

JAMES BACCA  
AMELIA ODORIZZI BACCA  
First Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schragar

Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

JAMES BACCA  
 AMELIA ODORIZZI BACCA

James: Potlatch; b. 1901  
 fireman

Amelia: Potlatch; b. 1908  
 homemaker

2.6 hours

minute	page	
Side A		
00	1	They came from a small town near Trent in northern Italy. His older brothers and sister went to Rock Springs, Wyoming, and he followed. His family ate green wheat in hard times. The oldest son got the land. Her family. Schooling through eighth grade.
10	4	The town lost 25 men in the war, and thirty from the flu in one month. Grape growing replaced by fruit growing after Italy took over the area. Sufficiency of food depended on size of crop - potatoes and corn meal were main foods, cheese from the creamery. Selling butter for income. In the war the government got everything, and came into the houses. The area was part of Austria, and the people still prefer Austria to Italy.
20	8	He felt he was coming to his kin in Wyoming. He enjoyed coal mining there . Digging coal he made \$10 a day. His concern about cracks in the mountain. Union improved lot of workers. Men had to <i>wash</i> outside at home, rather than at the mine. He boarded with sister: she came over with a friend who married her brother, and she married an Italian boy; she worked in a saloon. Not much English spoken in mine. (continued)
Side B		
00	12	To be a gyppo a man didn't have to speak English, but to be on day wage he did. They spoke Italian but were near German speaking people to the north. Few returned to Italy from America where he lived. There was a much better chance to make a living in the United States.
07	14	After his brother died, he went to California with his brother. He didn't like labor conditions in southern California. Digging a ditch, he encountered a rattlesnake. Ranching near Butte, Montana for two years - extreme cold. He got a job in Potlatch as fireman on his way to the coast with a friend. He left his lucrative mining job to see the world. Work as fireman seven days a week. By batching he saved a little money.
22	18	Decline of foreign population in Potlatch. Many thought the mill wouldn't reopen after depression. Americans had a little preference over foreigners. How they met when he returned to Italy. She had lost parents and worked at home for her married brother. Her father died from flu.

James Bacca / Amelia Odorizzi Bacca

minute	page	
Side C		
00	22	Flu. Mussolini helped poor, though he was a dictator. They questioned Jim about violating curfew.
05	24	She was scared to death when she first came here. She was stunned by lack of running water and electricity in Onaway, after what she'd heard about America. He made wine. There was money in bootlegging. <i>Boche</i> was popular among Italians.
12	27	He stopped belonging to unions because they kept changing. The first union in Potlatch was <b>Four Ls</b> .
15	28	A neighbor from a nearby village. A Bohemian lady who helped her adjust. Her children taught her English once they started school. She spent time with Italian friends speaking Italian.
20	30	Why bachelors didn't go to church – most didn't feel enough at home. Family attended Catholic church.
23	31	He worked a bit for company in depression and got a little road work. The company didn't help the people. They couldn't get government food because they owned a house, or because they were newcomers. They got by on their own, and feared having to sell their house. They wouldn't trade in Potlatch because the company helped those with some money.
Side D		
00	35	It was easier for them than many Americans because they were used to adversity.
03	36	She raised children to respect parents, not fear them as children did their fathers in Italy. Getting back to work after Roosevelt.
07	37	Bosses were all right when you did the right thing. Laird was good because he didn't go around the mill like some bosses did, and was fair to the men.
14	39	Work as fireman was hot and hard. Lunch was the only break. It took all their earnings to get by. Lumber pilers made more money working gyppo.
21	42	Their close friends were three Italian couples: Ecchers, Michelis, and Valozs. Their first vacation was 17 years ago. An occasional outing; they had to be home to take care of the stock. With their friends they talked of the old country. They didn't go to dances.

