

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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The Last Stage

98 Charles River Road  
Watertown, Mass. 02172  
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Mr. Richard H. Nolte  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
535 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Helen V. Rutyna, who is sixty-two, Hazel Lefebvre, sixty-two, and Alba Bocuzze, fifty-three, have eighty-eight years and ten months of service at Western Electric among the three of them. Each will retire in December 1974.

Western Electric first moved to the Merrimack Valley in October of 1944. It began its operations in a converted shoe warehouse in Haverhill known as the Haverhill Shops. Almost immediately the company began advertising for help in the local papers offering pay of 50¢ an hour and no bonus.

All three women began working for the company in its first year of operation in Haverhill. Hazel Lefebvre remembers seeing this ad in the local paper. "They wanted someone who knew algebra. I always loved algebra in school. I had gone to Macintosh Business College, then when I was first married I worked in an office. I did bookkeeping, typing. I worked a year and a half. Then I got pregnant so I stopped.

"I didn't go back to work until my children were grown up. They were all in school in 1943 so I took a part-time job as a clerk, in a store. I worked there about a year and then I saw the ad in the paper.



Hazel Lefebvre  
25th Anniversary Picture--June 1955

"By then the children were getting bigger (13, 12 and 9) and my husband who worked in the ship yard was sick a lot so I wanted to get a steady job. I answered the ad and came in as a tester on the midnight shift."

Alba Bocuzzo was twenty-two when she began working at Western in 1944. She had married Bucky Bocuzzo a year and a half earlier while he was in the service. When he went overseas she went to work at Western.

"I worked at odd jobs before. I was following Bucky when he was switched around in the service. I was a typist up in Vermont. I worked for Ethan Allen (furniture company) and I worked in a boxboard factory. No real good jobs.

"I came home to Haverhill when Bucky went overseas. Western was just starting up, they were offering 50¢ an hour and I just figured I would go down and apply. They came in August and I think I started in October, so I was one of the first. Right away I liked my job, I got in on the testing end of it. It wasn't crystals, of course, it was something else then, but I can't remember the name of it.



Alba Bocuzzo  
Wedding--June 1944

"We were making peanuts compared to what they were making in the shoe shops, but my parents had worked in the shoe shops and they didn't want us children to work there. They wanted something easier for us. My father always had big dreams for me, I was his pet. He'd say, 'I want you be secretary'. He came from Italy and he always spoke broken English. He always told me, 'I want you be secretary.'

"I sort of have a bum arm that I can't use, so I just couldn't do secretarial work too well. I never told him, but he was very happy when I got a job at Western. He thought that was a good kind of job, me being a tester."

Helen Rutyna began working at Western in January 1944. She had a pretty good job working for Remington company (making \$1.40 an hour) in Lowell. "This was just when the war was breaking out, and they had a big plant. I think I worked there a year when they decided to close it down, because of some complication with the government. The rumor was they were selling the armor piercing bullets to Germany. I don't know if that's true, but the plant closed down November 1943 just at the time when the war was in full swing.

"I wanted to go to Western then, but I didn't have a ride, so I applied for unemployment. There were plenty of jobs available but not of my liking. I didn't want to take one of the jobs they offered me in the mills because I had a lung problem.



Helen Rutyna  
1944

"They didn't want to give me a check so I got a note from my doctor. When they were about to give me a check I had gotten a job at Western and had arranged for a ride. I only worked at Western for four months. I lost my ride in April 1944 and had to quit.

"I remember my supervisor, Mr. Schneider. He said, 'Helen, why don't you stay at the hotel? Get a room some place in Haverhill near the shop.' I said, 'I can't. I've got a mother to support. What'll I have left?' I couldn't rent a place, and I couldn't afford a car on 50¢ an hour, no bonus. My six day week pay was \$26 take home, so I had to quit.

"U.S. Rubber was training some of the people from Remington, so I went with about twelve people to Bristol, Rhode Island to be trained to become a supervisor.

"I was down there fore about two months when I got a letter from a girl that worked for Mr. Nordengren. He was a department chief of mine before, and she said there's a fellow that's starting to work at the Western Electric plant from Lowell who could give you a ride, and Mr. Nordengren would like to know if you'd like to come back. I wrote back and told her I would.

"I figured even though I was going to have a good job at U.S. Rubber, it was only a war time job, and my boyfriend got killed in the service, and everything went down the drain, my plans and everything. I met him at a USO dance and I just knew I cared for him right then and there.

