

Interview: Dave Valedofsky

Interviewed by: Christopher Fitzsimmons

Interview was conducted on March 15th at the home of Dave Valedofsky

In this interview Dave Valedofsky describes what it was like being a part time employee at Gorham Manufacturing Company. In addition he describes various memories of different companies around the area and how they influenced his time as a resident. Now an employee at Alvarez High School, Valedofsky explains how he feels working on the former Gorham Manufacturing site and how his life is impacted by the present toxins.

Christopher Fitzsimmons: Could I have you please say your name, and...yes your name so I could test the sound levels...

David Valedofsky: My name is David Valedofsky and I live in North Providence, Rhode Island.

Fitzsimmons: That sounds perfect. Let's do it, let's do it one, one more time.

Valedofsky: My name is David Valedofsky and I live in North Providence, Rhode Island.

Fitzsimmons: Perfect. Ok, so as we are getting started, umm could we start with you telling how first came to work at Gorham Manufacturing Company?

Valedofsky: Yeah. Well, you know I worked for a company, called umm Culprit Detective Agency. They were located in Carolina Avenue in Providence, and I got that uh security guard job, mostly as like a second you know weekend job, or you know evening job, fill in. With security there was uh lots of opportunities to pick up shifts here and there. I basically worked for, well over ten years, at Rhode Island Hospital. [clearing of the throat] I was, I started off as a dispatcher and became a weekend supervisor, blah blah blah. But, I would fill in at different places and one of the accounts that Culprit Detective Agency had, was this Gorham Silversmith's plant, which is uh, my recollection, located off of Reservoir Avenue, in in Providence. Right near the Cranston Line. And uh, when I say I filled in, I filled in two [gesturing with hand], very distinct shifts. I mean there's not like it was a, you know, a Monday and a Tuesday. You know it might'a been a once in April and once in December. But, to make it worse, it was the, the twelve to eight shift, you know, graveyard shift. And at the time, I believe it was about 1978, I think, Gorham's was either downsizing, or all together closed, because, I didn't see much in the way of uh, any activity going on, and it didn't look to me as if, it was functioning much at all. I remember, this place you know put up against other sites that I worked at, as being very dirty, [clearing of the throat] very dark, very dank, you there were there, it was a bad, what they call tour. It took you about [clearing of the throat] forty minutes to go through the grounds and to, you know do the detox watch clickings, there was information you had to write down, its like a, it was a very, it was very bad job. And uh, one of the things I, I do remember uh, about Gorham's is that they had one structure on the facility. It looked like a pretty decent, maybe Victorian sort of house you know, rather than like a factory building you know. Very, long. Wide. This was pretty much just a house. I imagine it was probably like an, an office area. But, you had to go downstairs into the cellar of that house. [short laughter] And, to make it worse, there were evidently, were bats, in in the house, and not just in like the attic, I guess they were in the cellar as well. Because, as you opened the cellar door, I remember the trainer telling me when you go down here you have to grab this tennis racket, which is hanging near the light switch, and he says what happens is if a bat comes toward you, he says you whack it with the tennis racket. The grid of the tennis racket is confusing to the radar and it makes it very affective tool for getting them

away for you. So, [laughter] I never had to use it. There was, it was like the one experience, that I, remember most, uh about being at Gorham. Like I say I went, I went there two times. There was, uh, they were very very separated incidents, but both of them were in the overnight shift and...I remember being, very dirty, unpleasant, lot of uh like grease on the floor. I remember being told that you had to be very careful. Use your flashlight, because, you know, you could easily slip on, looked like black goodgen grease, I think they call it umm. [clicking of the lip] And you know, if you were moving heavy things around, we use the grease as sort of like, makes it easier to move, so I don't have much beyond that. I mean I lived sort of in the area I remember from about 1965 to 1973. I lived let's say in that neighborhood, didn't have much to do with the Reservoir Avenue side, I was more interested in my friends and the East Side I guess. I don't even recollect going over into the uh, those neighborhoods much at all, but...I, I would say that I was, I was a resident of the neighborhood of Second Street and Something Street.

[5:50]

Fitzsimmons: What had you heard about Gorham prior to working there?