minute	page	
Side D (continued)		
26	44	They have a better life here although they're common people: importance of education. Her fear of taking citizenship test; help for a neighbor. Inequality of justice in America – rich get off; Italy was fairer.
Side E		
00	46	Low pensions for long-time employees who built the company. The company made a lot of money on Potlatch. People in Italy grew up believing they would become rich in America. He didn't get enough schooling.
08	49	Their Italian friends in Onaway . Italian women coming to America. Her sister told her not to go to America because she wouldn't return, but she thought she would, soon. Brother-in-law returned from America to marry, was sent to the war front and killed. Some Italians went to the cities of Italy; many were coming to America. She was sick on the entire trip to America. His trip to Wyoming by train.
21	55	Fatal accidents in the mill.
24	56	Icebox and cook stove. Washing was hard work.
27	57	Work friends did at mill. All were from North Italy. Help from a nurse in the hospital when she had a baby. (continued)
Side F		
00	59	Help from a nurse. Hard to learn English. Italian families left Elk River.
(4 minutes)		

with Sam Schrager

September 24, 1976

## II. Transcript

JAMES BACCA & AMELIA ODORIZZI BACCA

This conversation with James Bacca and Amelia Odorizzi Bacca took place at their home in Onaway, Idaho on September 24, 1976. The interviewer was SAM SCHRAGER.

SAM SCHRAGER: Just where exactly, did you come from in Italy?

AMELIA BACCA: Did you ever hear about Trent?

SS: I've heard that name I think.

AB: Trent is a big city and all the little town around and this town is Nano. Yes.

JAMES BACCA: We really are, and ~~Waldino~~. Did you ever heard of that?

SS: I don't think that name is- no, what is that?

JB: Well, that's <sup>right</sup> where we come from, right there is close to Switzerland.

AB: Just kind of a valley, you know. Valley and mountain all around.

JB: Almost a hundred town in the valley there.

AB: Just little town, you know, smaller than this one.

SS: Did you both come from the same town?

JB: Yeah.

SS: You knew each other when you were growing up?

AB: Not very much, no. You know one of my brothers <sup>because my brother</sup> was the same age as him.

SS: What made you decide to come to the States in the first place? To leave Italy?

JB: Well, you see, we had three brothers here in Wyoming. My sister, after World War I. My sister is the one- she was older than I, and of course --

AB: Well, I'll tell you why- they come from the old country- there was six brother, one sister. And you know over there, they're very poor people you know, that's how you live. Whatever you raise, like you raise your garden, <sup>a big patch in a garden.</sup> Whatever you raise you eat, and that's it, you know. So his dad died when he was about seven year old I think.

JB: Six, I think.

AB: So he left his mother with all this big family, so they didn't have any support whatsoever for the <sup>little</sup> kids. So just as soon as he was the



age, they start come to America, So the older brother come first. And now he in California, he's eighty-four year old. And then 'nother brother, that he died after he was up to Wyoming and he died there. And after ~~the two~~<sup>brothers</sup> then the sister come over and she married an Italian boy, too, and then they called for him. They send da mon so he can come over.

SS: Where were they in Wyoming? Where were they living?

JB: Rock Springs, Wyoming because the town mine.

SS: What kind of mining were they doing?

JB: That's all there is there, just coal mine. <sup>how many</sup> ~~There is there.~~ <sup>They owned the mine, I don't know.</sup>

They get two line and they go down a little deeper and they have another mine like that. I don't know just how deep they can go down, you know. They's a lot of coal up there.

SS: Did your brothers plan to go back to Italy when they first came over here? Or did they see it as a permanent move?

JB: Well, one brother went back to Italy; the other got kill and the other two, one in California and myself, we still here. Is the oldest one in California, I'm the youngest one, see.

SS: How rough was it in- where you grew up? How rough was it to make a living in Italy?

JB: I'll tell you, it was awful rough, <sup>through</sup> the war. 1918 they finish the World War I and my God, <sup>we</sup> didn't have hardly anything to eat there, you know. We had to go out in the field-

AB: Had to go out in the field and eat the wheat, you know.

JB: Patch of wheat, stalk, and my gosh, you know, they go and they was taking care of that, and they go out and get it anyway.

