want to call in your fixer to do everything you know. You wouldn't want him to comb your hair and stuff like that. But you've got a loom picture, you've got a flag for certain things. Some of 'em has got a system, has got a bunch of flags on a bolt over in front of your machine. Well whatever is wrong with you, throw that number blue, red, white flag and so forth. And then if you got a flag you need filling, you flag it for the filling man. But you flag if your loom fixed. Now up at South Boston, we didn't have no flag, we had to go hunting. Find him out yonder somewhere else you know. And of course they'd joke and carry on about all that stuff you know when you find him. Go over there, "Ernest I got one over there draggin out ends," "So, you got a reed hook ain't you." Like that you know, and I'd say, "Well Ernest I got one slamming off in there." "So put some oil on the spindle." I said, "Well I did." He'd say, "Well



wipe it off." (laughter in background) All that kind of crap.

AT: Did you all ever tell any jokes or funny stories about the machinery that you can remember?

ADAMS: No, I can't recall none of 'em up there. No more'n we'd just say, well that one done everything today but have a nigger baby. (lady laughing in background) Stuff such as that you know.

AT: And the one you said about it would take all day to go through and come back.

ADAMS: Well, they were just kidding you know, about that being so wide. You see, it's so slow. See that's so much slower than the other one. The other one'll set there and just fly. But this one taking time you know. In other words their pick got a long stroke on it, and you have to hit it hard to throw it to the other end. Well the other one'll do the same thing coming back. So the loom being so slow said, it went up of a morning, come back that evening. (lady laughing) But you know it run faster than that.

AT: Any other things like that that you can think of, funny stories or sayings.

ADAMS: No, right off I can't think of none of them things. They got all kinds going, they had a cotton mill <sup>colle</sup> ~~calling~~ and all that stuff. You know they had a song in them days.

LADY: They had a song about that cotton mill.

AT: There used to be a song called "The Weaver's Life" too.

ADAMS: Well they got their life. Now we had a dairyman there who brought milk in there, and the boy would buy his milk from the dairy and then put it in a cooler, you know to keep it cold you know, for lunch time. When the boy drank his milk, one of 'em filled it half filled it half full of water, you know, what it'd been dranked out you know. The

weaver said, "Well I know damn one thing, that dairyman over there, he's got a good milk cow and a spring. A good spring." (lady laughing)

Well we had one boy, he'd hoboed all over the world you know. And he was bad about reading a magazine about hoboing and freight riding and all that stuff. So, there wasn't but just a certain amount of machines running there and he had to bring his filling. Well when you give out of filling, you go tell him, "Jack, I'm out of filling," he'd go get you some, see. Well there wasn't enough of 'em running to keep him busy, see, just had the rest of 'em standing down. And one day we went over there and got him, his mother done put some applejack pies in his lunch see. And he come out, said, "You all played the devil for me today." One of the boys done eat his pies, see. He said, "I had two cattle thieves done about starved out, and they's ready to come out of that canyon, and you all wanting to get the filling while I was gone to eat my pies, and now it'll take me two more weeks to get 'em back out." (lady laughing)

AT: So you had to kind of keep good relations with your filling people. They could kind of slow you down or cause you problems.

JANIE: Well they could if they didn't wait on you I guess.

ADAMS: No, we didn't have any problems that I know about there though. We've had workers all your life that can do a little quicker, faster job you know. He'd change oil a little more often than the other fellow and he'd get around there a little faster than you can. Get better production easier than you could see.

AT: Did people feel like they were in this together or did everybody feel like they had their own individual thing to do and it was there own . . .

ADAMS: Well in some sections of the country, but through this



section they never did care about it see. They just sort of, let me get by, don't care about the other fellow. But in other sections where they're organized they had a feeling for one another. They wouldn't try to outdo the other one. You go to picking on one, you had 'em all to pick on, see. In other words your production falling down all over the job when he go to picking on you see. Well to find out what the trouble-- you see I'm obligated as a worker to my contract. In other words that company is to you, you know, under contract. Well then you can't tommyrot, you've got a contract to live up to where they're expecting you to do good work, and expecting you to do better work, Well all right, you've got some age on, and they're beginning to pick on you to see if they can't get you to quit. Well you got three or four children, you go to stop but say, "Well no, I can't quit, I got to take care of my family." "Well the management wanted to know under the obligation we are both under, why the production is less that what it was last week, week before last." And when they found the truth of it, they're picking on you, you see. Well when they let you alone, the production goes back up, see you're working together. But don't pick on Jack because we're with him see. You know what I'm talking about.

