

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

MARCH 27, 2014

SHARON FIEHLER INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Sharon Fiehler: I'm Sharon Fiehler and I am currently the executive vice president and chief administrative officer for Peabody Energy and I've been in St. Louis for a lot of years.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk about your early childhood: your parents, your siblings, your cousins, your grandparents, the people you played with in school, your elementary school and high school. Would you talk about, who encouraged you to go on in school and to realize that you had ability and that you could do what you wanted to do. Would you talk about that in a broad scope.

Sharon Fiehler: I grew up in a small town in Southern Illinois called Germantown, Illinois, best known as the home of Red Schoendienst so it was a big baseball town but a big town it actually wasn't. When I was growing up, there were about 1,000 people there. It's in a county of maybe eight other very small communities called Clinton County. There was no high school in the town. There was a high school, public high school about eight miles away and my parents grew up, my father in Germantown, my mother in a neighboring community that was even smaller called Bartelso, Illinois, had about 300 people. There were rural communities, mostly farming communities. My dad actually grew up on a farm. My mom grew up in the small town of Bartelso. They were born, both in 1928 so their early years were during the Depression and as with anybody growing up then, it stuck with them throughout their life. They were very frugal people. It was almost a 100% Catholic community and education back at that point was very limited. Neither of them were able to go to high school and so, I guess, at about 1942, when they got out of 8th grade, they were expected to start to work. My mother was the fourth child of thirteen and my dad was the second of five. So my dad immediately, at 14, started working on his family farm and they had kind of a milking business and grain business and he would bring milk into town several times a week as part of the

little business they had. My mother, being one, as I said, of thirteen children, she was, at that age, pretty much expected to help her mother take care of the other children and the household. So they had a very simple kind of beginnings but instilled in them at a very early age was a very high work ethic. My parents are both very kind people and honest people and probably very typical of their era, especially in that part of the country. So they did those kinds of things. My father served in the Korean war, I guess which would have been in '53. He probably got drafted, maybe '52, and served in the Korean War. He was already in his early to mid 20's by that point and my mother did take a job at one point in a factory in St. Louis and she didn't like it. She was not comfortable being in surroundings where everything was new to her, very different from her very small town surrounding and after about two years, she moved back to Bartelso and once again lived with her family and worked at a little grocery store. My parents then met in 1954, married in '55 and I was born in '56. My dad, at that point, was working for Ford Motor Company and he was an assembly line worker. My mother, as was typical of that era, stayed home when I was born and stayed home for the next 14 years at that point. My dad ended up getting laid off at Ford Motor Company and he and his brother-in-law started a concrete ready-mix business. He was the truck driver and my uncle became the bookkeeper and that continued until he was in his early 60's. When I was 14, my mother decided she needed to work to make extra money and so I was the oldest of four and was then considered the head of the household while she worked. Of course, interesting things would happen. I had two younger brothers and a younger sister and probably during the first few weeks of her new employment, one of my brothers fell and needed stitches and I didn't know what to do and went to the neighbor who was also home, a mother, and she helped bring him to the doctor which we did have a little rural doctor in the community. My childhood was a good childhood, a very small little elementary school in the town and probably the person who left the biggest impression on me was a teacher. His name was Neil Wells. He's actually still alive today. He doesn't teach anymore; he's retired but he was our 6th grade geography and math teacher and did the same for 7th and by 8th grade, he was kind of the full-time teacher. He was a very wise man. He taught me many things about striving to do more than you might be able to do. He didn't do it on a personal level with me. He did it for the whole class and, coming from a small area

where the only families that really had any money were the ones who ran the bank or the elevator or things like that, I was one of just a lot of other kids that all probably to him looked alike but there was something about him that made me want to stand out that he would notice me and so in 6th grade, I would say I really came to the realization that I want to do something more than just stay in this small community; I want to do something bigger, and it's interesting, I probably should contact him. I've never done that, since I left grade school so he has no idea the influence he was.

Blanche Touhill: I'm sure he'd love that.

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, I know, I should do that, yeah, because, like I said, in 6th grade, it was just kind of like a transformation. All of a sudden I thought, you know what? I can do something different than just stay here. So got through 8th grade and, of course, I moved on to high school. We got bussed to our high school which was about two communities away, a small high school. My graduating class was 89 people and those 89 people came from probably six different communities. There was another high school about four miles away but it was a Catholic school and, even though my parents were very strong Catholics, tuition was involved and tuition, at that point, was something that was unaffordable for them. So I went to the public school. I would say the education there was probably typical of what you got in public schools and there were really no teachers there that I have great memories of, although there was a biology teacher that I really liked and we would go through annual testing and I actually got the highest grade of the biology kind of standardized test that the school had ever had and so it was something I'm still proud of, but interestingly, because there were no school counselors or anything like that, there was no seed planted that "maybe you should go into biology as a major in college."