AB: Go out at night and get it and then we ground <sup>whatever, flour and water.</sup> it with a little ground and we make

SS: You mean just what was left in the field after the harvesting?

JB: No, no, before the harvest. I still remember my poor mother used to

make a- you might say something like hotcakes and stuff like that.  
And the stuff wasn't ripe, and I still remember the bellyache I used  
to get- eat that stuff.

AB: You ground the wheat, no ripe, you know- <sup>cook it.</sup> and then just mix it with water and

JB: They used to ground it in the coffee grinder, you know, that's all  
we had to ground it and mix whatever they could get.

SS: Could you get any pay for work?

JB: NO. 'Nother thing they don't have anything to work for anywhere, just  
the little land they had there.

AB: *There was no industry like they have here. WAS all just  
farm. We have a little place to work and that's it.*

SS: Did most of the people work for big farmers?

AB: No, nobody had a big farm over there.

SS: So there wasn't rich people. So, really, everybody had his own little  
plot? Your family owned a little bit of land?

AB: Yes. Handed down, you know, generation to generation.

SS: But not enough to make a living?

AB: No, no, no. In other word, you know, if you <sup>have three or four</sup> boy in  
your family- one boy could stay in the family, the oldest, <sup>usually that's the law</sup> and then  
the other brother and the other, they has to go and find theirself, you  
know, in the other country. <sup>isn't</sup> They do that because there's nothing there  
for the other to do. And the girls, they usually get married so that  
different. And then the other brother- not for the boys, there wasn't  
nothing to do except for the older boy. <sup>he got the land.</sup> The older boy, he got the house and  
but the other, they don't get nothing.

SS: Was that the law or just a custom?

AB: It must be a custom, as far as I know. I never know about the law, but

it the custom there.

SS: Did you have many brothers and sisters?

AB: I just have one brother, but I had three sister, yes.

SS: Was your family also in about the same-

AB: Yes- it was just a little better, because, like I say, you know, the  
big family- you are, <sup>the</sup> more expensive so- So my brother was pretty lucky  
because he was all by himself so he got all the house and the land.

SS: How much schooling would you figure on getting there? How many grades  
in school?

AB: Through the eight grades. A lot <sup>kids, they</sup> don't finish the eight grade because  
in springtime they wanted the boys, you know, out in the fields to  
work, to help the father to work. <sup>the day since,</sup> They work <sup>as far as I know when I</sup>  
was over there, so I don't know now.

SS: Did you get to go to eighth grade?

AB: Yes. I don't think he finish the eight grade, did you?

JB: Well, just about.

AB: I know they <sup>take</sup> you out to work.

JB: Well, all the people work in the war, you know, and then the teacher  
let me out- I graduated a little bit sooner from that, about two or  
three months before graduation I'd say.

SS: Did you go into the army?

JB: No. No, I was too young. Was too young to go in the army. You have  
to be eighteen before they drafted, you know.

AB: He just did miss it.

SS: Well, did the war cause- the first war- cause a lot of- make things a  
lot rougher for the people? The First World War?

JB: Well, I'll tell you- five year, the war last just about five years. I  
think it was about twenty-five or twenty-six that die from the war.

- AB: From that town?
- JB: Yes. And that town was just about 850 people them days. And now through the flu right after the war, they had the flu, we bury thirty in one month.
- AB: One night, you mean. *Two or three days and <sup>nights.</sup>* That was terrible.
- JB: Yes, special old people.
- SS: Did you stay out of school in the spring to work? Did you stay out of school to work in the fields?
- JB: No. I graduate just before I got out I went to work *when I was 7 years old.* because my birthday in October, see, so I have to be just about four year old when I went to school, see. So I was about fifteen when I finished the school.
- AB: When he finish the eight grade.
- He mean in spring, you know, in spring did you get out a little bit early every year? Because you have your brother<sup>s</sup> do the work you see.
- SS: The older brothers would do the farm work and you would-
- JB: Yah, that right.
- SS: What was the farm work that they did? What did they do on the farm?
- JB: Well, they have a lot of grapes. They had them them days, now they don't have them any more. They change it all, since Italy take over the country, you know, they change it the grape culture. Pretty much all fruit there, you know. The grapes they don't get much volume any-  
more. They have the-
- AB: *kind of* Disease has come in, the grapes.
- JB: The grape all went out and so instead of planting grapes they plant orchards. They done that since I left there.
- SS: Well, in normal times, not during the first war, but before the war, was there enough food for people to eat then? Or was it still short?

