

Indiana BEDROCK

Interview with David Cline Bloomington Limestone Company

This interview was held at the Monroe County Public Library in Bloomington, Indiana on April 2009. Bobby Overman was as the interviewer.



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Bobby: So I want to talk about Indiana Limestone and the Bloomington Limestone Corporation. First off for the record just tell me your name and your age and where you were born and raised.

Mr. Cline: Okay. My name is David Cline. I was born in Bloomington and raised in Bloomington.

Bobby: Okay.

Mr. Cline: I have been a Bloomingtonian all my life.

Bobby: So is there a difference between Bloomington Limestone Corporation and Bloomington Limestone Company?

Mr. Cline: No.

Bobby: We wondered about that because we see it both ways. And we weren't sure if it changed or if it was just what it says. Okay.

Bobby: Who were your parents?

Mr. Cline: My dad was Kenneth Hoadley Cline. He was a member of the Hoadley family. Or his mother was. And my mother was from Rushville. She was Dorothy Mulno. They met here in school at I.U.

Bobby: Tell us about your family. Do you have siblings?

Mr. Cline: I had two sisters. And they are both dead.

Bobby: We have pictures of them.

Mr. Cline: Yup.

Bobby: Caroline and...

Mr. Cline: Caroline and Connie.

Bobby: And Connie. How did you meet your wife?

Mr. Cline: I worked for her.

Bobby: Oh.

Mr. Cline: (laughter) My second wife. And uh so this is how we met.

Bobby: And you worked for her.

Mr. Cline: It was Properties Unlimited.

Bobby: And do you have children?

Mr. Cline: Three. Well five altogether if we count Karen's kids.

Bobby: Are they interested in Limestone? Nope?

Bobby: How did you get started in the limestone industry?

Mr. Cline: Well that is a good story. I started to cut stone when I was sixteen. And you couldn't work under the over head cranes so they put me outside of the building. And by in the afternoon the sun was so hot and you know I was only sixteen. Then after that I went ahead and cut stone part-time and full-time and I did complete my four year apprenticeship so by that time I moved into management.

Bobby: Oh.

Mr. Cline: After I completed my stone cutting.

Bobby: Did you miss like stone cutting after you moved into management?

Mr. Cline: In some ways. You know it's neat to take a piece of stone and make something out of it. And I kind of missed the...it's hard work. I mean it really is and I kind of missed it.

Bobby: Could you tell us the various jobs you worked in and out of the limestone industry?

Mr. Cline: Well of course I started as an apprentice stone cutter and I uh moved into stone cutter foreman and then the superintendent of production for cut stone and that's pretty much where I ended up.

Bobby: So your father worked in the industry?

Mr. Cline: Yes.

Bobby: What company or companies did he work for? And the various jobs he held?

Mr. Cline: Well I am not too sure of the very early. They had his father had a stone company. I am not sure, it was the Hoadley Stone Company and he worked for them and then he started his own company. It was Hoadley-Cline Stone Company and that didn't work out so he bought out the Hoadley part and then it became the Cline Stone Company. And then in some way he ended up owning the Texas Quarries and then Johnson, a man by the name of Johnson owned the Bloomington Limestone then and somehow my Dad switched they switched stock and he assumed the Bloomington Limestone and Harry Johnson assumed the Texas Quarries. They still have a quarry out in Arlington and they had a stone mill in Texas. I don't know whether that whether that mill is still out there or not.

Bobby: So he took over...

Mr. Cline: So ended up with the Bloomington Limestone and sold the Texas Quarries business.

Bobby: So he started Bloomington Limestone.

Mr. Cline: Well he bought it.

Bobby: He bought it.

Mr. Cline: Yea.

Bobby: He bought so he and then Mr. Wiley came in on it.

Mr. Cline: Yea, yea.

Bobby: Okay. So it was actually started...

Mr. Cline: I think Wiley worked for Johnson.

Bobby: Oh.

Mr. Cline: As I recall. And of course he came with the deal. (laughter)

Bobby: So Mr. Johnson did he stay around here?