"He felt the same way so we planned a marriage as soon as he got back. He wanted to get married before he went across but, I don't know, I figured let's wait. My mother said the same thing.

"So I said to my mom, now I have to look for a job with security, which they offer at Western Electric.

"I'm glad I did. I really like this place. It's been like a home to me."

Those first years in the Haverhill shops were good years for all three women. Helen Rutema was a tester and soon was holding down a 36 grade job. She loved the work, but her problems with getting a ride to work continued. "All my life I had a problem getting a ride to Haverhill. Finally I bought a car in 1953. I don't think I would have gotten one even then, except my department chief Mr. Ferguson said to me (because I was late a lot), 'Helen, you'd better buy yourself a little jalopy.'

"My ride from Lowell had changed shifts so I was getting rides from people who worked in the shoe shops and they didn't care if they were late. This one man was supposed to pick me up at 6:00. I'd be standing out on a corner and sometimes he wouldn't show up until 7:30. I'd freeze because there'd be no place to warm up.

"I told Mr. Ferguson, 'I'm a nervous type of person, I'd never be able to drive a car.' He told me, 'If you can operate one of these (a test set that took up a full wall) you can operate a car.'

"I'll never forget when I first got my '51 Chevy (she laughs), my mother was my first passenger. I got the car and I didn't have a ride for work on Saturday, we used to work Saturdays, so I drove to work and when I got home my mother was waiting at the gate in her houseslippers and her housedress and after finding out how I did, she told me, 'Now you take me for a ride.' I told her, 'I don't know where to take you.' 'Anyplace,' she said. So we went down country roads and everything. When we got home my mother said, 'You're a good driver, you'll be all right.' I've driven ever since, and always owned Chevys.

"I liked working in the Haverhill shops because I liked getting out on my lunch hour and going shopping. I liked going to different restaurants. It broke up my day."

Alba Bocuzze also liked the longer lunch hours. She says, "We really enjoyed them because we had an hour for lunch. You could walk downtown. Oh, it was nice especially at Christmas time. You went downtown and did your shopping during that hour, got something everyday. But over here with only a half an hour you're stuck, you can't go shopping or do your errands. Here you've got to worry about hurrying up and getting downtown to do your errands and of course everything is busy downtown after work, everybody's got the same idea.

"We miss the Haverhill shops really. They didn't have the pressure you have here. In the Haverhill shops you were in big rooms, that were not wide open. So you weren't being watched by other supervisors. It was more like a family. You got to know each other well, and you didn't have to worry about what the other side was doing."

When Bucky returned from the service at the end of the war Alba didn't quit work. "I was doing real well. After a year I was made a 34 grade layout. I figured I'd work until I became pregnant which never happened, just one of those things. So I kept on working. We wanted a home, so we built one. We built it ourselves. A neighbor told us he had a silo he wanted torn down and if we tore it down we could have the wood to build our house. Bucky tore down the silo and there was a lot of beautiful lumber in there and we started our house.

"We built it practically piece by piece, him and his father. His father was a carpenter, you know--not a real carpenter but he did well for himself. So this is how we built it. It took maybe ten years to complete it but we lived in the rough for a while--no walls up, just the two by fours and rough floor and just the sink and no cabinets and all that stuff.

"We really enjoyed that house. Bucky used to bring his tractors into the living room and put them together there. His friends used the living room too. I mean there was nothing in the living room to worry about, no nice furniture, no nice floor, so everything they wanted to assemble, a boat, a tractor, they did it there. They never wanted to see that living room get done. It was a real playroom."

Hazel Lefebvre, like the other two women, enjoyed working in the Haverhill shops. She did very well. "I came in as a 32 grade tester and a year and a half later I was up to a 37 grade layout operator. In those days they taught you. I started out on the midnight shift, and I went to school during the days. They had a teacher here who taught three days a week. I passed the test and became a 36 grade. And then I got a 37 grade layout operator job.

"While I was in final inspection we used to change places every three months. Mr. Fritz was my boss. He was very nice. My husband used to change shifts every three months in the navy yard, and Mr. Fritz used to help me change shifts when my husband changed.

"I had just moved off the night shift onto days as a 37 grade layout and I got pregnant and had to quit. I stayed out for three years. When I came back I lost my time and had to start as a 32 grade again.