Blanche Touhill: Were you good at math as well?

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, math. I really enjoyed the science more than the math, yeah. So I remember asking him lots of questions in class and I could tell he was kind of intrigued with my questions all the time. Unfortunately, he left when I was a sophomore and he went on to another community, actually on the West Coast and so my interest in biology, although it still was there, the teacher wasn't there who I really enjoyed. So I'm almost to the

point of graduating. It's probably March of my senior year and at that time, I'm thinking of going to the junior college to become a nurse because that's what a couple of other of my classmates were going to do. Well, one Saturday morning, my mom and dad, who, having never even gone to high school, really didn't have an appreciation for college but neither were they opposed to it, but I remember one Saturday morning, they came home after being out Friday night with some people they knew, and their children went to college and they came home and said, "Would you like to go to a four-year school because our friends said maybe you should think about that?" and I was just kind of like, oh, my gosh, I can't believe it, and it's like, "Of course." And so the closest four-year school was SIU-Edwardsville and another girl from high school's brother went there and so my mom and dad had me talk to her and her brother and went on campus and they had no housing at that point so you had to find a place to live and this girl actually...and I ended up both going to SIU-Edwardsville and we, along with another girl, found a place to live. It was a trailer so we lived in a trailer for our college years at SIU and thought we were on top of the world. In college, my interests were truly science and architecture but I don't know why, I just never went into those fields. So when I was taking general studies, one thing that was really interesting to me was psychology and people and they had a program that was kind of a social work program. I think they actually called it Human Services for a Bachelor's Degree because they didn't have a social work program, per se. So I did a double major in psychology in this social work-like program called Human Services. College was not fun for me. It was a lot of hard work because I worked a lot.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you work?

Sharon Fiehler: I worked at the school and I worked in the administration office and I worked with another woman, Inez Roberson was her name and we took care of the GI Bill. So we had all the GIs come through our group, either getting some scholarships or things like that. So it was a way to make money which, my parents were quite helpful. I had a partial scholarship and they helped and, of course, I worked and in order to make it easy, I took extra hours, easy as far as numbers of semesters. So I finished in three years and that way we could save on tuition money quite a bit. But it was not a fun period because it was very, very hard. So I got through college. I actually finished my last class and I was still 20 years old. I

turned 21 while I did my practicum at a hospital in Highland, Illinois, in the social work department.

Blanche Touhill: Did you have a car?

Sharon Fiehler: Yes, I did have a car, a '64 Chevy, yes. My dad bought that car for me so it was great. It broke a lot but it got me where I wanted to go most of the time. So I worked in Highland, Illinois at the hospital as a social worker for my practicum for the very last quarter. They were on a quarter system, graduated then in August and coincidentally, the hospital had a opening for a social worker only because somebody was on maternity leave. I was able to take her role for a few months, actually about nine months she was gone and while I did that, I also worked as an assistant to a secretary in a legal office. So I had two jobs and unfortunately, the social work job didn't turn out to be permanent because the lady came back to work and I was aware that that was going to happen so I was looking for a job and I got a job with Ford Motor Company which, coincidentally, my dad had been there in the mid '50s when he got married but I was hired into the personnel office, they called it back then, and it was a great experience. So I got to see cars being built and understand how workers and management work together or sometimes didn't work together, but generally it was a very positive experience. It also was my first opportunity to kind of experience the City of St. Louis. The plant, you might recall, was in Hazelwood and it was really my first opportunity to do very much in the city. Having grown up where we did, coming to St. Louis was a really big deal because none of the highways existed back then and we would probably make one trip a year, every other year, something like that, but now I was coming to St. Louis every day because I had a job.

Blanche Touhill: Did you drive?

Sharon Fiehler: I carpooled with some other people.

Blanche Touhill: From the area?