Mr. Cline: No he went back to Texas.

Bobby: So somehow your Dad had a quarry in Texas. The Texas Quarries. Well he owned the company.

Mr. Cline: He owned the company yeah.

Bobby: Did you have any other relatives who were limestone people?

Mr. Cline: Oh yeah. The whole family was in the stone business. I mean all the Hoadleys and the Clines and the Neals and so yeah just about everyone.

Bobby: So did your father have siblings who were in limestone?

Mr. Cline: No.

Bobby: So it was but it was starting with your father.

Mr. Cline: My father only had one sister who lived in California.

Bobby: Okay.

Mr. Cline: And he had no one else in the stone business.

Bobby: But then your Mom's...

Mr. Cline: She was not she was an official of the company but she had nothing to do with it.

Bobby: So when you say all your other relatives...

Mr. Cline: Uncles, Aunts.

Bobby: All the Hoadleys and all the ...So your wife's family. What about your wife's family? Were they affiliated with the limestone industry?

Mr. Cline: No way. She's from Chicago.

Bobby: Okay. Do you recall your father giving you advice about how to navigate up through the limestone company?

Mr. Cline: I remember one instance after the war. We had a lot of what we call springs. They were about like this. And then Cline mills. That was when I was cutting stone outside the building. And they wanted they asked for volunteers to stay and load those in an open box car. And I tell you by the first hour I was ready to die. There I was a sixteen year old kid and I was all but in tears and my Dad came by and said did you volunteer for this? And I said yeah and he said then you'll finish it. So that was pretty much his attitude.

Bobby: That was his philosophy. What do you think about Bill McDonald referring to limestone people as a group?

Mr. Cline: Well I think he has a good point. They're a different kind of creature. (laughter)

Bobby: Are they still a different kind of creature?

Mr. Cline: I don't know I can't say now. But you know at the time I was active they certainly were.

Bobby: Like did they just their work ethic or...

Mr. Cline: Just their attitude yeah.

Bobby: Did limestone people tend to hang out with other limestone people?

Mr. Cline: Not particularly.

Bobby: No?

Mr. Cline: I don't think so.

Bobby: Were all the workers cordial, supportive and protective of each other?

Mr. Cline: Yes and no. (laughter) Yeah I would say overall . There were exceptions but...

Bobby: What if anything would cause a rift in a team in the quarries and mills?

Mr. Cline: Well I'd say if they didn't accept responsibility for some error they made. You know it's always easy to blame somebody else for something and I'd say something like that but otherwise there wasn't much.

Bobby: What was it like as a boy listening to your father talk about his work?

Mr. Cline: He didn't really talk about it much.

Bobby: And you were there for a lot of it.

Mr. Cline: Yeah, yeah.

Bobby: Were you ever around a mill or office when a worker was injured?

Mr. Cline: As I said earlier we only had one really serious accident in the mill in my portion of the company. The production or limestone area cut stone production. And it

was a guy got his arm cut off. And we demanded to go back to work the next day. We demanded we work the whole day after that and we work the next day. Because we thought it was better you know and I think that was the right decision. But that's the only accident you know other than a mashed finger or something like that.

Bobby: So out in the quarries?

Mr. Cline: I can't say for the quarries.

Bobby: Okay. But in your section... probably you just answer the next question. Is there a particular tragedy or even that made such an impression on the company officials so you didn't have any? Did the company provide protective shoes or uniforms for the employees?

Mr. Cline: They made...there was no uniform no clothing per se. There was a mobile shoe store that came by and people would buy their own shoes.

Bobby: Were they...

Mr. Cline: We didn't even furnish at that time you know you actually have a helmet now or whatever you call it we didn't even have that.

Bobby: Were the shoes like...

Mr. Cline: They had a steel toe.

Bobby: Were there unions at that time?

Mr. Cline: Oh yeah.

Bobby: Do you remember like...

