

# Indiana BEDROCK

## Interview with Harold E. Hickman

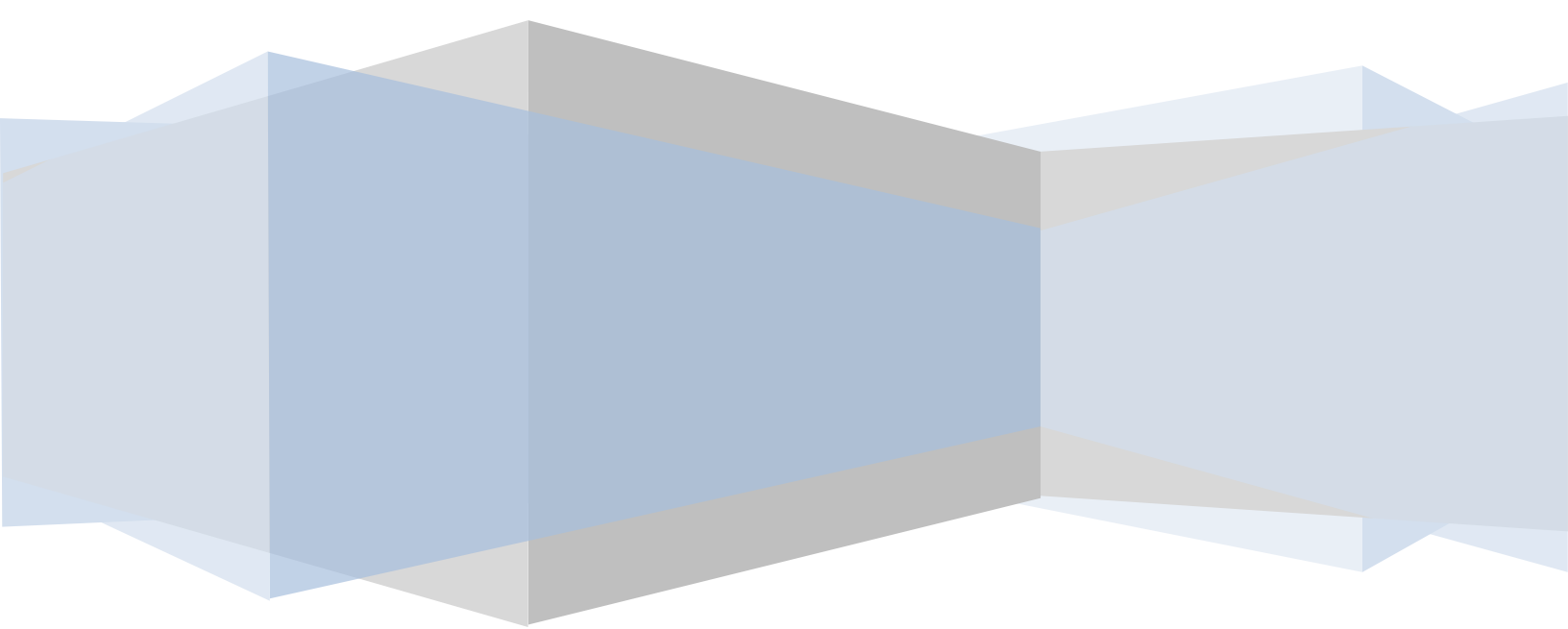
### Bloomington Limestone Company and Woolery Stone Company

This interview was held at the Monroe County Public Library in Bloomington, Indiana on April 14, 2009. Christine Eykholt Friesel was as the interviewer.



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1. Bill McDonald, former Director of the Indiana Limestone Institute, said that “Limestone People are by nature entrepreneurial.” Today I would like to explore with you your thoughts about these 2 areas: Limestone People and your experience working as an entrepreneur as a worker and as an officer.

Hickman:

BILL MC DONALD WAS A WONDERFUL PERSON, AND I ATTENDED MANY MEETINGS WITH HIM IN THE INDUSTRY. HE WAS CAPABLE, KIND AND VERY IMPRESSIVE.

Limestone People were hard working people, many quarry and mill workers who would go home after work hours and farm.

They were friendly and fair, thinking about others, especially with the ones they worked with.

I was privileged to tag along after my Dad, Charlie Hickman, doing chores a young lad could do. When I started, we had no unions, so it was easy for me to follow my Dad, helping him, and being with him. I had a good Dad, one that I looked up to, and liked to be around, listening to him as he would talk to other people.

I was privileged to work for and with a man named Charles Woolery, who was a Baptist through and through, and who fitted in with my beliefs as a young Christian person, enabling me to work for his company and fulfill the purpose God had given to me in working for him and his company, in serving others.

My Dad was a great influence, and I learned a lot from him about how to treat others and to work hard and accomplish much.

John W. Rogers, was my overseer at Woolery Stone Company, and also, a man of integrity and good character, who had a great influence upon me, and who was always a good friend.