Valedofsky: I knew it was a pretty classy [cough] manufacturer. I mean the, the objects that they made were pretty well known. I mean aside from, tableware, flatware, I think people would, you know recollect with pride that that they got a...Gorham Silver, what do they call those...like a mirror, and...I think there was like, like a makeup tray or something like that. That woman used to have. I remember hearing about that from my grandmother. She had some of those pieces that were made from Gorham. [yawning] You know they were like pretty prized possessions I guess. You know. I don't know if they call them heirlooms, but I never saw it. [cough] ...I think people used to take pride in an item that was made by Gorham's.

Fitzsimmons: You said you worked the graveyard shift, were you the only one...on the...property?

Valedofsky: The first time...the time I had the trainer, the second time I was alone. There was so much time in between. All they cared about was that there was a human being on the property. I didn't have to worry about every single little place to go to. I mean, eight months difference there was no way, I would be able to do a good job. I did what I could, and uh, I don't think anyone broke in and nobody started any fires. So, I mean that's the main function of uh, security guard.

Fitzsimmons: So, you had never heard of anybody...breaking into the premises, not uh, not when you were working, but on different times?

Valedofsky: I never heard of anyone breaking into the premises. The trainer told me that the place was haunted. [laughing] Whether that is true or not, I have no idea, because uh, I don't believe in anything of that nature. I never had any problem. I, I, I'd be worried about real people, rather than ghosts or spirits...[slight chuckle].

Fitzsimmons: Did you have any interest in visiting Gorham during the day or checking it out?

Valedofsky: Not in the least. I found the place sort of repulsive.

Fitzsimmons: Can you elaborate on that a little?

Valedofsky: Well, you know [clearing of the throat]. Let's say it was unpleasant because of the, the dirty mess of the place. They may have been out of business, or relocating by the time I had anything to do with it. And I remember a lot of...dirt. A lot of filth...a lot of dust. I mean it could have been much nicer at one time... I remember it smelled dank. There was, it was just a general odor in the place I think...of chemicals. And...and that, I had worked in factories before..I, I worked just down the road from Gorhams at a place called Tribal Tool and Dye. And they're even worse [quick laugh], but they are still in business, so...don't have that part in the...

Fitzsimmons: Could you explain more about working there though? Were you a security guard?

Valedofsky: No no no, I actually worked for, for the company...making General Motors ignition keys. You know, back in the...I guess the 70's, if, if you owned a General Motors car you had either a square key, which was the ignition key, or a round key, which was the trunk key. I made the ignition key. I operated a two ton drop press, for a dollar .60 an hour. Stamping General Motors into the square key. And then they would box, you know all the gross at a time...ship them off probably to a locksmith. But when they are, when they are being stamped they have to be greased, so it accepts a better implant of the from the dye, and...The problem is you can't ship them that way, they have to be degreased and I was eighteen years old and I'm dipping, you know a hundred and forty keys at a time into a vat of trichloroethylene, which I now understand is like an illegal chemical [laughing] you can't have people working around it. It's sad...[laughing]. But you know things were a lot looser back in the late 60's. I think I worked for them and like 69 and 70, in between college semesters and during the summer and what not, so.Yeah that was a long time ago [laughter].

[10:57]

Fitzsimmons: At the time Gorham was definitely a prominent manufacturing company in the area, would you say that company was also...?

Valedofsky: Well, no...no, they were, they, I'm sure that they had peaked. There was another one just down the road called Lisner Industries. [spelling it out] L-I-S-N-E-R. And they made more like jewelry...but at the time, jewelry what they, what they wanted to create was like an antique look to the jewelry. So, you would have this

like bright colored you know, not silver, but say aluminum, shiny aluminum, or shiny brass, and that would be too garish I guess at that time, you know, that, that wasn't the in appearance you know in the late 60's. They wanted more of an antique appearance so, those would have to be...those, those items, like bracelets and necklaces what not, they would have to be dipped into, like a dark lacquer and then spun dried. You know, by this high speed device that would spin and the lacquer would go all over and...The idea was like a tiny residue would remain on the uh bracelet, and it would give it like a darkened appearance so... I only did these little jobs like in the summer time or if there was a week off from school sometimes I would pick up money, you know to...you know buy books and stuff like that.

Fitzsimmons: Do you think these industries were beneficial to the neighborhood? Did they contribute anything to the neighborhood? Or do you think they were more...just a force separate on their own?