"My pregnancy really surprised me. We got married in 1930 and had three children one, two, three. Then I waited thirteen years before

having my other one. I didn't even know I was pregnant. I went to the doctor and he told me. He said, 'What did you think, you were immune?' I said, 'Well, after all these years...'

"It was funny. I didn't even give it a thought, not after so many years. I had been working. We had bought a home and were doing good and that's when it happened. I was an old lady then, thirty-four years old. I thought I was old. It's not like it is today. I was really ashamed, I was afraid to tell anybody.

"I stayed out for three years before I went back in. My daughter was three and I went back on days. My husband's mother and father were living with us for a while and they took care of her. My son used to come home from high school and he'd take care of her. Everybody chipped in. When there wasn't anybody home, I'd stay home myself and take care of her.

"Like I said, I went back in as a thirty-two and I didn't pick up my time for five years. I came back in 1950 and I was laid off in 1950. Things got slow and they had a big layoff. I was only out for five months.

"I worked as a 32 grade for a while and then I got a double upgrade to 34 and then I got a 35, and I was on that for twelve years. I went back on the third shift when a 36 grade job opened in 1961, and I was tired of being a 35 grade. I had been a 37 grade before I had gone out to have my baby and I wanted to get up there again. When I was out for the three years having the baby I lost time. People I started with had those extra three years on me, and so they were passing me and I couldn't seem to catch up and get up on the top of the list for days. So I went on nights to get the 36 grade job.

"I only stayed on nights for six months before I came on days and I've been on days ever since. The first time I worked the third shift years ago I didn't mind it. The children were little and I'd come home and get them off to school and then I'd sleep. But this last time when I went on to get my upgrade I hated it. I just worked on it three months and then I went to the hospital and had an operation. Then they called me up and told me when I came back to work I could come back on days.

"I was glad because I hated the hours. I couldn't sleep. I'd go home, sleep about two hours and that would be it. The children would come home from school and sometimes I'd lay down in the bed but I couldn't seem to sleep and I was always tired. They were building a house right behind us, so when I'd come home I'd hear all that pounding.

"I've been on days ever since for twelve years now in the same department, first upstairs when we set up this department and then we moved down into the basement about ten years ago.

"I've been offered 37 grade layout jobs, but I didn't care to be a layout operator over here. When I first came to the company and was a layout it was different. The layout operator had more work to do, they were considered almost a supervisor. The supervisor was seldom around, so when you gave work they did it without complaining. But since we've come over here, it's different.

"They don't respect the layout operator over here. They say, 'You're not our boss.' So lots of times the layout has to go to the supervisor to get something done which in earlier years we didn't. People just don't respect the layouts. I'm surprised because I like to respect anybody over me at all. I always wanted to please people over me. So I'm glad I didn't take any of the promotions, and stayed as a 36 grade tester, because I love my work."

Helen Rutyna kept on driving her car to work. When the first Chevy went on her she got another one. "I stayed on the first shift for fifteen years," she said. "I remember I stopped working on the first shift in 1960. I was a 36 grade tester and they offered me a 37 grade layout operator job on the second shift.

"I took it because there was no one to hold me at home. There was no one to worry about or cook meals for. My mom died in 1959. After she died it was lonesome at home. When she was alive I used to rush home and talk with her and fix her meals.

"I fixed her meals the last couple of years because she went blind. I wasn't aware of it until I kept seeing her dropping everything, and stumbling. I took her to an eye doctor. He said she was going blind, and an operation couldn't have cured her because it was hardening of the arteries.

"She went blind in 1957 and then in 1958 she had a stroke. She was bedridden for another year before she passed away but she was still wonderful company. I'd have a lady take care of her during the day. When I'd step into the house and speak she'd recognize my voice and say something like 'Oh, my angel's home.' Every child (there were seven girls) was called angel or kitten. I'd say, 'How do you feel ma?' She'd say, 'Couldn't feel better.'

"She'd never complain, she'd say she never had it so good, and there she was bedridden, a whole half side paralyzed. She was a beautiful person. I had a good family life.

"I was the fourth oldest of seven girls. My father died in 1940 and he was sixty-two, going on sixty-three, my age. He got a bad cold, got pneumonia and died. I took over the responsibility then. My three oldest sisters were married and the others were in school.