As Controller and Office Manager, I was privileged to hire my son, Mark, my daughters Susan and Cathy who assisted me in our office at Woolery Stone Company. This was an honor and an opportunity for them to come into the business world.

2. For the record, please state you're the following:
  - a. Your Name Harold Ellsworth Hickman
  - b. Your age 89
  - c. Your place of birth Lexington, Illinois (McLean County)
  - d. Where you were born and where you were raised

Lexington, Illinois, near Bloomington, Illinois. and I was raised in Orange, Lawrence and Monroe Counties in Indiana

3. Who was your Father? Charles Ambrose Hickman, Sr.
4. Who was your Mother? Mary Elizabeth Fears Hickman
5. Tell us about your family – how you met your wife and about your children. I met my wife, Winifred Jean Eddleman, in The Clear Creek Christian Church, Clear Creek, Indiana, in 1946.

I was Sunday School Superintendent, and one Sunday, my wife when she came into the Church with her Dad and Mother, and two sisters Janice and Elizabeth, saw me leading the Sunday School during Opening Exercises, and she exclaimed to her, "That's the man, I am going to marry, and evidently as God desired, we were to become engaged and married on April 24, 1948". We had a wonderful, fulfilled life together for 48 years and 4 months, and raised our son, Mark, our daughters Susan and Cathy.

6. Tell us how you got your start in the Limestone Industry.

By working in The Truck Gardens at The Bloomington Limestone Plant in Clear Creek, Indiana, and helping my Dad as he would deliver or pick up items for the company, in their Chevrolet Pickup.

7. (Please elaborate on the various jobs you've worked, in chronological order, if possible.) In The Gardens at Bloomington Limestone COMPANY

MOWING YARDS FOR OFFICERS OF THE BLCO  
CLEANING AND SWEEPING THE DRAFTING ROOM AND

OFFICE BLCO

DOING CLERICAL WORK FOR THE CLEAR CREEK MILL  
DOING PRINTING OF MILL TICKETS AND DRAWINGS FOR

BLCO

8. Your father worked for the industry. Please tell us what company or companies he worked for and the various jobs he held.

FARMING IN LAWRENCE COUNTY INDIANA  
THE BLOOMINGTON LIMESTONE COMPANY, INC.  
TRUCK DRIVER AND CARE TAKER FOR BLCO

9. Did you have other relatives who were Limestone People? What about your wife's family – were they affiliated with limestone?

MY BROTHER JESSE HICKMAN WORKED FOR BLCO  
MY SISTER RHEA DAWN MARRIED A MAN WHO OPERATED A

DIAMOND SAW FOR WOOLERY STONE CO.  
MY SISTER MABLE MARRIED A MAN WHO LABORED IN THE MILL  
FOR BLOOMINGTON LIMESTONE COMPANY  
MY WIFE'S DAD DROVE A TRUCK FOR GRIFFITH MOTOR EXPRESS HERE IN  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

10. Do you recall your father giving you advice about how to navigate up through the limestone company or how to look for opportunities?

YES, MANY TIMES, AND I FOLLOWED HIM.

11. So, to recap, the jobs you've had within the 50 years of working with the limestone industry are...grounds keeper, messenger, clerk, treasurer... which one was the most exciting time for you?

WORKING ALONG SIDE OF MY DAD  
BEING CONTROLLER/SECRETARY-TREASURER OF WOOLERY STONE COMPANY

12. What do you think about Bill McDonald referring to "Limestone People" as a group? VERY TRUE.

COMPANIES OBSERVED THE HONOR SYSTEM IN BIDDING  
JOBS

HELPFUL TO ONE AND ANOTHER AS NEEDS AROSE

13. Were all the workers cordial, supportive, or protective of each other?  
YES, BECAUSE WORKERS SOON REALIZED LIMESTONE WAS DANGEROUS AND  
WORKERS LOOKED OUT FOR EACH OTHER, A BROTHERLY TYPE WAY
14. What, if anything, would cause a rift in the team in the quarries and mills?  
UNIONS WOULD COME IN AND SETTLE.

15. From our research, we found a reference that stated the peak production was in 1928. You were probably in elementary school at this time, but this was also a time when there were also some significant accidents. What was it like when you were a boy listening to your father talk about his work? DAD STRESSED BEING CAREFUL, AND KEEPING YOUR RECORD STRAIGHT, TREATING OTHERS WITH RESPECT, NO MATTER WHO THEY WERE. DAD WOULD ALSO POINT OUT THE BENEFITS OF WORKING HARD, SACVING YOUR MONEY, AND BEING LIKE FRED BECK, DAVID WYLIE, KENNY CLINE, WHO WERE OFFICERS OF THE BLOOMINGTON LIMESTONE COMPANY.

16. Were you ever around the mill or office when a worker was injured? How did the supervisors and workers respond?  
YES. THE PLANT WOULD CLOSE BECAUSE OF THE TRAUMA, IF IT WERE A BAD INJURY.

17. Is there a particular tragedy or event that made such an impression on the company officials that they were thus motivated to improve working conditions or safety standards?