And then some smart aleck, who's done been to school you know, and know how to twist it. Sort of know how to wrap his tongue around something. And they'll persuade him to go over in the other room with maybe a nickel more pay. Then they got him see. He done broke his seniority. But now through this area, it's root hog or die.

AT: Everybody on their own.

ADAMS: And the whole southern management knows it. And therefore your guy can lay around Florida and let his money work right on, you know, and the mill is going right on. There are your cloth grading tables.

They put it over this table here and they look at it through a light.

AT: Let's see, we're on page 139.

ADAMS: And you grade it see. See there aren't defects for the customer.

LADY: That light shows up everything.

ADAMS: Show all the defects you know. You see if it's right before you send it out to him. It's graded before your customer gets it. I wish that you would find that loom. Boy I hadn't seen one since I left Roxboro.

AT: Well let's

ADAMS: Crystal Hill Virginia on a farm. I turned over there one night and I tried in my heart to ask the lord to help me, to open a way for me to help my daddy. He wasn't doing any good there on the farm. Those are reeds and you put that thread through there you know.

AT: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt your story.

ADAMS: And so I dreamt that night of running a loom with more than one warp on it, which was one of these when I finally got the job. But I had never seen nothing like it.

AT: You mean you dreamed about it, the one you did.

ADAMS: Yeah, before I ever left home. Dreamed about running a loom like this with just more than one warp on it. Well I got a job at another plant through with different type of stuff. They said when I went down to the boarding house down at Collin Aikens from Longhurst to Bakers Mill, he called it then. The boarders down there said, 'you're not going to work up there, you're going to work with us down here see. So they go to the superintendent and get me a job. Well I went in there and there was the answer to my dream. And you're supposed

stay with a teacher six or eight weeks there you see. Well I'd messed around at Dan River Mill you see and so, three days time they give me a machine. Weren't supposed to give me one for eight weeks you see. But I was that much ahead of time. I got along fine and went back to South Boston, he wanted me to come back over there you see, on running one warp with more of 'em you see. And that was the answer to another prayer that I tried to pray. Well I hadn't helped him none here on this job but plush see. Got over yonder, he come to me in two weeks, wanted to know if he could help me. Put him in a \$30.00 house and paid the rent myself. At Christmas we paid all of his debts off. There's one living, there's one living above you. Whether you realize it or not. But there is one that's looking down on what we're doing.

AT: And now, what did you see when you had that first dream. How was it different from . . .

ADAMS: Well that's all there was to it. I just dreamt before I woke up of running a machine. I was a maintenance man, you know, take care of it. And I hadn't ever seen nothing like it, and I've wondered about it and wondered about it afterwards. And then when I done the same thing again. So I come over here with this supervisor, he come and got me from Danville, brought me over there and put me to work. Come and got me on Sunday over there and put me to work Monday. And I remember telling him about that in the living room one day and he wanted to know, laughed you know, said, what do I want to call it, a answer to prayer or using my head. Well, you know it come to pass because that was in reality, you see.

And the cogs on it don't take the cloth down like these others. You roll your cloth up back behind you. And when it gets to where a

certain mark I'm talking about, you do what you call a felt. To put a pile gear on the thing and run a plain piece. Just plain cloth, and then cut it off when it gets round there where you can get it.

AT: Now these needles, different kinds of needles and things. Companies wouldn't make those like this, but you all would rather buy them from somebody around here.

ADAMS: They got a company that makes them, just like you would your reeds. No the company wouldn't make the needles. In other words, you got . . .

AT: But I mean these, what you call reed hooks.

ADAMS: Oh the company don't do this, this is like you.

AT: No, I mean one of these companies. Would there be a company which would make reed hooks.

ADAMS: Well it's a possibility that some companies here that make some of 'em but all I ever heard tell of was a fellow worker that took it up himself and bought the lathe and things to put in a little garage or something and then sit down and make 'em.

AT: Well that's real interesting.

JANIE: They made money off of it.

AT: Yeah.

ADAMS: Lord yeah, they got Shorty Morris pretty well fixed down there what he made off of it. And he had saws, little saws and things to saw his celluloid, and he had little dials to put them threads on this little thing, had a lathe to hold it, and all that stuff.

AT: Did he make different kinds of unusual . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, he'd make you a square one with your initials in it, one with a square handle, put your initials in it.

AT: Shorty Morris.

ADAMS: Yeah, he's dead now. But he got two and a half to three dollars for his and he took 'em to Danville by the big bunch, leave 'em at the place and sell 'em or . . .