Sharon Fiehler: I was living then in Highland and then moved to Edwardsville, yeah. So, yeah, we carpooled and that was, in my mind and actually probably in the minds of many for somebody who was 21 years old by that point, I made a lot of money and it was a great, great experience about learning about how business works. So, unfortunately, in early 1980, is when the car

industry in this country kind of really took a crash and Ford ended up laying off 50% of the workers at this plant and being two years seniority, I was not one of them who got to stay but, by that point, I had also had somewhat of a mentor at Ford and his name was Gordon Houston and he encouraged me to start thinking about getting an MBA and so by the time I was laid off at Ford, I had started an MBA program, first at SIU-Edwardsville, but then transferred over to the University of Missouri in St. Louis. So I was able to, while I was looking for a job, I took a few more classes, then was able to get a job with Peabody about eight, nine months later, in March of '81 and I just had my 33rd anniversary last week with Peabody. I answered a blind ad in the newspaper and was interviewed by an outside person and then they told me it was with Peabody Coal Company and of course I'd heard of it but, as most young people would be at that point, didn't know too much about it, and of course you envision coal and what comes with it, dirty, dusty and everything else and I wasn't sure what to expect when I went to their corporate headquarters but interviewed there and, of course, saw people who were very business and suits and didn't look like my vision of a coal company and immediately felt very comfortable there. It was in downtown St. Louis so another new experience, actually going to downtown. I was hired by a man by the name of Jay Sin and probably, of all people in my career, once I started working, he was very instrumental for me to really have an appreciation for what it's about to be a business person. So he took me under his wing and taught me many things about business and had very high work ethics which was easier for me because that's kind of what my parents believed, but so did he. So we worked very hard from the beginning. So, moving up the chain of different jobs and taking on more and more was never a real hardship in my mind because he and my parents had always already instilled kind of, you work as hard as it takes to get the job done.

Blanche Touhill: How long of hours did you work?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, back then, we always got in about 7:30 and we would work maybe until 6:00 o'clock so it wasn't like it was late at night but we would work Saturdays. We would sometimes work much later at night but you never really thought about it. It was just what you did because that's what the job required and Jay was a man of very high integrity and it's just what you did.

Blanche Touhill: What was your major concern in those days?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, I would have to say, this was a very male-dominated company, of being coal miners, and this was in the early '80s, there were a lot of men there who were very good at what they did but not always polished, maybe, mostly because they came from mines and it's hard conditions oftentimes. They worked extremely hard. I thought I sometimes worked long hours; these people worked many, many more hours than I did and they sometimes intimidated me. I mean, they weren't used to having women around. They never used foul language. Our CEO was Bob Quinan and he was just the first class gentleman and I don't think he would have put up with foul language or yelling and screaming and from the top, he instilled kind of a culture that I think is still there today. But that was probably my most intimidation, was just, how do I tell with...I'm 22 years old...or actually, I was 24 by then...and here we've got people who are 50, 60 years old and very wise and experienced and am I going to have something to offer? So it was intimidating, is what I would say.

Blanche Touhill: The personnel office probably handled all the employees all over the nation?

Sharon Fiehler: Pretty much. Well, we didn't do the hiring for the mines. The mines did their...

Blanche Touhill: No, but you had to process all those applications.

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, I was not part of the hiring group actually. I was part of what they called "salary administration" so my role was to look at how jobs are evaluated and graded and how do we pay people. Bonuses were not a particular part of the programs back then except at the very highest level. So it was more about base pay.

Blanche Touhill: How did you learn that?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, Jay and I kind of learned it together. Peabody didn't have a formal program but he was able to convince senior management that it was time for one and he was right on in doing that and we went to a company called the Hay Group. They were a big human resource consultant but we went and consulted with them and they taught us how to use something that in the (comp?) world, at least from years ago, was known as the Hay system and put in a very formalized program. I learned so much. It was

just amazing. We had two pretty much full-time consultants there for several months to help us, Jay and me, to learn how this worked and then we went around to all of our different regional offices and, one by one, evaluated jobs. It took, like, a year but great learning experience. So that was really my first job at Peabody.

Blanche Touhill: Where were they in those days? They were in Indiana and they were in the West because Phelps took them to the West.

Sharon Fiehler: Right, so we had Arizona, Colorado. They were the two western mines, and then we had a few left in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky. Bob Quinan then bought a company, I think it was around 1984, that was our first West Virginia operations and then we were also starting to develop our mines in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and they started also in about the mid '80's so we were totally pretty much U.S. We had been in and out of Australia a couple times during that period but predominantly, a U.S.-based company. So we would travel to all these areas.

Blanche Touhill: And did you stay, like, a week or something?

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah, we would stay for the week and go through job after job and ended up grading them on this Hay system and it was quite an experience.

Blanche Touhill: Did they welcome you?

