

Eula McGill talks about the strike

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Eula McGill talks about the events leading up to the strike.

Duration: 3:01

Transcript:

Audio Transcript

Jacquelyn Hall

Coming back to events that led up to the strike. . . .

Eula McGill

When the mills went from two twelve-hour shifts to three there became a shortage of workers, and particularly in ours. There was a big mill there, a Comer Mills, at Avondale, much bigger than this one where they made the material for the sugar bags. It was a much better run mill, a bigger company, more powerful. The old man that owned this mill, that bought it out and started it up, came out of Mississippi; his name was Ames, A-m-e-s. When we started organizing and he got wind of it, he shut the place down one night and called us all together and made a talk. He told us how he came and opened this place up, and people were needing jobs and they were hungry, and he'd been losing money constantly. And I listened to this for a while and I couldn't stand it no longer. He was begging us not to quit and go over to the other mill and go to work. And some nights we couldn't start up the second shift; there wouldn't be enough people in there to start up, because, as I say, they began to compete for the labor. He was begging us not to quit and to stay with him, because he'd operated the place more or less just for our benefit. So I said, "Hey, may I ask a question?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, if we all get a job somewhere else then you won't have to be responsible to see that we get a paycheck, so it should be to your advantage if we could leave and go to work somewhere else." [laughter] We come back upstairs and Joe said, "Why in the name of God did you say that? Why did you have to open your mouth?" I said, "I could not stand there and be made a fool of. How can a man stand up and think you're so stupid, that he's running the place at a loss yet he's begging us to stay and work? It don't make sense. I could not stand it."

They fired a little old woman that was a good bit older than me; I can't remember her name, but me and her became good friends. She was very active in the union; she was a weaver. And they fired her, and they fired the president of the local, and eventually got me, after I went to Washington. I can't remember right now any more, but some did get fired. That Sicilian boy got fired too (I can't remember his name), got clipped right out. I think he thought nobody would stick to him; in that area there weren't too many Italians. Apparently they all went to the steel area, you know.

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