"My father worked for the Sacco Lowell shops as a machinist for twenty-six years and they had no pension or nothing. They put money into a pension fund but God knows...they moved and he got nothing. I think that broke his heart. He worried himself sick. He had brought the house during the Depression and lost his job. He knew no other trade. He went to work for the WPA, caught a cold on the job, got pneumonia and died.

"Before my father died he'd take me every Saturday morning, this was a ritual for him, to pay his insurance, pay the mortgage on the house, pay the fuel bill, the electric bill and a couple of other things like that. He'd show me all the places to go to and from then on that was my job every Saturday morning.

"I still do it to this day. This reporter for the Lowell Sun wrote one time, 'I wonder where Helen Rutyna goes every Saturday morning?' I wouldn't dare tell him, he'd laugh at me. But I'm glad I took on that responsibility. When my dad was dying he couldn't talk to me, he just held my hand tight. I know he wanted to say take over, and I did.

"Anyway my ma was very good company all those years. When she died it was very lonesome. I'm glad I took that upgrade on the second shift. It was a new job. We were very busy at the time because they were hiring a lot of new people. Most of my people were brand new, not from other departments, but right off the street. I had to train them all. I used to go home exhausted and I'd fall asleep. One day and the other, one day and the other. It helped me through the humps and it was very good for me. I've stayed on that job ever since. I've enjoyed the shift and I really like being a layout."

Alba Bocuzzo was the last of the three women to move over to the North Andover plant. Her group didn't move over from the Haverhill shops until 1960. She worked out in the main building for a year in piece parts doing soldering and brazing before going into an expanding crystal department.

"Ten years ago we moved to the crystal building and I've always loved it. It is one of those places. Everybody who goes over there loves it, and doesn't want to go back to the main shop. It's like the Haverhill shops. It's small, you get to know each other. We have our own cafeteria and a few of us have eaten together every day for ten years. We eat together and the men play cards during lunch. Everyone knows each other.

"I think everybody knows they're stuck with each other and everybody gets along with each other pretty well. There's not much friction. You don't have the boss looking down on you. Well, they do watch you to see that you get your job done, they do that, but they know we're an older group, that we have more experience and they don't need to watch you as closely.



"They know we won't goof-off. Of course we've had people in our department who are goof-offs. Some have got transferred, and some have gotten upgrades (she laughs). I mean it didn't make any difference that they goofed-off. If it was time for an upgrade, they got it. This gripes you, but what do you do about it---nothing. This is the way the rules read.

"Like I said, I've liked the groups I've worked with and I've liked the work, it's always been interesting. I was never stuck on a bench where I just did the same job eight hours a day. I never did that. I've always fallen into a job where I've changed around to do different operations. I was fortunate that way. That's probably why I stayed at Western. I think if I stayed on one job eight hours a day, it would drive me out of my mind.

"It's never been boring, and I think that's why I stayed such a long time. I never thought I would. It's been a challenge, especially working with crystal. I think I've solved a lot of the problems on my job. I think the biggest challenge I had was something I solved a couple of years ago and I got a \$1,000 award from the company. It was a problem which you might not understand because you don't know crystal and it's hard to describe unless I show you the actual thing.

"We were working for flatness on polish plates. Now to look at a plate on a bench here you might go, 'What's wrong with it, it looks flat.' But you have to read it on a special kind of light and it will show you the flatness.

"I worked on this one problem of trying to get the plate flat for nearly three years. We just solved it a year ago. At first I was making plates for the engineer. The plates weren't flat, but we were shipping them because he said they were within limits. Yet when they came over to the supervisors over here in the main shop they used to complain that the crystals just weren't working properly and they weren't as flat as they should be.

"I knew they weren't flat. I tried to tell the engineer but he wouldn't listen to me. He told me they were within specifications. See, he goes by what's on the paper--this should work and this is supposed to work. But I work with material and I know what works and what doesn't work.

"We were supposed to be working together but he never could understand what I was trying to put across. I'd keep trying to tell him this is wrong and that's wrong. He used to get aggravated and made me feel I was bothering him with minor things that didn't mean anything. It got so after a while I didn't bother telling him anymore. I just tried to work out the problem myself, which I finally did, and if I had any problems I went to my supervisor. My supervisor got real mad at the engineer. I can't tell you the names he used to call him.

"Anyway I worked with my boss until we solved the problem. The engineer didn't want to give me any credit. He gave me a hard time. In fact he tried to pay me off with \$185, but my supervisor made a big stink and finally I was given \$1,000 for my suggestion.