Valedofsky: Yes...I think they were more like a force [laughter] on their own. They were, they were for profit industries and you know what they probably felt like they were doing the public a favor, because they would be able to hire somebody and, and I mean what would it take to train you? Like twenty minutes to operate a piece of equipment and, you know, they paid like next to nothing and if you quit there would be somebody else ready to your job the next day. Hmmmhmmm. They were hooked up with the a lot of these like employment agencies in downtown Providence that... would have them at there list, like they were always looking for somebody to do general, general factory work - happy to have anybody come in with almost any qualifications. If you could breathe and walk you were, you were in...yes.

Fitzsimmons: Do you think many of the employees were locals of the neighborhood?

Valedofsky: Absolutely...yes. I think a lot of people probably, used to walk to work. Yeah. I think that was like a tradition. You wouldn't want to spend any money to get to work so you could make minimum wage. You know? It was probably mostly local locals.

Fitzsimmons: I know you said you didn't spend much time on the reservoir side, but could you talk a little bit about your neighborhood when you were there, you said, 65-75?

[14:12]

Valedofsky: Yes..from 65-73 I, I lived in that area its certainly much different now then the main like commercial entity in that area, was definitely the Ford dealership. Dunn Ford. They were a big outfit [cough]. And you know, they sold cars right down on Elmwood Avenue, they had used cars, they had a facility for making repairs, ad for doing body work and they had like a used car lot, but Dunn Ford was a big, big company...they and I'm sure were a big employer. That was a good company I would

imagine to get into but uh they're, they're gone down. [big exhale] A place that I remember, right on the corner of Adelaide and Elmwood, I mean our school, Alvarez used to be known as Adelaide Avenue school right around the corner there was a big drugstore called Colonial Drugs. And...oh [smiling really big] I haven't thought about them in years. They were one of those old fashion drugstores that had a counter, with the, the, the turn around spinning seats, you know? And they would make milkshakes, and uh, Rhode Island they, they call 'em cabinets, but you might know them as a frappe or a malt. They used to have you know have ice cream service, and you know a whole section about candy, a whole section about perfume. Last minute gift you could, you could go to Colonial Drug and get it there. Very interesting story, you could cut this out too, but uh very interesting story that for me, I was talking to the pharmacist one time and he was telling me, he says, he sees kids coming in – you know young kids, eight and nine years old – they were buying contact cold pills. Now the advertisement back in those days would say: inside these little plastic capsules there were six hundred tiny tiny capsules, you know that were inside the plastic capsule and they're going to relive all kinds of cold symptoms. They were different colors. White. Red. Yellow. Well...he said to the kids, when they came in for like the second or third time during the day, and they are buying contacts, what are you doing with these things here? They says, oh, well my the friend of my mother's is telling us to go and pick them up and bring them back and he's got them on the table and he's separating the different colored little...granules inside the...capsules. So, he, he refused to sell them anymore, but evidently they didn't randomize the coloring of these little granules and they did have some kind of significance, you know, somebody could find out I guess what the ingredients were of the contact, but he told me later on that the company started to randomize the color of the granules, and you couldn't tell which piece was, maybe like pseudoephedrine, or which one was the decongestant, because somebody was separating them out for the purpose to have them like some kind of desirable affect as far as I am concerned. May we have our coffee, can we stop it now? [laughing].

[END PART #1]

Christopher Fitzsimmons: So...we're. [laughing].

Dave Valedofsky: Yes.

Fitzsimmons: Dave could you tell me a little bit about some other establishments in the neighborhood?

Valedofsky: Well across from that Colonial Pharmacy, but still sort of on the corner of Adelaide and Elmwood. Was a barroom called the Four Dees Café...and let's say I never frequented that place, but my understanding is that it was, kind of a dive...and frequently you would see like police squad cars out on front. I mean probably any establishment is going to face that from time to time. I think they probably had more

