

Nuts and Bolts: Stories from New Britain Manufacturing
Connecticut Humanities CT at Work Project
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Interview Subject: Clara Banos
Company: P & F Corbin

American Dream

Clara was born in 1941 in the country of Cuba and immigrated to the United States in her early twenties, first landing in New York with her two children, no money, and spoke no English. She eventually found her way to New Britain, where she rapidly learned English; without fluency she could not get a job to make money to support her family.

“In those years, you gotta learn,” she said. “For me, it was about making money.” For a short period of time she worked in a Social Services office helping Spanish speakers understand the English language and then received a job at the P & F Corbin factory in New Britain. When she began, she was given what was considered the worst job in the factory: spraying machine parts and tools with oil. When referring to the dreaded job she said, “My goal was making money so I didn’t care.” Clara then moved onto cutting keys where she proved to be an extremely dedicated, skilled, and efficient worker and it reflected in her pay. “I was making such good money that in no time I could even buy a brand new house.” The company required 300 cut keys per hour, but that was easy for Clara. “I was cutting about six or seven hundred, so I was turning 200%.”

Not only was Clara an immigrant starting from scratch in the United States, but also she was the ideal example of the American Dream. She calls the United States “her country” and has an undying sense of pride for working in the “rich town” of New Britain, Connecticut. More than anything, Clara considers her life a success and one to be proud of. Clara came here with a goal and achieved it very quickly and loved her job at Corbin that benefited her and her family. When asked if she truly enjoyed her work she said, “I did because I made money! That was the important part, kid. Like I said, a young girl in her twenties who doesn’t know English in a strange country, my goal was making money. And I tell you guys I am proud of myself. Never had the government give me a penny.”