Sharon Fiehler: I'm not sure. They were always polite but I'm sure, like many regional offices, any time corporate comes, there's a little bit of a question of, "What are you doing here?" But I would say, overall, the program was pretty well accepted because we were working a little bit in the dark, deciding, is this job bigger than this job? How do we pay this job? There were no formal surveys done. So that led to us becoming much more instrumental in the whole industry. So Jay and I started an industry group to do surveys and Jay was also a great leader in that because he led these meetings. I learned how to lead meetings and how to get things done and he always told if, "If you want to have things done, want to have influence, you've got to get involved," and so he did it for a couple of years and he handed it over to me so I headed up some of the industry groups and it would be all the coal companies, would participate in this and a third party would take the data and compile it and then we would know, for kind of the first time, what's the average pay for first line

supervisors at the mine; for maintenance people and warehouse people. So I think it was something, to this day, we still carry on. So it was a great thing and Jay was very much the person that had the mindset to start this.

Blanche Touhill: Were women being hired in those days? Was there an attitude that you had to have an affirmative action plan?

Sharon Fiehler: There was. I would say it was a combination...this is when affirmative action from the government was also something that became a lot more prevalent and Peabody has always, always been a company that, if this is what's expected of us, we are going to make every attempt to do it. So we did start hiring people at the mine sites, some women. Admittedly though, a lot of women don't like these jobs. These are not jobs that not everybody likes. They're hard, hard work; they're often in conditions that are not easy to be in; it can be very cold; very hot; it's dirty; sometimes the underground mine, you've got some low ceilings; you're using big equipment. Finding women who were interested was difficult but we did.

Blanche Touhill: Is it easier in...

Sharon Fiehler: Oh, it's easier in surface mines because you've got truck drivers and we have today...a big percentage of our workforce, we have women just because they're driving trucks and things that it's easier just to find candidates who are interested in doing it. So we have a lot more hourly people today who are female. Now, the underground mines, it's still difficult to find women who are really interested, at least in volumes. I mean, we get women and we have women but we don't get a lot of people who request that they would like to have a job. But in the corporate office, the female ranks were growing more and more. So, from the time I started in the early '80s, we continued to hire lots of women into financial roles, into our law group, sales and marketing, the human resource group. So the women grew in that group. Female engineers were very hard to come by. All the companies struggle to get these engineers and oftentimes it wasn't just coal companies; it was also oil and gas companies and many times, they would be in a position to make better offers than the coal companies could. So a lot of the few female engineers graduating back then, many of them ended up in oil and gas.

- Blanche Touhill: Were they electrical, mechanical...
- Sharon Fiehler: A lot of civil, civil engineers. We hire a lot of civil engineers but oil and gas; some mining, not as many, but they would probably the two most dominant types of female engineers we were finding back then.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you have diversity like Hispanics and African Americans or Native Indians?
- Sharon Fiehler: Well, we do. We have mines in Arizona and New Mexico and you will find much larger concentrations of Native Americans there and we do have a lot of individuals who are employees who are Native Americans. We also have scholarships that we specifically designate for Native Americans.
- Blanche Touhill: In any field or unless they go into engineering?
- Sharon Fiehler: We want them to go into a field where we could hire them. It doesn't have to be engineering. So it could be accounting or it could be different technical fields, geology or environmental or something like that but something where it would be a field that would be useful to us. Now, we don't require them, of course, to come to work for us but we...
- Blanche Touhill: Do you have internships for them?
- Sharon Fiehler: We do, yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: And do many of them join Peabody?
- Sharon Fiehler: They do. A lot of individuals from that area really like to be by their families so having a job and staying by family is important to some of them. Now, same with me. I didn't stay where I grew up. I mean, some people just want to go out and see the world in a different way but we do get individuals who come back and stay and will fulfill their whole career in certain areas, and now we're to a point also where we move people around so having Native Americans from Arizona, some of our management people, we send to Powder River for a period of time because there's just different skill bases and do the reversal from Powder River down to Arizona. So it's been, I think, good learning experiences for all of them.
- Blanche Touhill: So, back to personnel. So you really became an expert in salaries, in how to build a plan, then how to get the coal industry, in general, to

understand statistics and bring a certain uniformity. So then what did you do?

Sharon Fiehler: Then I was asked to also add to my salary administration, Benefits, so then I headed up both the Benefits and the Compensation area. So Benefits is just what you expect, and back then, it was a little bit different than now. Medical benefits, we were self-insured. We're still self-insured but we actually processed our own claims. So if you went to the doctor, you'd bring your doctor bill into the office and somebody would process it right there. Of course, we ended up moving that business by the time...probably 1986 or so. So that was another good experience, to understand the benefit world. Then a few years later, I was asked to take on the hiring so I started doing recruiting and hiring.