frequent problems than the average place...let's put it that way. Also there was an establishment down the road on Elmwood Avenue called the Walt's Roast Beef. Now this is going back until around 1968 – 1969. There was, it was sorta like a...competitor against places like McDonalds and Burger King, where you could get like a higher quality, but still a fast food item. Well what I remember about Walt's Roast Beef more than anything else is that they had as a spokesmen...a fella named Colona, and he was, he had done some work in Hollywood and what not. He was a comedian. I forget his first name. He was [cough] a spokesman for Walt's Roast Beef and they were, they were not too far away from that Dunn Ford facility. And the only other place I can remember is, I think was called, Paris Barber Shop or Persian Barber Shop and they had two or three barbers, so you didn't have to wait a whole heck of a long time over there. I'm, I'm trying to picture in my mind what was, what was along the street. The only reason I would even like be on that side [cough], I went to Classical High School, and, and Classical is located beyond the fork of Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue. So, I could take either the bus that went along Broad or the Elmwood Avenue bus and I guess the Elmwood Avenue bus came more often or something. But they would let me off near that Dunn Ford and I would have to walk a little ways to get to my house. That was very close to the RIPTA, you know Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority, bus yard, where they would, I think they worked on buses that had, breakdowns, they did tire work there. And...I remember that facility as being really rickety and you know like chain link fences that were like bent over and had been crashed into. You know kind of an eye sore in the area, but now when I go to work I drive by RIPTA's, OH brand new facilities. I mean, this, this is gorgeous. I mean they really have made like some kind of positive impact on that neighborhood. They have like underground garage parking. It's all looks like it is up to date security wise, the fencing, I, I...I don't know when it was built. I am fairly new to Alvarez High School, but yeah, when I first started you know, taking 95 South and getting off and on Elmwood Avenue, I was like wow, they really made a big impact in this area. So...I think this is about all that I can recollect about that...area. I didn't even know there was a Mashapaug Pond to tell you the truth. I don't know that anybody used to like, what would you do, go boating, you would swim over there? Not in my recollection that is for sure. I think the only thing that I see in that area is Spectacle Lake, because that is what you are looking at when you are at Twin Oaks. If you are in the right dinning room there is a big picture window of you know, Spectacle Lake. I don't know what the connection is to Mashapaug Pond, but that looks a lot better than what I see out of my math...the math class window, in the business room. That lake really has to be, I don't know what they would do. Dredge it and clean it out. It looks like maybe it could be something good and maybe it would be nice if you get the funds to take care of it, but I know like at our school the gym teacher dreams of being like the first high school in the city to offer as a sport kayaking. [chuckling].

[6:30]

Fitzsimmons: Is that something that people talk about as a possibility in the future, or are people aware of the situation of Mashapaug and know that it is going to take a lot of effort.

Valedofsky: Well, it is going to take a lot of effort, you know. We're not buying any equipment just yet. But, you know I think it would be a great idea, just to be distinct, because Alvarez High School has a lot of issues about sports programming. The Scholastic League of Rhode Island has a mandate, because of the number of students that are enrolled at the school, they can't have their own basketball team, they can't have their own football team, they have to be merged with some other large high school. You know we are just down the road from Central High School, but they have made the decision that Alvarez High School would have to play at Mount Pleasant High School, which a lot of them see as very very remote and distant sort of place that they have trouble getting to, so a lot of them kind of just say like forget it. But you know, if we were able to hook up with Central I think there would be more enthusiasm for sports at our school.

Fitzsimmons: Is there any concern about the proximity of Alvarez to Mashapaug Pond, because of the toxins that are currently there?

Valedofsky: Oh listen, when I look out the business department window, they have this, it looks like it is hand made sign in Spanish that says, no pasar no walking over here. Danger! Peligroso. You know...yeah there is a lot of concern. There is a lot of talk. They tell us that there is a mound that has been put over, what they consider to be the worse area, the toxic area, and before they put the sand in the mound there was some sort of membrane, tarp or something that went over everything. But...you know, you know [laughing]...people worry a little bit at least about things like cancer. I mean god forbid, who knows, who knows what you breath in when the wind blows through that area.

Fitzsimmons: Who would you say is the most informed? The adults in that school or do you think the kids are aware and the parents of the kids are aware?

Valedofsky: I don't think the parents are aware of it. Kids generally feel they are invincible anyway, I would say it is probably the faculty and the staff members that give it some moderate concern. Just on general principle I don't drink out of the water fountains and I try to generally avoid being out in that area. You know, if I am going to my car I am going to my car [making speedy noise with his lips], that is it. I don't walk around; I don't jog like around the facility. I don't jog anyway, but if I did jog I wouldn't jog around the facility. I am just in and out that is it.

Fitzsimmons: Do you think the general state of Mashapaug is something that people should be made aware of?

Valedofsky: Well I guess, you know, there are newspaper articles and I guess there has been stuff on the radio about the area. About the dump. I know the news outlets

have been there from time to time. I think when they started the big clean up some time earlier this school year, there was, there was some television coverage about it...but I think it is probably not, not enough money has been devoted to this site, which has probably a variety of toxins, because of the manufacturing process.