Mr. Cline: Oh yeah. I was on the union negotiating committee for ten or twelve years. In fact Mason Hoadley had a stone mill and during the negotiations we reached an agreement and he was in Michigan on a vacation and the union wouldn't accept the Vice-President's signature on the contract and I had to sign it for the union I mean for him for the union before they would go back to work. And I mean they wouldn't accept the signature of the Vice-President of the company. (laughter) Yeah it was interesting. One time the head of the mill workers and I agreed on a contract and we thought everything was fine and everybody turned it down I mean the unions turned it down and we took a six week strike and agreed on the same thing we had originally had.

Bobby: So there were strikes?

Mr. Cline: Oh yeah.

Bobby: Were they often? When the strikes happened?

Mr. Cline: It seemed like they were often. The contract normally ran three years. And uh it seemed like you know we were talking for pennies. We weren't talking about a dollar an hour. We were talking like four or five cents an hour.

Bobby: Did you also negotiate other like wages and benefits?

Mr. Cline: Yes. I think we had like seven unions and I recall. And uh we dealt with the stone cutters, the mill workers, the machinists, the blacksmiths and anyway there were seven. We met with all seven. Very seldom did we meet together. We knew we had to meet with each individual craft. So it was interesting.

Bobby: Do you remember when the first union came in?

Mr. Cline: Oh no. I don't remember that.

Bobby: Was it long into...

Mr. Cline: It was early.

Bobby: It was early. Was it typical for those looking for work to hand out near the quarries and mills hoping to get in?

Mr. Cline: Yes during the depression it was. Uh I mean they'd be standing outside the mill waiting for somebody to get hurt or quit or whatever. Yep it wasn't in my time but during the depression.

Bobby: And they would just hire laborers just to come in? I mean did you I guess my question is could anyone just come in and work in the mill and in the quarry?

Mr. Cline: At that time yea. There was no union.

Bobby: There was no union so anyone could just in but I mean as far as training goes...

Mr. Cline: On the job.

Bobby: On the job yea. What do you value the most about your experience with the limestone industry?

Mr. Cline: Oh boy. I don't know. It was an interesting it is amazing to see the product come out of the ground and then end up in a column or cap or something like that. I think that's uh it's just the transformation from a block of stone to a finished product it's really interesting.

Bobby: How did the company managers judge and demand excellence with the product and the service? Was there quality control assigned and monitored?

Mr. Cline: Yea, yea it had to be right. We uh did some for the Cathedral in Washington. We would set the columns together and be sure everything fit you know so there was I remember one time when I was an apprentice and another apprentice and I cut a hold in what we call dollies they were just wood pallet type thing and uh his Dad was the foreman the stone cutter foreman and he didn't like our work so we had to recut all that again.

Bobby: So before it went out somebody inspected it to make sure.

Bobby: What can you remember about Mr. Wiley?

Mr. Cline: He and my Dad were very good friends and we lived next door to each other for over twenty some years. He was very prissy and very I mean he was very well dressed.

Bobby: You told me earlier he took care of the bookwork.

Mr. Cline: He took care of the bookwork and my Dad did the production.

Bobby: Dad did the production. This is sort of off the path...quarries are very popular with locals for swimming.

Mr. Cline: Oh yes we swam in them.

Bobby: Did you yea. And it was fine I mean at that time people didn't mind that you went and swam? Well you had the quarries so...

Mr. Cline: No they didn't mind we never went in ours. (laughter)

Bobby: Oh you went in all the other ones. (laughter)

Mr. Cline: They were fun, I mean they really were. Some of the things people did in them were really foolish. They'd fly out on the wires and then drop into the quarry. That's something I would never do. You had to be careful.

Bobby: Yea. What buildings were built with limestone from the Bloomington Limestone Company? Can you just name some?

Mr. Cline: The I.U. Memorial Union. Just about every building on the campus. Almost all the dormitories and the uh we furnished the stone for the library. We didn't do the production.

Bobby: And you said the Washington Cathedral?

Mr. Cline: That was an ongoing project for 100 years. It really was about a 100 years. And they would really go hog-wild for four or five years then they would stop for awhile until they got enough money. On some of that stone on the back we would carve the name of people who donated money for that piece of stone.