JB: Well, I can't remember that long, you know, I was a kid.

AB: See, all depend on about on your crop, too. If you had a nice crop then you have enough to eat, if you don't have a nice crop, you just scimp a little bit. But the main that you eat over there- it's potatoes and corn meal. They eat potatoes three time a day. In the morning you make like brownies, you know-

SS: Brown-?

AB: Hash brown potatoes.

SS: Ch, yeah.

AB: Cold potatoes in the evening again- we just fry in the morning and that's why.

SS: What about lunch? Potatoes at lunch, too?

AB: Well, at lunch you have a big meal, so we have corn meal for lunch. You know corn meal?

SS: Yeah.

AB: You make kind of a round <sup>thing</sup> and then we slice it and eat that with cheese. Because usually every <sup>we have</sup> one cow, two cow, all depend- like I told you before, how much land you had. If you had quite a big <sup>of</sup> land you can support cow, you know, you have enough grass and then you have a one cow, if you don't you have a two cow. You milk the cow, instead of drink the milk we usually- they don't <sup>give you</sup> drink <sup>to</sup> milk <sup>there</sup> over there they drink water or light, light wine, even for the kids, you know. That is the custom. If you take the milk to the-- what you call them?

SS: The store?

AB: No, no. To the factory, where they make cheese.

SS: To the creameries.

AB: To the creameries. And you take your milk <sup>there</sup> for four or five or six month, <sup>all</sup> depends on how much milk you have and then when you take all this milk

for this many things, they give you two...

JB: They weigh the milk.

AB: They weigh the milk and according to much milk you bring down every six or seven months, they give you a big <sup>thing of</sup> cheese, like that. And they give you, I don't know how much butter. Oh, I say probably -

JB: Twenty pounds-

AB: Oh, I don't think so, about ten pound or so. Course, we sell that, that our income. The cheese, we keep it. And that what we eat the <sup>with</sup> corn meal and potatoes. <sup>has to be enough...</sup> So this cheese they give you through the year, there,

SS: All the year around.

AB: Right. You divide 'em up according to how much you have. And so that's what we eat; <sup>with</sup> the corn meal- and then in the evening we just boil the potatoes. In summertime you have a little bit the lettuce or cabbage.

SS: So, when you said it was really bad was during the war?

AB: During the war, because the government got everything. Everything was-- we don't have nothing- <sup>to eat</sup> boy they come in the house and if you have something, you don't suppose to be, yeah.

JB: We were right close to the front, too, you know.

AB: Yes, every night you hear the boom, boom.

JB: They have the cannon fire and the airplane go over head.

AB: <sup>The ocean, was war all the time</sup> . Course you know, before the war we belonged to Austria. And then after World War I, Italy took over.

JB: Yeah, that's why they <sup>changed</sup> see, they changed the <sup>agri</sup> culture because and the food and water ain't worth as <sup>much</sup>, belong to Italy.

SS: The people in your - in the city and the towns where you lived, did they think of themselves as being Austrians, or as being Italian?

AB: I think they like Austria better than Italian.

SS: So that's really the nationality, Austrian?