"After my suggestion went through there weren't any complaints anymore from the main shop about the crystal we were sending them. Still the engineer didn't want to give me the credit. Everyone around me, however, knew what I had gone through for maybe a couple of years, struggling with that job everyday, coming in and saying, 'What'll I try today?'

"It was a big challenge and this is what made the job interesting, even though I'd go home with a headache and come in with a headache many mornings. Sometimes I'd wake up in the night and wonder what'll I do tomorrow? Solving that problem was a big thing, a big challenge and I feel as though I've accomplished something."

Except for a short period when she was a layout, Hazel Lefebvre has been a tester. "I loved it all the time, I loved testing, adjusting-- we have to adjust different parts so they read right on the test sets, and if they don't read right, we have to make them read right. You have to find out what is wrong and fix it. It's a real challenge.

"That's why I've always preferred process testing to final testing. I was in final testing for a while and all you got to do was tell if boards were good or bad, you couldn't do anything about it. I got switched back into process as quick as I could because if you found something wrong there you could make them read good if they read wrong.

"It's like solving a puzzle, and I loved that. That's why I don't like these new computers they have. Right now they break down a lot. I suppose once they get the bugs out of them they'll be very good because they can put low grade people on them because there's not much to do but watch them. You put the program in and that's it. Working on them is like being a final tester and I don't like that. Just sit there and push something in all day long, that would be terrible. I like to be able to fix it myself.

"I'm very proud of what I've done and I've learned a lot. There have been some special jobs that I've been asked to work on. We had some coils at one time that they had to get on an airplane that night, and I did them. Boy, did I work that day. I was testing them and testing them, and getting them ready. We got them out and they thanked me later. And then we had the cable job, going across under the ocean and I was the only one that worked on the cable. I know they appreciated what I did.

"That means a lot when they can appreciate what you do. I think that's why I liked one supervisor we had better than the others, because he knew how to test. We could work with him, and he would appreciate what we did, and we didn't need to go to the engineers.

"Since then we've had supervisors who don't know how to test. All they can judge you by is how much work you put out, not by how good a tester you are, and that hurts. Like now we got a new boss, we've had him about three months and we're getting another one. We keep changing every four or five months and they don't know what you can do. Other than the amount of work, they wouldn't know if you were a good tester, a bad tester or what.

"Since we've been getting supervisors who don't know how to test, we have to go to the engineers, and we've been very lucky to have two really nice engineers. It is very unusual. They don't mind us calling them when we need them. They have been real helpful.

"In our department I'm usually busy all the time and I like that. I can't stand sitting around. I like to work every minute I'm here. Once in a while I like to goof-off, or have someone around to talk to, but not very often. In fact, now it's getting terrible because I feel that now that I'm retiring I should give up the work to the others instead of doing it myself so I hang around a bit more than I used to and I'm not used to it.

"Right now I'm teaching people how to do my work. Really it makes me kind of mad to think that I've got to give up my knowledge. All these years doing these jobs, I've got all this knowledge. Lately I've been giving it away.

"I'll leave my notes for the new testers. See, coil filters or other things come in, sometimes the engineers set them up, but plenty of times they write the blueprint up wrong, they give us wrong instructions, so we have to find a way of making them come out right. So that's experience and knowledge. I have all these notes in a little black book. Sometimes I make notes on the blueprints, but there's a lot I've written down in my notebooks over the years.

"Of course parts of my notebooks have been copied, because I use them in teaching my girls and they've been copying them. But there are certain jobs that I'm the only one who's worked on. So no one else has experience on them yet, and if they don't come in before I leave I'll have to leave my notes for a certain way of doing them that I have found works."

Helen Rutyna has liked her work and the company, which she says "has been like a big family. I've been in one department for thirty years and I've had loads of people working with me and they're through the whole plant by this time. They don't stay in one department. So no matter where you go, you always see somebody you know and everybody says 'hi' and 'How are you?'"

"Some of them now, when I see them out in the parking lot going home from the first shift and they haven't seen me for a long time, they say 'Hi, Helen' and they give me a big hug and a kiss like a lost friend. It's nice. I feel at home here.

"They treat you like a human being in here. It may not look like they do, they're a big outfit, and it may look like they're not partial to your problems, but they are. I think so. And I know I'm not the only one. I really like this company and a girl and myself, we always talk about it. She says, 'Helen, I feel the same way you do about this company, it's been our bread and butter for thirty years.'