Blanche Touhill: For the entire company?

Sharon Fiehler: For the corporate office. By that time, we had decentralized pretty much of the things at the regional offices needed to do so this was for the corporate office. So it was just kind of piece by piece, I started adding a little bit more to the things that I was responsible for until...

Blanche Touhill: And then you had to head staff?

Sharon Fiehler: Oh, yeah, yeah, all the time. Yeah, I had actually...probably from six months into my role at Peabody, I started to have some staff because even the salary administration required more than just me to be able to do it. So these were individuals who provided administrative support early on but by the time I took on the benefits role, there were some supervisors involved because they had other individuals there and then for the recruiting side, there was a recruiting manager. So I think in about maybe '88, '89, I was promoted to a director and that was a big deal.

Blanche Touhill: In personnel?

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, in personnel.

Blanche Touhill: Was Jay still there?

Sharon Fiehler: Jay was still...you know, that is probably when he moved and he took over Risk Management and I think I took his job then, yeah, as I'm thinking about it. So that's when Jay...

Blanche Touhill: Were you the first woman director?

Sharon Fiehler: No, Gail Jackson, who is part of our International Women's Forum, was the first female executive at Peabody and she came in the '70s. So Gail was the first female at Peabody to have a management, kind of senior management role and she was a vice president. So I came in '81. She had been there, I'm sure, at least six years at that point in that role. So she was really the person who'd had the first high level female role at Peabody. It was not me and I think there were probably a couple of other directors at that point, females. I think we had a couple financial individuals and somebody who was in the law group. So I was not the first. So I was very flattered to be one of them and it was great and celebrated and thought I had done more than I ever imagined I would have and loved my job.

Blanche Touhill: Did the women at Peabody get together in a group ever?

Sharon Fiehler: You know, not really and I don't think there was a reason for that other than, at that point, the corporate office was in four or five buildings downtown and we never really knew each other, to tell you the truth, because we were so separated. Actually, Joe Touhill was in our law group and I worked a lot with Joe but even working with him, he was in a building across the street so I think we were in maybe four to five buildings downtown so we never really knew each other. I was in the Human Resource group and we were tucked away all alone in one building and then the main office had all the financial groups and engineering was a separate building. The law group was a separate building so, no, we never really got to know each other that way. Now, of course you get to know people just because you need lunch buddies once in a while. I knew the other women but to say that all of us got together, it just wasn't something we did. I'm not exactly sure why. Nobody stopped us from doing it but I think everybody was just so involved in what they did, we didn't do the after hour things.

Blanche Touhill: So go on then. So you ran...

Sharon Fiehler: So then I had kind of all Human Resources. Jay moved on to Risk Management, Insurance and Risk Management and then I guess I did that for, I would say, five to eight years and then during that time, we were acquired by Hansen which was a British conglomerate. So the world

changed a little bit then because we were not longer the corporate office. The corporate...we were owned then by a British company and the office was in London and so I started making trips back and forth to London.

Blanche Touhill: Was that a big experience?

Sharon Fiehler: That was a very big experience, yeah. Hansen had a program where they would have, like...they had individuals from all their different companies come together into London, kind of their "high potentials" and I was selected for that one year so one year, I went to London as Peabody's representative for this award and there were people there from the forestry business. They owned Tommy Armour Golf Clubs; they owned Jacuzzi Spas; they had all these different kind of businesses. So there were about 15 of us there.

Blanche Touhill: How many were women?

Sharon Fiehler: I would say, there were several of us, maybe 3 of the 15.

Blanche Touhill: And were they American?

Sharon Fiehler: They were American. Most of their companies were in the U.S. Yeah, they were all Americans but the corporate office was in London so a lot of the women that we met were British.

Blanche Touhill: Do the British have a lot of women in the corporate office with Hansen?

Sharon Fiehler: In Human Resources, they did, yeah. So I remember seeing a lot of women. Of course, the upper echelon was always the men but there were a lot of women there. So it was a good experience. I would go back and forth probably two times a year or so. I did that for maybe five years. I didn't get selected for the "Employee of the Year" but I was one of the 15 that was up there so it was quite a privilege to represent Peabody. This was all during the mid '90s so there was a lot of turmoil from a business standpoint of conglomerates at that time so Hansen decided that maybe their share price could go up if they diversified, kind of de-merged companies so they took different groups of companies and spun them out as separate publicly traded companies and Peabody was spun out with an electric utility company in the U.K. and that lasted for about a year and then, I guess it was '98, we did a leverage buyout with Lehman

Brothers and we had a new CEO, actually going back to 1990. Earl Engelhard became our CEO.