Fitzsimmons: From Gorham you mean?

Valedofsky: I don't know that anybody from Gorham was doing any of this stuff deliberately. It was probably just a practice that went on for years and years. There probably were not many laws that you would associate with the EPA. So, I guess Textron sort of bought the Gorham name and the property and they are the long pockets that got wacked, at least, with doing the initial clean up when it was discovered that the place had, you know a lot of carcinogenic materials dumped in the ground.

[11:56]

Fitzsimmons: And when you worked at Gorham for those two times

Valedofsky Yeah...those two days, those sixteen hours yes.

Fitzsimmons: Was there a facility where Alvarez High School is now?

Valedofsky: You know I am not, I am not so sure. I...Alvarez is on a piece of land that connects with where this church is and a Workout World and a defunct Stop and Shop. There is a big parking lot for them. And then there is this no man's land where you are not allowed to trespass. I guess that is the real toxic area. I imagine probably, the bulk of the facility of Gorham's, the numerous buildings and storage facilities were probably more towards the Stop and Shop that is out of business now. That is my guess...now don't forget I was there at midnight. I think probably the actual manufacturing facilities were more in that area then in the school.

Fitzsimmons: So there are no memories that came flooding back when you came to work at Alvarez.

Valedofsky: Oh no it is all very modern over there. You got to say it is a nice looking group of buildings, you know [cough] that you see there. I, I went to Alvarez the very first time, about three years ago for an in service, in English. I was impressed, because you know, having worked at Hope High school, which is very very old. Hope goes back I think into the thirties. Here, here it was a building that was on two levels and...it was air conditioned on a good day and it is so clean, you know, compared to Hope High School, which was you know just old and worn and used. You know, I m sure that they tried to improve it now and again, it is just an old facility.

Fitzsimmons: You had mentioned earlier that in the 60'd and 70's, when you were living in the neighborhood, you didn't really, you weren't really aware of Mashapaug Pond. When was the first memory of Mashapaug Pond that you can remember?

Valedofsky: I have no recollection of Mashapaug Pond at all. I don't remember even hearing the name. I think Mashapaug is the name of some Indian tribe you know. Maybe the first time I saw Mashapaug Pond was when I parked my car at Alvarez two years ago. Because I know when I went to the in service before that, I parked in the front. I didn't see no pond that is for sure. Yeah..I never heard of no Mashapaug Pond.

Fitzsimmons: Earlier you had talked about certain establishments in the neighborhood, could you talk a little bit about the people and some memories you had with them.

Valedofsky: You know if you went further down on Elmwood Avenue they had the old IRS building, which the government decided they no longer need, so then that property when derelict and I think the school department actually got hold of the property and they made it be, sort of an alternative school...[Ringing goes off] Oh excuse me.

[END PART #2]

Valedofsky: Next to...that...next to that IRS building, maybe a little bit further down, there was an old Industrial National bank, which became Fleet National Bank, which I think became something else, maybe TD North, something like that. Anyway it is one of those series of banks that had just been taken over by larger and larger banking sharks, but that is where I opened up my first bank account, was that Industrial National Bank on Elmwood Avenue. Oh and then they had, you know they had a Star Market that was on Elmwood Avenue. Just, just short of where Gorham's would be, I'm pretty sure there was a Star Market over there and that must have been pretty popular in the neighborhood. I think that is about it.

Fitzsimmons: We have heard stories of locals that used to live around the pond, using, and their fond memories of the pond.

Valedofsky: [interrupting] Oh really?

Fitzsimmons: Were there any, did you have any favorite places as a kid that you liked to explore, or parks you liked to go check out, when you were living in that area?

Valedofsky: Well you know it's, it's not that far away from Rodger Williams Park, which is very nice, well maintained by the city. I think where I would go as a youngster was...I would get on my bike, I had a group of friends, actually who lived not too far from this area in North Providence, more, more near the Providence line

and we would travel up to, what they call Twin Rivers [cough]. Not the gambling facility, there was nothing there, that used to be Lincoln dog track. But, there is like, on Route 7, on either side there are these two big ponds, they call them Twin Rivers. There was a way to get into this access road, you know if you had a bike it wasn't to bad. We used to go and have sort of like our own private beach area. Absolutely, you know a trespassing situation. I mean how bad could it be, just four guys swimming you know be no problem. So, that's where we would go swimming. That is the areas we would explore.