- AB: Yes, that's the nationality, oh, yes. Austrian.
- SS: Well, when you left, did that leave your mother without people to help her?
- JB: Well, I had two brothers there.
- AB: <sup>still</sup> two brothers over there.
- JB: Two brothers left there.
- SS: Did you think ~~it~~ was a big chance to get out and come to America?
- JB: Oh, yeah. I think that was a good deal! Because I had two brother in Wyoming, see, so it pretty much like going home anyway, see. They have a house and stuff to eat-
- AB: And a job there-
- JB: Yeah. Job too.
- SS: Was it hard to get used to working in a mine after growing up on a farm?
- JB: No. No, I kinda liked to work in a mine. Yeah. First, of course, I'm telling you that I was pretty much scare, you know, because <sup>it was working in a</sup> pillar. I don't know if you know anything about mining or not. The place it goes <sup>up</sup> about, oh, ninety and two hundred feet and they start close and the entry is small but <sup>then</sup> right away it <sup>will</sup> widen out and it'll be about, oh, fifty feet, I think, and goes clear up to the entry. And between one place and the other there'd be the pillar, see that'll hold the <sup>mountain</sup> up see. I was working in the pillar, see. The entry it was <sup>finish</sup> the two. But we were working in the pillar. I was working alone but I had a friend down below that used to come up <sup>and see</sup>.
- SS: What did you do? What was the job that they had you do?
- JB: Well, you gotta dig coal, see.
- SS: So you dug the coal right by the pillar?
- JB: Yeah. Well, <sup>when</sup> you work in a pillar, you know, it is easy to get coal you know because it squeeze out from the mount (ain) you see. All you

have to do is to take out a little bit in the bottom and it squeeze out and then you have to dig down a little bit in the top. I used to do pretty good. I would make about \$10 a day.

SS: Oh, that sounds like big money in those days.

JB: Yeah, them days.

SS: Just digging the coal with a pick?

JB: Yeah.

AB: Pick and shovel.

JB: The company men, they used to get about \$8 a day. I do better than that.

SS: That's gyppo, eh?

JB: Yeah. And, hell, they only work six hours a day. Take one hour to go eat and an hour to come out. That's a long ways in and out, you know. It wasn't really steep down; it goes down to the entry then it goes straight down. It take about an hour to go in you know and out.

SS: Were you worried about the safety?

JB: Well, I don't know just what the safety means. When I was in there first you know, you can hear the things cracking around here and there and I thought the mountain was coming out, so I go down and see my friend down below. (Laughter) He come up and say, "Well," he says, "I can't see nothing wrong here." "It's cracking here and there." He says, "The mountain'll do that." But after I was in there say about a month and I know just what to do myself, see. All we have to do is prop it up right where you're working, see, with a prop up then, the mines they all got sides, see, and when they cave down dat won't <sup>bother</sup> anybody.

SS: But the walls really were cracking? When you work on 'em?

JB: Oh, ya, that will squeeze the coal out, too. ya, because the weight of the mountain, see, <sup>that'll</sup> squeeze the coal out see. But as long as you have



props on it, then you safe.

SS: Were there any bad accidents?

JB: Well, every once in a while you can hear about one, not very often. Something like this here in the mill, you know. Somebody get hurt. Sometime it will happen that they get killed. That right here in the mill, too, you know. Not very often.

SS: Was there a union in Wyoming, for the miners?

JB: Ya, ya. Had a union, ya. Everything was union then, you know, ya. You bet. After the union, <sup>come</sup> we done better.

SS: Was that the United Mine Workers? In Wyoming?

JB: Ya. Ya, that's what it is. Ya.

SS: Did you live pretty good in Wyoming? Was it a good living situation?

JB: Yeah. Well, then I was boarding, then I had my sister there, too, you know, so I was boarding with her when I was working in the mine. Yeah, had a good board. Well, <sup>they</sup> everybody work hard in the mine, you know. Long <sup>as</sup> <sup>they</sup> work you know, and working long hours, but anyway- when day work, they work, I'd say. Then, of course, they come out and wash off. Them days we used to have a wash outside the house, you know. We had a house to wash in, wash yourself out, too, you know. They called it shanty, you know, it was right close to the house, they have it that building there so you can wash yourself and clean up. Now it's different. The company's got that, you can wash out <sup>after they</sup> come out of the mine and clean up-

SS: But you had to go home before you could wash?