"These kids today, they haven't worked in places like we have before and they've been treated decent and they don't know the difference. But we do. I worked in the mills when I was a teenager and they didn't treat you with any respect. I hated it. One supervisor would whistle at you when he wanted to talk to you. I wouldn't answer him. One day he came over and said, 'Didn't you hear me call you?'

"I told him, 'You didn't call me, you whistled at me.' 'Yeah, that's the way I call you,' he said. I told him, 'I have a name, please call me by my name.' He didn't like me since. I was glad to get out of there.

"This place has been my bread and butter. I got up on my feet with it, almost paid my house, took good care of my mom, had the house fixed. When I sit down and take inventory I've done all that all on my own and I wouldn't have done it anywhere else but here. I had a limited education. I really didn't have a chance to go to school outside of high school, even though I wanted to. No money.

"It's not just the company, people here have been really nice to me. A couple of times on my birthday the girls have gotten together and given me a cake and a little gift to show their appreciation. When my mom was sick they were very nice, and when she died they were very nice.

"When my mom died, my house was broken into the day before the funeral and I had cash and bonds for funeral expenses in the house (\$420) and it was all stolen.

"The insurance company gave me \$100, that was all. When they found out about it at work all the kids here took up a collection and gave me \$100. I thought that was wonderful.

"I've had good jobs since I've worked at Western. I was a tester for a long time and I like it because it was a challenge. I've liked being a layout too. It's a good job, but it's a little hard to please everybody.

"Some girls always think you're giving other girls the better work, no matter how fair you try to be. Sometimes there's one girl who can perform a job better than another one and when I have to ship my work out, when I have a deadline to meet, I can't give it to the girl who's going to take two hours longer than another girl. I give it to the quicker girl and the first poor girl may feel abused or that I'm mistreating her. I don't know.

"I try to be fair. Some of them understand but it isn't a job where you can make people happy all the time. One day they'll be happy and be nice and everything and the next...women are funny, cranky one day and friendly the next...you have to understand, most of the women here are married and have families. Sometimes they come to work and their minds are not on their work, but on family problems. So one day you give them a job and they won't mind it and another day it will hit them the wrong way.

"I try to do the best I can. On a good day when I can go home and there's been no discord I have a good feeling. Other days when things are rough and people are unhappy I go home unhappy because I don't like discord.

"My supervisor has told me over and over not to take it home with me but I can't help it. I've had to learn the hard way. I have a problem with myself and I know it. I'm a very sensitive person and I get hurt very easily and I shouldn't, not in this type of work.

"I've got an ulcer now. I know that I got the ulcer because I was a worry wart. I know that. When I have some kind of job to do, I worry about it because I want to get it over, and tension and everything like that builds up.

"Well, when I had that ulcer I figured maybe my health is going to give me trouble and I don't want to be staying out two months or three months. I don't want to bleed the company. If I got sick again and had to stay out another length of time, I wouldn't feel right. So I felt that as long as I'm still able, maybe I should get out."

Hazel Lefebvre will retire at the end of December. "I'm sixty-two now," she says. "At the end of December when I retire I'll have twenty-seven years and four months of service. I figure I've worked long enough. I want some time out. I never had time out, really. I'm financially O.K. right now, so I might as well get out and enjoy a few years.

"I talked to a few of my friends about it, they told me I should get out. They said, 'Why don't you? You're sixty-two, you'll get almost as much now as you would if you stayed to sixty-five. Why wait those three years?' I just decided they were right.

"Then there are little things. I hate to brush the snow off my car in the morning. I couldn't see another winter getting up and brushing that snow off my car. Also I'd like to get up later. I'm so used to getting up early that even on weekends I'm up by seven o'clock. However, at the end of a two or three week vacation I'm getting up later.

"I want more time with my children. My husband died in 1967, seven years ago, of cancer of the lungs. Welding and everything in the navy yard, that helped cause it. He had emphysema. I would always be rushing him off to the hospital at night. He wouldn't be breathing. At the end I had to have an oxygen tank in the house. We were married for thirty-seven years.

"The company helped a lot when my husband was sick. The benefits were wonderful. I would have lost my house and everything else if it wasn't for Blue Cross. One hospital bill was \$6800. That was paid up, every cent of it. I would have gone bankrupt. My husband was out three years on disability before he died. He was in and out of the hospital all the time.