Fitzsimmons: If the area surrounding Mashapaug were to ever improve, what do you think the difference would be in the community and surrounding area around Alvarez?

Valedofsky: Well I think it might enliven the area, it might be good for the local economy, I see that there is a lot of small shops further down Reservoir Avenue, going towards say the fire department. It looks like very small, maybe, owner operated business. More than likely it would be good for them... I, I, you know I'm not even sure how people would access Mashapaug Pond. I mean, would you have to cut through someone's backyard, like I used to? You know it would be...it would have to be revamped I would imagine. You know some zoning laws would probably have to be changed. You know this all takes time, money, effort, concern. I...[coughing] I don't see myself, you know, going over to Mashapaug Pond for anything. But I know there are people that like water sports and recreation, they probably would put some kind of walking path around it or near it, you know. We got this big bicycling race where you can go from one section of the state to another. You know, they may have something like that for the locals. I wouldn't be against it, believe me. I just know that things of that nature take a back burner position; because of the way the economy is right now, I mean. We are worried about having enough copy paper at our school, you know. Things are tight almost everywhere. So... they, people wrongly or rightly might see improving Mashapaug Pond as sort of a luxury that can be delayed.

[5:30]

Fitzsimmons: There's actually a public path that surrounds Mashapaug Pond. Do you think people don't access the pond because that's not made aware to locals or do you think it has to do with toxins that are in the pond and people just see Mashapug as something that's they don't want to bother?

Valedofsky: You know I would be hard pressed to speculate. I certainly don't know of any access road, but...you know there is probably a lot of other bigger, nicer places that you could take your kayak or your row boat [aughing]...not have any worries or concerns. I would say that is probably a better lure then the area we are talking about.

Fitzsimmons: Do you think the pond represents a sort of nostalgia with the people that used to live there and interact with the pond?

Valedofsky: I don't. I have...I don't have any memories of it and I don't know that there are a lot of people in the area that treasure memories of Mashapaug Pond. No...you probably would have to make an effort to generate some interest and enthusiasm about that body of water. It's not like, you know I don't think it used to be famous in the day, like Crescent Park in East Providence or stuff like that. You know there are some things that people remember with fondness, all the stuff about Rocky Point. You know, places of entertainment, enjoyment, recreation. But...let me tell you, like I said, I had never even heard of Mashapaug pond, so I doubt that there is that element to it where we are going to try and revive 'good 'ol' Mashapaug Pond. But I could be wrong....[laughing]...you know?

Fitzsimmons: I'm curious, do you think you never heard of it because it is hard to access and there are a lot of houses blocking it? Or do you just don't think it was something people used unless they were right on the water?

Valedofsky: You know what, if it's nice it's probably a well kept secret. Maybe they wanted it to be sort of under the radar. Not have a lot of people over there, you know, vendors and balloon salesmen. Probably liked it nice and low key.

Fitzsimmons: Was that an area of town that was quieter and less occupied by businesses?

Valedofsky: Well...let's see if...I don't know how far that extends, but I'm thinking that, that area, down towards where Route 10 is now, that was, that was sort of like at least middle class you know, maybe a little upscale area. I remember the houses being good size. You know, owner occupied. Yeah, I would think that was a nice area back in the day. I think it's suffered now with the economy again. I think back then it was probably nice.

Fitzsimmons: Earlier you had been talking about certain industries around there. Do you know anything about Carpenter's Ice or American Enameling Company?

Valedofsky: I don't. I don't. Carpenter's Ice? I don't recollect that. And I lived, like I said, in that general area for about eight years. Yeah, 65 til around 73 or so.

Fitzsimmons: I also read somewhere about Fruit of the Loom occupying some land around that neighborhood.

[10:00]

Valedofsky: It's funny you mentioned that. My grandfather worked for Fruit of the Loom. He used to operate this machinery that made sheets, your bed linen,

pillowcases. But that was down at...I believe the Pontiac section of, of Warwick. Where...

Fitzsimmons: Of Warwick?

Valedofsky: Yeah Lambert Lind Highway, where the Warwick Mall is now. [whispering to himself] Warwick Mall? Yeah, Warwick Mall. I get it confused with Rhode Island Mall. The...where the Warwick Mall is now there was Pontiac Mills and I think they did work for Fruit of the Loom and my grandfather was one of the operators down there. That was a good job. I mean if you think about it, he owned his house and he owned a couple pieces of rental property near where he lived. To do that he was either a good investor or had a good job.

