

Nuts and Bolts: Stories from New Britain Manufacturing
Connecticut Humanities Ct at Work Project
CCSU Student: Morgan Skovich
Interview Subject: Helen Politz
Factory Subject worked at: Landers, Frary & Clark

When Helen Politz went into the lab everyday at Landers, Frary & Clark, she was still doing her “womanly” duties; the shopping, the cooking, making the coffee, overlooking every little detail of what came in and out of her sight, making sure everything was perfect.

She enjoyed these tasks and wouldn't have been doing any other job.

For forty hours a week Helen would test products, by actually using them.

Sometimes she could work on one Percolator for two weeks because it was packaged wrong, had a fingerprint imprinted on it from a careless assembly line worker, or the product just simply did not work. It was her job along with five other lab technicians to fix it.

The day after, the Percolator was forgotten in the corner or shipped off to a department store where it would sell for \$8.00. Luckily for Helen though, the frying pan became her crowned jewel.

After a fortnight of attempting to get the kettle to brew endless cups of coffee, she was sent to Mohegan Market to fetch groceries to then cook in the skillet.

When her 7 in the morning to 430 in the afternoon shifts were up, her job and “womanly duties” went home with her. She would test Landers, Frary & Clark items at home as well - thermos bottles, vacuum cleaners, toasters and hair dryers were all tested within the walls of her New Britain home.

She would test the products, write up her report and then get to keep the products.

Helen wasn't too popular among the other people at work because if she found a mistake, she shut down the assembly line and no piece work was being completed- workers were losing money. Among her friends though, she was well liked and popular since she had so many free goodies to hand out, let's face it, who on their own needs 6 Percolators?

Trialing Landers, Frary & Clark's products was a huge part of Helen's life – she learned a lot and still uses the products to this day.