"They were good with my husband and they give good benefits but sometimes they act like they don't care. Just two weeks ago I was out sick and they didn't pay me for it after twenty-seven years because I had been out more than five times in a year and I didn't bring in a doctor's certificate. When you're out for a day you don't feel like going to a doctor, you know. What can you tell him, for a doctor's certificate, you just don't feel good? I didn't get paid. If I was in my old department I would have got paid, but we had a new department chief. Sometimes it works out differently. A few years ago I had a small operation and I was out for two weeks, and the doctor told me I'd have to stay out for another week. The company nurse told me I'd have to go back to work the next week and I said, 'no, my doctor says no.' She said 'they won't pay you' and I told her, 'Don't, I'm not coming in. If they don't want to pay me, they don't have to.' I stayed out. I got paid. "

Alba Bocuzzo is only fifty-three but she has been thinking about retirement for more than a year. "About a year and a half ago I said when I got my thirty years, anything can happen. If something interesting comes up or if I find another line of work, which I'd like to go into, maybe get a part-time job, I thought I might retire.

"This was in my own mind. I got my thirty years in June. I thought well I'm going to get my pension. I'm going to have money coming in, what do I have to worry about. I have no children to worry about and my husband gets a good pension from the Navy yard.

"In July we went to visit my sister and brother, they both live in Florida. For six years my sister has been trying to talk us into moving down there when we retired. We said we'd look. We took three weeks and took the car and went down one coast and through the middle and down the other looking over the different areas for a part that really appealed to us, because my husband is a country lover, he loves trees and grass and hills and that sort of thing, and in Florida you don't get that sort of stuff.

"We didn't find anything and my sister took us around to a couple of places near where she lives but we didn't see anything we liked. The places were either near the highway or very noisy or very expensive.

"We were all very discouraged. We went to one last realtor. She showed us what she had, three or four places and they had no land, no backyard, which wasn't our style. She said she had one more place which

wasn't our style. She said she had one more place which might be suitable but it needed work. She showed it to us and it had a nice piece of land. It was a corner lot, and was just the right size for us, and I said, "Well, this is our style, what do you think old man?" I call **Buddy** old man. And he didn't say no right away so my sister and I worked on him.

"There was something there that appealed to him. He liked the corner and the piece of land. There were trees on it and all it needed was a new roof and cleaning up which was a minor thing.

"We made an offer and the realtor called us that night and said, O.K., it had been accepted, come down in the morning and sign the papers.

"We signed the papers the next morning and left that afternoon. That was it, we were homeowners and we didn't even have time to think about it. All the way home I was really excited about the new house, and moving to Florida and retiring. I couldn't wait to tell my boss 'I'm retiring.'

"He made me a layout operator a year ago and he said, 'You're not going to leave me for a couple of years now are you Alba?' I said, 'No, I think I'll be good for a couple of years.' I thought at least a couple. So I came back in July and told him, 'Joe, I bought a house down in Florida.'

"He couldn't believe that I was leaving so soon. And I couldn't either. I still can't believe it. I won't until I'm there. So much is happening now, between all the moving and trying to wind things up so we can move in January. It's quite a big job, a big step to take.

"I thought of leaving in October. I went over to see Mrs. Niamo (in the benefits office) and she said if you leave in October you lose quite a bit. I'd lose my five weeks of vacation. She said, 'If you stay until December 16th you have nine days vacation left for this year. If you save those you can quit December 16th and get paid through February 6th.' So how could I refuse all that for just two months' work?

"I'll be getting about \$264 a month, which isn't bad for staying home. It's like \$65 a week, and there are cost of living raises. If I ever get bored I can always take a part-time job. I'm hoping to find a lot of things to do to keep me busy without going to work for a while. I haven't made up my mind about anything special, just something different that might interest me. I don't know what. I'm just hoping I'll find something in Florida.

"My life has been a lot of routine at work and home. I want to do something different before I get too old to enjoy it. I'm getting older and I want to do a few things.

"I'd like to enjoy a yard, which I never did. I like the sunshine and puttering around the yard which I never do because I just don't have time. So this is what I'd like to be able to do.

"Bucky opened a second hand furniture business when he retired from the Navy yard. He always loved a store. When I met him he worked in a little hardware store. He's getting a little older and the work with furniture is a little heavy. So we may go into something lighter like bicycles or something when we move to Florida.