Blanche Touhill: Who did Earl replace?

Sharon Fiehler: Bob Quinan.

Blanche Touhill: So Earl was the head for a long, long time.

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, '90 or '91, he was the head of Peabody and Earl was another individual that was very influential with Peabody and took us through very tough times. So when we did this leverage buyout, there was no money. I think many people looking at us from the outside wondered if we would survive but Earl was very good at really understanding how to save every dime you can and we put a lot of cost savings measures in, paid off the debt as much as we could; very frugal at that point and we made it through that period. We went public then in 2001 as a BTU so since 2001, we've been a public company. I worked directly for Earl, probably starting in, I would say about that period that we did the leverage buyout, late '90s. So somewhere along the line...I'm not exactly sure of the timing of all this...I took on the supply chain management group. That was my first group that was somewhat diverse, as far as not being HR and it was a good experience so at that point, I was able to learn about what all this big equipment and to haul trucks and all of the equipment use at the mines, what it was. So that was a new experience for me. It allowed me to get closer to the mines as far as understanding day-to-day what happened there. So being public was a new adventure for is. Having to report quarterly earnings was a challenge that seemed like you get through one quarter and, of course, you're immediately working on the next and it was an amazing learning experience. So coming back to my Human Resource side, it was also the first chance that I really had to work with stock options and restricted shares and RSUs and everything that goes with it. So it was a wonderful portfolio to add to the things I had done from the compensation perspective.

Blanche Touhill: How did you learn all these new skills?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, a little of it was by trial and error. I worked with a legal team out of Chicago and they were the ones who would have the legal documents and by working closely with them, I really learned a lot. I'm not saying we didn't make some mistakes; we did, but they were very helpful because

nobody at Peabody had ever done this. We didn't have systems in place. We had to create everything. We started doing this on Excel spreadsheets and of course we've come a long way since then but it was a lot of trial and error, is how I would phrase it but we learned from it.

Blanche Touhill: When did Peabody computerize?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, we always had big mainframes but that was another project that I did probably...I'm going to say in the mid '90s. We had all had just kind of the dummy computer. It was just a screen more or less, and then we went to PCs in the mid '90s and I headed up that project. So it was a great opportunity to learn another area that I had never learned before. So we went from just kind of these dummy computers...I can't remember what you call those...to PCs and so I worked on the very first project of getting those who needed PCs to get PCs.

Blanche Touhill: How did the regional offices react?

Sharon Fiehler: Everybody was pretty receptive. I would say our biggest problem back then was, there was no software that was standardized. Everybody ended up getting a PC and then they'd go buy their own software. So we ended up with chaos for a while until we came up with standardization. I didn't head up IT but I just was given this special project to get the PCs and get them to learn. Back then, it was Lotus and all of these other kind of things so we set up classes and Excel classes. So that was a really good project to work on and it kind of went full circle when, in...it probably was about 2007...maybe it was 2005...when IT started reporting to me. So it was another new group to report to me.

Blanche Touhill: But you knew basically the people and you knew...

Sharon Fiehler: I knew the people but to know IT is a full profession by itself and, of course, I just think Peabody's done a beautiful job of hiring talented people.

Blanche Touhill: What system did you ultimately go with?

Sharon Fiehler: Work with SAP, is that what you mean?

Blanche Touhill: Yes. And so you hired a lot of Indian people?

Sharon Fiehler: Oh, yeah, that group of individuals, their skill sets is wonderful. Actually, Lena Young who heads up...she's our chief information officer, she is Indian. She grew up in this country. Her mom and dad, though, both came from India and so a lot of the people there that are very good at these skills are either from India or have Indian heritage with their parents. So it's a great group of very, very talented people. We have a wonderful IT department. I'm very, very proud of the group. I'm proud of all of our groups but that group has really done some great work. They're very well known for what they've done. We put in SAP about six years ago, maybe, seven years ago and, as any company who's done it, you go through chaos for a period of time and then you try to get things back to some normalcy and, in the meantime, people think it's all a disaster and then in the end you come out of it and it doesn't look so bad. So it was a good experience, going through all that. Now, I didn't head up the SAP implementation. It must have been right after that that the IT started reporting to me so I would say it was about the 2008 timeframe.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know that a lot of universities looked at that...