Bobby: So did you say a project took that long or even some of the buildings at I.U. was it ever a couple of limestone companies that would work on it? Like you said you did the stone production.

Mr. Cline: Yes and no. On the bigger jobs sometimes there would be more than one company. Uh but you know something like the at the university...

Bobby: They just contracted with you?

Mr. Cline: We did one job. The National State Office in Nashville Tennessee. We were shipping five truckloads a day of stone and uh that was twenty five trucks a week and we still couldn't keep up with them. I mean they could send it faster than we could produce it. In addition we were shipping probably one truck a day at other jobs so uh that's a lot of stone. That was out of Wiley Mill.

Bobby: So tell me about the Cline and Wiley Mills. Where were they located?

Mr. Cline: The Cline Mill was at 900 South Walnut. Do you know where the sign company is now? That was our office. The mill was right behind it. Wiley Mill was of course in Clear Creek. It's still there.

Bobby: Yea. When did they stop production?

Mr. Cline: Well I left in '72 so it wasn't long after that.

Bobby: So did they both stop around the same time?

Mr. Cline: Yea. They tore down Cline Mill prior to that and uh so I don't know I assume Wiley Mill...see we changed hands.

Bobby: When did that happen?

Mr. Cline: I left in '72 and uh...

Bobby: So the Bloomington Limestone Company around that time they went out of business or did they just change hands?

Mr. Cline: They changed hands.

Bobby: They changed hands so they really didn't go out of business.

Mr. Cline: No. They kept their Maple Hill Mill which is on Rockport Road also. I don't know how long they went on and eventually they sold everything. All their stone.

Bobby: So it's all...

Mr. Cline: Gone.

Bobby: Gone now.

Bobby: So what can you tell me about the conversion of the Cline Mill for war production? It was just that mill that was...

Mr. Cline: No. They converted my Dad was the one that came up with the idea of producing materials for the war. He wanted to enlist but he was too old. We he yea so he decided that they should plan something they could do to help the war effort. So he

was the one that came up with all of this. I mean he got the mill in Ellettsville and the Wiley Mill and the Cline Mill. I'm not sure whether the Woolery's did or not. I don't remember whether they did and then Indian Neal Stone Company did so he was responsible for all the conversions.

Bobby: So both so all the mills were converted for the war effort?

Mr. Cline: Lots of them. I can't say about Bedford.

Bobby: But the Cline and Wiley they were both converted?

Mr. Cline: Yea, yea.

Bobby: So then when were you still doing...

Mr. Cline: And we even had the Palmer B plant over in Ellettsville that they converted to war production.

Bobby: So were you still producing stone?

Mr. Cline: No.

Bobby: Oh so you stopped...

Mr. Cline: Yea everything was stopped in the limestone.

Bobby: Oh so that's interesting because one piece I was reading actually it was a letter in here that said we need help because we're still producing stone in our other mills.

Mr. Cline: Not in our mills. Now Fagan brothers which was right next to Cline Mill I think they continued with stone during the war.

Bobby: So you were just doing this. I mean there was a lot to do. So did all the workers convert with you?

Mr. Cline: A lot of the m did. There were a lot of them drafted you see. It kinda was catch catch can you know.

Bobby: So you had a lot of your workers drafted but the ones that could went and worked in the mills for the war effort. Okay.

Bobby: So the Army-Navy E Award was given to the Wiley and Cline Mills and I know you attended the ceremony. I saw your picture. What did that award mean to the workers?

Mr. Cline: I'm not really sure. (laughter) They probably didn't know what it meant. I think they were proud. I mean they were pleased. But I am not sure. I can't really answer that.

Bobby: What did it mean to your Dad and Mr. Wiley?

Mr. Cline: Well they were really pleased.

Bobby: And it was a big deal here in Bloomington? Everyone came?

Mr. Cline: Oh yea.

Bobby: Is there anything else you would like to add about yourself or the limestone industry that we didn't cover today?

Mr. Cline: No. I think we pretty well covered it.