JANIE: He'd make a bunch of 'em and take 'em off to some of these mills you know, and people would buy 'em.

AT: Well I never heard that, that's real interesting. All those are hosiery and knitting machines there.

ADAMS: Well there you've got a different market when you come to that. Here we are. You see you got a difference there between hosiery and textile. That runs right on whether you say anything or not don't it.

AT: That's right. I can turn it off every now and then. What do you want to talk about now.

ADAMS: I ain't found that one I was talking about awhile ago. But this loom I'm talking about hunting for now is a German loom. And it had a little box here with a safety handle over it. And your sleeve could hit that thing and start it up on you. But they had a straight up handle here to put it in permanent see. And you could back and forward this little finger thing here. Well Bernard Sneed there one day, some way or another he was looking down between the lay and the loom looking at the bottom piece of cloth and the sleeve hung that thing, pulled that lay in on his head. Like to mashed him to death you know. But anyway--he was sleeping with me at the boarding house, and Peter Butler was running the boarding house. And he began to come in drunk--Johnny Sloan did--come in drunk, run him off the job because he was drinking. Come in there and wanted to call me Peter Butler. So Peter says slip over, just give me one inch. Cold as \_\_\_\_\_ that night and done fell across the head--including Bernie Sneed done hurt his head that day. "Oh Lord Harry get

off my head." It wasn't me on it at all you see. But anyway, he was calling me Peter Butler, he said, "Peter just slip over, just give me one easy." Like he could sleep on one or two inches that night.

Got us up there in the cold, we ought to shot him. Well, he

AT: Well what happened to the guy who hurt his head?

ADAMS: He got over it, but it took a long time you know. busted his skull. You see that sleeve hanging that safety thing pulled that lay in here against him see. He was getting some solid piece here and that other piece hit him. Wonder it ain't killed him.

AT: There's a plush, says plush

ADAMS: Do you ever go down to Raleigh?

AT: Sometimes, yeah.

ADAMS: They've got a textile school down there, you run into a lot of this stuff down there.

AT: They study, learn all this stuff.

ADAMS: Yeah.

AT: Yeah, I've got to go over there and talk to them about it.

ADAMS: That's where you can get your information.

AT: But I don't think they'll have as many good stories as you have to tell.

ADAMS: I don't know, they might have more. All of it's a dream, but I enjoyed or something or other. Just take your--sap your life out here in these mills. You work your sixty-five years with 'em, you're about through. Now we're getting back to the looms again.

AT: Stafford looms.

ADAMS: Now that's a worsted loom.

AT: Have you ever heard of Stafford?



ADAMS: Oh yeah, that's what I'm talking about I run twenty out in Danville on that. Automatic chain, thread my own shuttles. There, the company put the pick clocks on the machine, told some of 'em how to do it and you get ten off that clock any time you wanted to. If you knew just when to hit the clock. Well now, the man said they had to have production, well, and taking that bobbin out of the shuttle, you take it and hit that clock just a certain lick at a certain time, get ten off of it. Up your production. Well I hit one there one day, the thing wouldn't stop. Run me a hundred on that thing. (lady laughing in background) Lord, I sweated it wanting that thing to stop. 'Cause the man going to see it you know. He caught it next day he had me out there. I said, "well just come on to the point, I'm not married yet," just like that you know. "Well we're not going to fire you for it, but the next one we catch the paint off of, he's automatically gone." But he's going to paint all of them clocks after that. But boy, you ought to have seen me standing there sweating wanting that thing to stop. Ten is all I wanted that time, and maybe get ten more later. But the boss told me two days before that he had to have production regardless of how long that loom stood. Well, I was just going to tap it--when that 0 you see get's started up on 1, when that 0 get there, it just starting to make the change for the 1, tapping it'll give you 10, a certain lick. But if you get 200, liable to get you a hundred like that, man, make you stand there and sweat, you know doggone well the man's going to get it you know. Like a little boy stomping his toe, he'll stand there and cry awhile and beg it to quit hurting. You never have stumped yours though, have you. You ever stumped your toe?

AT: Oh yeah.

ADAMS: Used to keep just one toe tore up, couldn't stump nothing but that one.