Fitzsimmons: Going back to Alvarez.

Valedofsky: Yep

Fitzsimmons: You mentioned the gym teacher had a hope that someday...

Valedofsky: Speculation.

Fitzsimmons: Speculation.

Valedofsky: Yes.

Fitzsimmons: Are there other faculty members that have showed signs of trying to get efforts to help Mashapaug Pond or trying to do research?

Valedofsky: Oh yes, Dave Evans. He is the science teacher and he's, he's done an awful lot. He's used as a resource. Debi Crouse has expressed a lot of interest and helped out with doing some research on the area. Yes I think there are a few teachers that have an interest in Gorham, you know? I mean it's not all bad reputation and stuff. They made high quality stuff. They were the biggest silver smiths in the United States. I was going to say the world, I am not, I am not positive the world, but they were definitely up there. They had a lot of people working for them. Those are some of the good things [laughing]. And you know, maybe they were not breaking any laws, by doing what ever it is that they did to get rid of chemicals. But you know, now that we have these laws we have realized probably, that it was fool hardy and inconsiderate at least. For them to get rid of them they way that they did. I don't think they had been doing it criminally at the time. Now yes, but not then.

Fitzsimmons: Could you describe the moment when you found out that Gorham was closing and moving away or was it something that...

Valedofsky: I have no recollection of that. It was no big deal to me. You know in 19...I don't know when they moved out, in 1978 were they even in operation, because that place, where I, where I went on these tours, those two times, it didn't look like to me a whole heck of a lot was being made. Were they still functioning in 1978.

Fitzsimmons: I'm pretty sure they closed in 1880, no sorry, in 1986.

Valedofsky: '86. Oh.

Fitzsimmons: But I could be wrong.

Valedofsky: You now maybe they only had me going into the defunct buildings. Buildings that were no longer useable or something. I never gave it much thought.

Fitzsimmons: This is kind of a different question, but now working at Alvarez do you see the local residents and the, people that lived there, tied to the area at all or do you think they kind of just live there and go about and do their own business. Is there any relationship between those people and, and the land so to speak?

Valedofsky: Not that I am aware of. I am probably that type myself. I, I work in the area and I go home. I am not interested, that much, in hanging around there. I don't [coughing] I don't stay beyond, I don't stay in that area beyond what I have to. It seems to me that it's getting to be, sort of a rundown area. I see...a lot of liquor stores, that is always a sign...that things are going downhill. I see a lot of kids hanging in large groups in the area. I don't, I don't think I want to hang out there a whole heck of a lot. And I don't that, I don't know anybody in the area that would, would impart any special knowledge to me about how they are...[laughing] tied or not tied to the area. I don't know. You know, you might be asking the wrong person that question. I'm in. I'm out.

[15:47]

Fitzsimmons: Well when you used to live there...

Valedofsky: Yes.

Fitzsimmons:...was it different then, did you see a lot of differences from now.

Valedofsky: I think...I think the area was better when I was living there... I think, people...probably stayed in the area for longer periods of time. I think people grew up in the area. I am trying to think of, of neighbors that I had...that at least the kids, when they were in high school, at Classical and what not, they, they were born in those houses, in many cases you know? So, they were there for like, say...sixteen/seventeen years. I moved into the area, because...[cough] you know my father passed away and the house was going to be absorbed by the state to make...I

used to live near where the Department of Health is now. Big white building in back of the state house. So, the state kind of took that over, so we moved, we moved to you know that general area. Reservoir Triangle. But...as time went on it did get pretty scary. I lived on Something Street [laughing] and kids tell me that there is a gang, or was a gang called the something Street Posse. I took a drive by there a few years ago, and I remember being kind of saddened to see cars parked on the sidewalk you know. Something Street had these large trees on either side and...they would, the leaves, the branches with the leaves would touch the opposite member you know? So in autumn [clearing of the throat], it would look sort of like a colorful tunnel going down Something Street, but if you drive down there now you see a lot of the trees are dead or have been removed. There is none of that, you know, good memory left over there now. No I think it's deteriorated quite a bit.

Fitzsimmons: Well do you have anything else you would like to add...any memory that is coming up?

Valedofsky: No I think I have talked myself out. I don't know how you are going to edit this, who couldn't possibly put everything...?

[END]