

## Mary Thompson talks about going to work over the summers when she was 14.

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Carl and Mary Thompson interviewed by James Leloudis, Charlotte, NC, July 9, 1979. Interview #H-182 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### Audio

### File:

**Duration:** 3:35

### Transcript:

### *Audio Transcript*

Jim Leloudis

Let's talk a little bit about how you first went to work. You said you worked in the summers when you were young.

Mary Thompson

Yes. I was fourteen when I went to work in the summer. I went to work there at Poe Mill, and I went to work creeling on warpers. And then I run the warpers, and then I went back to school. And then the next summer I went to the spooler room and worked in the spooler room a good while; then I went back to school. But I quit then in school and went back to work, and I worked in the spooler, and then I went to the draw-in room and learned to draw in. And so I stayed in the draw-in room from then on.

Jim Leloudis

And drawing in was your first permanent job?

Mary Thompson

Yes.

Jim Leloudis

How did you get those summer jobs?

Mary Thompson

My daddy was boss in the machine shop, and you know one always has pulled for the other; they always tried to work one another's children. So that's the way we did. We didn't have no trouble getting jobs.

Jim Leloudis

How did you learn those jobs? Did you get any formal training, or did they assign you to someone?

Mary Thompson

You have somebody to show you to get started. Then you just keep learning. Then, in some of the jobs, you had to work six weeks to learn, but then we never did. I never did work but three or four weeks.

Jim Leloudis

Did you get paid while you were learning?

Mary Thompson

No. But that mill quit that. They quit and got to paying. I think they give them about two weeks to learn, and then start paying them. But I don't think I ever worked over two or three weeks without pay to learn anything. And then when I went to drawing in, that was piecework. And my sister drewed in, and she was the one that taught me, so I got the pay from the start there. They paid you so much for a warp, and so I got pay from the start. Of course, I was slow and I didn't make very much. When your speed picks up, you make more and more. But my sister taught me there. Now anyone that come in there that didn't have nobody to teach them, had to pay somebody to teach them. They wouldn't hire you unless you could hire somebody to teach you.

Jim Leloudis

Oh, you paid somebody to teach you.

Mary Thompson

Yes.

Jim Leloudis

Why would they do that?

Mary Thompson

Because it was expensive to teach anyone.

Jim Leloudis

But that person would lose their pay, I guess, while they were...

Mary Thompson

Yes, that's right, while they was teaching them. But most people had somebody that would teach them. But it didn't cost me nothing.

Jim Leloudis

Had you ever been in the mill before the summer jobs?

Mary Thompson

I hadn't worked any.

Jim Leloudis

Had you been in? Had you visited?

Mary Thompson

Oh, yes, my daddy was the bossman. He'd take us down there and take us all the way through, and so we'd been in the mill ever since I can remember.

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