Sharon Fiehler: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: ...and they didn't particularly choose it. So I knew that often it wasn't in the curriculum of the business school and so you really did go to India because the Indians do have that in their schools and I always thought that was interesting.

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah, now the Rolla campus of the university, they have a major. You can actually get a...I don't know if it's called SAP but they teach students about SAP and we've hired several individuals from there, from that program.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you always had the connection with Rolla because of the Missouri School of Mines.

Sharon Fiehler: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: And that sort of went down because not many people were going into that but I think it's coming back up, isn't it?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, it's kind of cyclical. It was back up and since 2008/2009 timeframe with the global economic downturn, there aren't as many graduates

being hired. So those programs...in the mid 2000s, we couldn't find engineers. They were just so...

Blanche Touhill: Mining engineers?

Sharon Fiehler: Mining engineers. Well, it's civil, mechanical, electrical, anything that you kind of use in the field of mining and it doesn't have to be just coal mining. It can be exploration. Iron ore was a big promoter and employer of engineers, all kinds of engineers. So they were very difficult to come by in the mid 2000s but right now, a lot of the mining companies are struggling with the economic downturn, starting to pick things back up again and I think, once again, the pendulum will swing and in a few years, there won't be enough engineers again.

Blanche Touhill: I think that happens to the engineering profession in a variety of...

Sharon Fiehler: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: So then go on. What else was added to your...

Sharon Fiehler: Some of the other functions that I have today, Facilities so we have a lot of offices around the globe and we just want to make sure, from a corporate perspective, that we know what's being rented, what the rental prices are, what's our obligation, how long are we committed. So I don't have a staff that takes care of the physical facilities but all of the leases come through my team just to make sure that we're protected, the way we want to be and I would say we've probably got leases in 10 major cities right now across the globe, from London to Beijing to Ulan Bator, Mongolia to Singapore to Jakarta, Brisbane, Australia, a small office in Germany and a small office in India. So we just want to make sure that we always know what is being leased in the name of Peabody. So I've got a team that takes care of that.

Blanche Touhill: Have you visited all those places?

Sharon Fiehler: I have not visited all those places, most of them but not all of them.

Blanche Touhill: Which ones haven't you gone to?

Sharon Fiehler: I have not been to Ulan Bator in Mongolia.

Blanche Touhill: What is your title today?

Sharon Fiehler: Today I'm the Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer for Peabody.

Blanche Touhill: And you're one of two women?

Sharon Fiehler: One of two women, that's on our very senior team, reporting into the chairman and CEO.

Blanche Touhill: But you were the first woman?

Sharon Fiehler: I was the first in that role and several years ago we promoted another individual. Her name is Jean Hull and she heads up our Technical Services.

Blanche Touhill: What year did you generally get into that inner circle reporting directly to the CEO?

Sharon Fiehler: I would say in the mid 2000s, about then. We became public in 2001 and I started sitting in on board meetings and always did the work, of course, of our compensation committee of the board and then by the mid 2000s is when I really started becoming a part of the senior management team reporting into the chairman and CEO.

Blanche Touhill: And you've been there approximately 33 years?

Sharon Fiehler: Thirty-three years last week.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that wonderful.

Sharon Fiehler: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Congratulations.

Sharon Fiehler: Thank you.

Blanche Touhill: Now tell me: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what do you think you would be doing today?

Sharon Fiehler: Not what I'm doing, that's for certain. I think a lot of women before me have paved the way for me to be able to do this. I hope I'm paving the way even more for the next generation, that there are more of us to be able to do what I've just been incredibly able to do. It's amazing. I think 50 years ago, I don't think I would have made it out of Germantown. I think I probably would have followed pretty much what my mother did, which was raise children and work someplace and have a good life but a

different kind of life, not have seen the world the way I've been able to. I think 50 years ago was a different world for most people and I think my mom was probably one of them. I think my mother had every ability to have done what I've been able to do but the circumstances weren't there that allowed her to...the path wasn't there for her to go down.

Blanche Touhill: Have you received some award or awards that mean something special to you?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, there's several. I would say the Business Journal's "The Most Influential Women" was an award I'm very proud of. I've received a number of other awards from the YWCA and some other organizations. I think right now what I'm most proud of is I'm currently chair of the Federal Reserve in St. Louis, the 12th District and that's not exactly an award but it was something that I was elected to do and it's been a very, very...honor for me to be able to, not only serve St. Louis in this way but I feel like it's a little bit of service for our country, by being the Federal Reserve Bank. So it's a nice, wonderful achievement and I took over as chair January of this year.