WHEN OUR QUARRY SUPERINTENDENT AT WOOLERY STONE COMPANY WAS RELEASING AND MOVING A NUMBER OF RAILROAD CARS DOWN THE TRUCK AT THE QUARRY, AND AT THE OTHER END WHEN THE CARS STOPPED, HERSHEL "BEAN" SMITH WAS HIT BY A QUARRY BLOCK WHICH CAUSED HIM TO LOOSE A LEG.

18. Did the companies you work for ever provide protective shoes or uniforms for the employees? WE BOUGHT SAFETY SHOES AND THE COMPANY FURNISHED SAFETY HATS AND GLASSES.  
WE RENTED UNIFORMS.

19. Our research also tells us that 1943 was a year of minimum production. Of course, this was due to World War II. I know that you were in the service at this time. Can you tell us a little bit about your war duty then?

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT SENT ME GREETINGS BY LETTER TELLING ME HE NEEDED ME TO HELP WIN THE WAR AGAINST THE NAZIS. I WAS INDUCTED INTO THE US ARMY, OCTOBER 6, 1942, AND WAS STATIONED SAT FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON AT INDIANAPOLIS, UNTI I WAS TRANSFERRED TO FORT LEWIS, WASHINGTON, WHERE I SERVED IN CLERICAL CAPACITIES, AFTER MILITARY MANEUVERS AND CONTINUED BASIC TRAINING. I SERVED MY COUNTRY 3 1/2 YEARS.

20. While you were away, did you receive any updates from your family about how things were going in Monroe County?

THE CLEAR CREEK CHRISTIAN CHURCH KEPT IN CONTACT WITH ITS ACTIVITIES, AND MY FAMILY KEPT ME POSTED ABOUT FAMILY HAPPENINGS AND OTHER EVENTS HAPPENING IN THE COMMUNITY.

21. Was it a common expectation that you would return to work in the limestone business after the war? Were you encouraged or discouraged from choosing to develop your career in the limestone industry? MY COUNTRY OFFERED ME A COLLEGE EDUCATION WHICH I PURSUED AS AN ACCOUNTING MAJOR. THIS WAS MY PERSONAL CHOICE.

22. How did you learn about the trade? Was there someone who provided a great deal of coaching for you? I JUST GREW UP WITH IT,

23. Can you recall a particularly as an officer with Woolery when the day was especially eventful? For example, did you ever have a day from hell or a day when the entire office celebrated after getting a winning bid?

MY BIG JOB WAS CONTROLLING FINANCES AND MANY TIMES, IF WE WERE SHORT OF MONEY TO MAKE PAYROLL, I WOULD PICK UP MY WIFE, AND WE WOULD DRIVE TO A LOCATION WHO OWED US AND PICK UP PAYMENT TO KEEP "WHEELS" ROLLING.

WE DID A LOT OF BIDDING AND THE EXCITEMENT SEEMED TO STAY IN THE FRONT OFFICE. YES, THERE WOULD BE JUBILATION. YES, THERE WERE SADNESS, TOO, IF WE DID NOT GET THE JOB.

24. How did the company managers judge and demand excellence with the product and with service? How was quality control assigned and monitored?  
CHARLIE WOOLERY WAS THE BOSS, A FAIR BOSS, BUT IF HE SAW A PIECE OF STONE BEING FINISHED THAT SHOWED A FAULT OR MUD SEAM, HE WOULD PICK UP A SPALLING HAMMER AND JUST BURST IT IN TO SPITHEREENS.

25. In our earlier conversations, you mentioned that there were 7 unions. Can you recall which came first and last? When was the longest strike?

DRAFTMEN'S UNION  
THE QUARRY UNION  
THE MILL WORKERS UNION  
THE CUTTERS AND PLANERMEN UNION  
THE TRAVELERS UNION  
MILL MECHANICS UNION  
BLACKSMITHS UNION  
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26. Was it typical for those looking for work to just go and hang out by the quarries and mills, hoping to be given any task as a day laborer?

THIS WAS TRUE BEFORE UNIONS WERE STARTED.  
AFTER THE UNIONS CAME IN, PEOPLE WENT THROUGH THEM FOR EMPLOYMENT AND THE UNION WOULD SEND THEM OUT TO THE MILL OR QUARRY.

27. What do you value the most about your experience with the limestone industry? THE OPPORTUNITY IT GAVE ME TO RAISE MY FAMILY AND TO FEED THEM. I BELIEVE GOD HAD A HAND IN MY BEING IN THE LIMESTONE INDUSTRY.

28. Is there anything you'd like to add about yourself that we didn't review here today?

I AM THANKFUL AND GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES I HAD TO HELP OTHERS, AND TO BE THE BEST I KNEW HOW TO BE, "WITH GOD'S HELP", THE KIND OF DAD AND HUSBAND, GOD WOULD HAVE ME TO BE-----FALLING SHORT, MANY TIMES, BUT I HOPE "OVERCOMING"!  
HAROLD ELLSWORTH HICKMAN