"Now we're just trying to get ready to go. We just sold the house and most of our furniture. We're going to take a few pieces, whatever fits in the truck and maybe a small trailer. But we're selling the majority of it. We're having no problems, everything is going along well, except my husband is an awful junk collector, a saver, never threw anything away."



Helen Rutyna is not as excited about her retirement.

"I'm pretty mixed up now that I'm going. I've been here for more than thirty years. I'm going to be pretty lonely. When I work as a layout, I feel I'm needed. A lot of times some of the girls come to me and confide in me with their problems. They ask for advice and you feel like you're needed and it's a good feeling. I'm going to miss that, because at home, nobody wants my ideas or help or anything. I think if I stay home I'm going to make arrangements with my doctor so I can go to the hospital and do volunteer work at least one day a week.



"I've got to get myself into other projects. I'm going to take a few crafts and hobbies up. I don't know yet. I haven't got a set pattern. I don't think I'm going to get another job. If I were to get another job, I'd be doing a stupid thing--I'd rather work here. I want to do a lot of reading and tend to my garden and take a little trip here and there and give myself a little time. I have a friend across; my cousin in Europe and some in Poland. I'd like to see them if I could see my way clear with this inflation. I'm afraid to spend the money that I might have to use later.

"I'm going to get a pretty good pension, something like \$336 a month from Western Electric alone and \$250 from Social Security. I figured my budget out and I'll have to have I figure close to \$600 a month because I still owe on my house and with the fuel bills doubled and the electric bills doubled and the gas that I've got doubled and food, I need something like \$400 just to run my house and all the basic necessities. The rest will have to be for emergencies like if the car breaks down. I've just finished paying for a 1972 Chevy and it's going to have to last me a long time.

"I don't have much figured or extra, but I have enough clothes. I don't need any more and I had my house repaired pretty well before I thought of retiring. It's an old house. I bought it from my mom in 1948. I've got a roof over my head and heat and I've got a piece of land to plant my trees and shrubs and whatnot. I've made a real mess of it (she laughs) but it keeps me going.

"I just hope I won't be too lonely. I don't know, this summer the third week of vacation I was getting restless. I had plenty to do around the house. I don't know why it bothered me, but I wanted to go back to work. It's funny, but when I had to come back to work, I found myself singing that day. I felt I had some place to go and I just didn't feel bad, like some people do when they come back from vacation. I was glad to be back with people, and to have people to talk to."





Hazel Lefebvre also had some doubts about her decision to retire. "When I decided in the summer to retire I was scared. I don't know why but I didn't know whether I was doing the right thing or not. But now that I am about to retire I'm pretty happy about it.

"You get used to a routine. But I think I'll be all right. I have the children in Connecticut and here. I have grandchildren to visit. I love to drive.

"I'll have plenty of time. I'm going to do some more work for the Pioneers (an association of Western Electric people with more than twenty years service). I've worked for them off and on. I was on the knitting committee and on the hospital committee off and on, not too much, a little. But I plan to do more volunteer work. I'd like to use my car to drive people places. I like to drive.

"My girlfriend and I hope to go travelling. I've known her ever since I was married. The four of us were always together. She'd have a baby, then I'd have a baby. Then she'd have another one and I'd have another one. She had three boys and a girl. I had three girls and one boy. We were always good friends. Her husband died of cancer, my husband died of cancer. She's got cancer but I haven't so far--knock on wood. I just had my physical and the doctor found nothing wrong whatsoever.

"I'm going to get a pension of \$258. And I have Social Security. I haven't found out what that's going to be. But I've also a pension from my husband, at the Navy yard. We had a couple of annuities when my husband died. I had quite a bit of insurance and we had insurance at the Navy yard, so I don't have to worry about money. I don't have to worry about a house anymore. When my husband died in 1967 I moved into an apartment in Groveland, and I lived there about a year and then my son, who lives in Salem in a mobile home park, said, 'Why don't you buy a mobile home up here?' So I did. I bought a mobile home right opposite my son and his wife.

"Still I have a funny feeling about going. The idea of knowing you aren't going to work anymore. That's it. You're at your last...well, you're in your last stage of life and that's it. Somehow it's a way of marking...I don't know, but you're in your last stage. I'm trying to forget about it now."

*Robert J. Baze*

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