Blanche Touhill: Congratulations.

Sharon Fiehler: Thank you.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about the IWF.

Sharon Fiehler: I was asked to join the IWF, I guess it's maybe four or five years ago, and I was so flattered. The women who are part of this organization are all so accomplished. The idea that I, too, could be part of it was just a wonderful, wonderful moment for me. So it's been a great, great way to meet women that I knew a lot about, some of them I knew and others that I now do know because of this and what I find so interesting with this organization is that these women don't talk about themselves. It's just so amazing to me. These women are so accomplished but they're always interested in what the other person has done and I find that so rewarding, to just be with women who are more interested in you than they are in telling you about themselves. It's just an amazing organization. So I've met a lot of women. We get together monthly and I can't say I make all of the monthly get-togethers but I go a number of times a year. I look so forward to having an evening with women because the conversations are full of interesting ideas, from world affairs to books

that have been read to human interest stories. It's just always a wonderful evening when we're able to get together.

Blanche Touhill: Are your mother and father still alive?

Sharon Fiehler: They are.

Blanche Touhill: And are they proud of you?

Sharon Fiehler: I think so. Now, these are German people who do not really show a whole lot of affection but I think so, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Is there anything you want to talk about?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, I would say that the thing that I look forward to seeing in my lifetime is more women becoming CEOs. I think, as I look around St. Louis right now, we've probably got four or five women who are CEOs that, a decade ago, we wouldn't have really probably even been able to forecast what would happen. So it's great to see it. We need more. I think as more and more women are in the workplace...women and men, we have differences and there's nothing wrong with it but being able to accept those differences is something that I think the workforce is still working on and I just look forward to the next generation. I have a niece who's 21 now. I really hope that by the time she's my age, the number of women, of CEOs is equal to the number of men who are CEOs because I think the talent is there. We just need to change the mindset a little bit more to be able to convince the world that the CEO as a female can be just as effective as the male. So, as I look forward to things, that's the biggest thing I look forward to, is more CEOs. I think there's a lot more women in upper management, at my level, but we need to make that one more jump, which is to the very top. So I look forward to that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, are the boards growing in numbers of women on them?

Sharon Fiehler: They are. I think most of us are familiar with some of the statistics of graduates from colleges today. More women graduate from colleges than men. I think in the financial community right now, many more of the management positions are held by females than they are by males and I think we will start to see more and more boards being composed of females. Most boards are people with lots of experience and wisdom which means they're people who are later in their career and women are

just getting to the point right now, that they've held enough kinds of positions like that to be at an age where they have the experience level and the wisdom that they're asked to be on boards. So I expect boards to really become very much having a lot more women during the next decade than we've seen in the past decade, without a doubt.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to make a comment about your home life?

Sharon Fiehler: I would love to. Twenty years ago, actually two months from now, I married my husband, Dale Fiehler, and I would say, because of Dale, my life at Peabody has been a lot more manageable. He is an amazing spouse of somebody who took on a lot of responsibility. He not only had his own career for the first 10 years of our 20-year marriage, being a partner in a CPA firm, but in the last 10 years, he retired but he became kind of the force behind me, so to speak. He took care of everything that needed to be taken care of. He has been the most wonderful spouse of going on business trips and when we have company affairs, he is the only male until we recently got our second female on our senior team, so when we would go to Peabody events and leadership conferences and he would be there, he would be the trailing spouse and I'm very proud of him and, like I said, without him, these last 10 years would not have been as manageable as they've been because he took care of our life totally, from all of the household things that are in there to the business aspect of things we have and my life is much more wonderful because he's part of it and I think I've been able to do a better job at Peabody because of him. So that's my wonderful home life.

Blanche Touhill: Good. And what will you do when you eventually do retire?

Sharon Fiehler: Well, I have a lot of things I haven't done yet. They're a little bit all about me so I want to do things for myself that I haven't been able to. I want to take Spanish lessons. I don't know a second language like many Americans. We're pretty delinquent there, I think, and I want to learn a second language. I want to learn how to play a piano. I want to take photography classes, and like anybody, once you get more time, there's many places in this world that I haven't yet traveled to that I want to. So it's, unfortunately, a lot about me but I think I just want a little bit of time to focus on those things, for Dale and me to be able to experience and for me to be able to do some of these things I've put on a side burner for most of my career. So I look forward to doing that.

Blanche Touhill: Thank you once again.

Sharon Fiehler: Thanks.