JANIE: Always be the same one. (chuckle)

ADAMS: Well, it'll tell you under the bottom of that thing it's plush, but I can't find it, but it's in there 'cause I done seen it. Old broken thing, got three or four warps on behind it. I don't know. That's that sheeting loom again. There's your worsted loom again, we done got back over here. There's for towels, terry towels. There's corduroy, and there's for fancy weave stuff like dress goods and stuff like that. And your Model E is motor drive, so forth and so on. I wish I could find it. I believe we done passed some more, now we got over here in the heads again. Oh well, we done been through it three or four times. But you've seen it there too, if you've looked at it.

AT: Yeah.

ADAMS: It'll tell you under the bottom, it's plush. There's your bobbins and things, you put that stuff on. Use some of these to dye your yarn after you put it in a tub you know, so the dye'd go through.

AT: Well, let's see, what else to ask. About fixing your loom yourself, what kind of things could you do, did you learn how to do. How would you know when to call the loom fixer in?

ADAMS: Well you have your experience with it. You know when it's got a defect. Now say for instance I had one make a thin place, up at South Boston. Well when I was beginning on there, well . . .

AT: Thin, what's that?

ADAMS: What you call thin places. In other words your pick gear is taking down too much or something, or slipping. Well, I didn't know the difference. Well when I drawed my pay that week I didn't draw but



\$2.00 in money, the rest of it in cloth. You should learn that stuff, see, what I'm talking about. Learn what's causing that defect see. You've got to know when one's breaking filling, when it's cutting filling, when it's cutting out your warp, and all that.

AT: Who could you ask about that, how'd you find out?

ADAMS: Well you know that the flags on there for that man to come look at it. Well you just put your flag up, now the chances are you've got a piece of sandpaper in your pocket, you can go over the shuttle and slick it up so it won't knock your end out. And sometimes your print will get dubbed in your shuttle and you look over that point, see if it's dubbed. Or put a piece of thread on it, see if it dubs, keep it cutting the warp out. All that kind of stuff you can correct some of that stuff yourself and . . .

AT: Would you stay there while the loom fixer was working on it?

ADAMS: No, not necessarily, you can't, you ain't got time, you got to go around to the others. In other words, they got you geared up so if you bring your dinner in this morning, a fellow asks you, says, "What you got in that bag?" You say, "My lunch." He say, "Well you better eat because you ain't going to have time to do it after you start to work." And one fellow said, "We won't have to come back will we." He said, "Well, why, why you think . . ." "Well the way we're having to work, we're going to do it all today."

LADY: They used to have thirty minutes, but they . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, I used to have a hour in South Boston.

LADY: Yeah, you had an hour down there.

ADAMS: I used to come home to a hot dinner. But now we worked ten hours in that day, you know.

AT: And what about here at Burlington, did you have lunch time?

ADAMS: No, they didn't have it. We had to work on through when we come here, but it weren't but eight hours there you know. Just go in at seven and work 'till three that evening.

JANIE: A work straight on through, and you did your work. (chuckle)

ADAMS: But now you've got a commissary, the laws begin to, you know, they begin to talk you know. After awhile there are changes made, you know, and finally put us in a commissary.

AT: And when would you use that, when could you get in there?

ADAMS: Just when you get caught up. You got time enough to run down and get you a sandwich.

AT: Now what do you mean get caught up, how would you know when you were caught up?

ADAMS: When things were running smooth.

JANIE: Got 'em all running good.

ADAMS: But now, most of the time though, if you're on piece work, you think well, as soon as things go to leveling off here I'm going to get me a bite you know. Then they go stopping off worse that they ever did. And I have gotten mad, and said, "Dammit all of you standing," and go on and get my dinner. And they do better when you come back. But it looks like they have sense to know how to work you. And you think, well when I get them all going now, I'll go get me a sandwich. And they go to stopping off worse then than they ever did. But finally you get mad, and say I'm going if all of 'em stop. So one fellow, he goes down to the commissary and eat and the boss come by his job and saw there wasn't but one running. Come on down there, he says, "I think you better get back up here on your job, you ain't got but one running." He said, "Damn, if

something ain't done happen, there wasn't none running when I come out here." (laughter) Yeah, he told 'em, he said, "There's something done gone wrong." Yeah, the boss jumped all over him, said, "You better get back on your job, you ain't got but one machine running when I passed." He said, "Well something done gone wrong."

AT: Did that have any effect on you after you quit working. Did you learn how to slow down and eat again, or did you just keep on eating fast?

ADAMS: Yeah, you learned one thing. There's one meal a day and all day. After you retire you're talking about? That's my trouble. (laughter)

JANIE: He's always a nibbling. (laughter)

ADAMS: I told you what that was made out of didn't I?

JANIE: When he's around the house he's always nibbling on something.

END OF INTERVIEW