For years, people talked about the possibility that Goodyear would shut down the Union City, Tenn., tire plant. I never really believed it was going to happen. The factory wasn’t ancient or anything. It was built in 1968.

Then, all of the sudden, they did it. It was announced on February 10, 2011. More than 1,900 workers worked there then on several shifts, people from Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri. They called us together in groups of about 100 or 150 and spilled the beans to us. Then they moved to the next section of the plan and did it again. You have to understand, this was a massive factory, 52 acres under roof. When those guys said the place was done for, every shift and told us the place was closed as of that day. We could get our stuff out of our lockers, but then we had to leave. We were done.

That threw 1,900 people into an already bad job market. Factories in that area had been closing and going overseas for years. In 1970, the eight counties in western Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky that are called the Jackson Purchase employed more than 30,000 people in 28 factories. By Goodyear’s announcement in 2011, most of those plants had moved overseas. Goodyear was the last one employing more than 2,000.

Other plants had moved overseas. In 1970, the eight counties in western Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky that are called the Jackson Purchase employed more than 30,000 people in 28 factories. By Goodyear’s announcement in 2011, most of those plants had moved overseas. Goodyear was the last one employing more than 2,000. You just couldn’t find a job then.

I was out of work for two years. My wife works, but before I lost my job at Goodyear, we both made good money. On my last day at the tire plant, I earned $24.76 an hour and had a decent health care plan. After I lost my job, I earned $10.25 on June 18, 2013. That’s less than I made at the job I got right out of high school with a company that was bought by Kohler, the faucet manufacturer. I am topped out now at $14.25 an hour. That’s a $10-an-hour pay cut from what I made at Goodyear. And I have to contribute a lot more for health insurance.

I am trying to put some money back in my 401(k) for retirement now, but it’s hard because I make so much less. Don’t get me wrong, though, I am thankful to have a job. And it’s a good job. I am the lab technician and storeroom attendant. I test the tensile strength of the wire mesh we make.

You know, my dad worked at Goodyear. And it would have been nice if I could have spent my career there. And maybe if one of my boys had wanted to work there, he could have, and he would have earned wages that are enough to support a family. But, instead, Goodyear went to Chile and Brazil and China. Now there are no jobs that pay anything in this area. If you could rewind it, and put everything back where it was, it would be awesome. But for that to happen, somebody’s got to fix the problems this country has with trade. I believe it can be fixed. Everything can be fixed. But for that to happen, somebody’s got to fix the problems this country has with trade. I believe it can be fixed. Everything can be fixed. I just don’t trust lawmakers to actually do it. They certainly haven’t yet.