JB: Ya, you had to come home to wash. Just like Negro when you come home. You look just like Negro when you come out of the mine because the coal you know, you get a little spot on it and, <sup>then be</sup> Dirty all over. You have to change clothes, everything, every day when you come out de mine.

SS: Was your sister married then?

JB: She was married, ya. I think she just got married when I come here. She come out year before I did.

SS: Had she come over with the brothers?

JB: No.

SS: She came over by herself.

JB: No, she come with-

AB: Another girl, didn't she?

JB: Ya, 'nother girl. My brother married the girl, see.

SS: Oh, so she came with your brother's wife?

JB: That's right. Well, she wasn't his wife then.

AB: She came to marry him, you know. *His brother.*

SS: I had the idea that most of the women from the old country, you know, they stayed over there, unless they got married and came over here, like you did.

AB: What do you mean?

SS: Well, most of them, I thought- unless they were already married, they wouldn't even come over. It's not like the men, like him, would just come over to work, but the women wouldn't just come over.

AB: Yeah, but she know she was going to marry him. They was writing to each other, see, so she come over here and marry, see. And his sister was the same thing. This fella, you know, was an Italian boy, too.

SS: She came over to get- to marry him, too.

AB: Yes, uh-huh.

JB: Well, she doesn't know. She didn't know.

AB: No, I thought she knew. *Well, anyway she got married pretty soon anyway. WAS an Italian.*

JB: She didn't know anybody at that time anyway. Anyway, she work here. *My brother, UNTIL they get married. The saloon.*

AB: *The saloon.*

SS: She worked as a-- she tended bar?

JB: She- yeah. Help him around there.

SS: Did you find it takes very long to learn English?

JB: Well, you know. You never went to school for that. <sup>But we</sup> Just picked it up as we went.

SS: Did it cause you any trouble before you knew to speak the language? I mean, like getting around and then knowing what you--?

JB: No, in a mine you won't speak much anyway, see. The boss'll come in and tell you; it's a lot of foreign in there-

## SIDE B

JB: ---company will be a little different- the boss, he try to help the language- <sup>a bit, to</sup> ~~quite~~ do the job. I used to go in and work by gyppo- don't have to know much. (Chuckles)

SS: You say when you started- when did you have to be able to talk to each other- you say when you did the gyppo- it was just a day wage?

JB: Yes. Ya, ya. They all was working days, you know. But they worked by company, you know- company men. But you got to know the language quite a bit otherwise you don't know ~~when~~ the boss wants you know.

SS: Did you have a foreman who could speak Austrian?

JB: No. No, I never know anyone that speak my language then, except the people they work on it, ya.

AB: We wasn't Austrian; we speak Italian. Oh, ya, it was Italian, ya. We speak Italian, oh, yes. We didn't speak German.

JB: Just like over the other side of the mountain, they speak German and didn't speak ~~any~~ Italian.

SS: Out- the other side.

JB: <sup>the other side</sup> It's not a big hop then. Used to be on. The way you have to go, you know there just one way out and then it south and otherwise you got to go

through the mountain, see. Then just go <sup>around</sup> like that, it only take  
bout, oh, say about a couple a hours, with the train, you know.

SS: Did you ever learn to speak German, too?

JB: No. No, I know something about it because ~~the~~ <sup>soldiers had</sup> ~~^~~ been around five  
years, you know. And Austrian and German and Hungary, all kinds of  
nations there, so I don't know, someone that can speak German- most  
of these can speak German. You want something to eat, dey all know that  
part of it.

SS: Were there a lot of people who had come over from where you lived, come  
over to the United States?

JB: Yeah, ya, quite a few.

SS: I had heard that a lot of people who came from Austria went back when  
the First World War started. Is that true? Did many come back from  
the United States?

JB: I didn't know anybody that come back there. Lot of people, they don't  
come around there anyway because, hell, the only way they come around  
if they want to go out ~~to visit their parents or their brother,~~  
then they be back here, see. But otherwise what do they want to go  
back there for?

SS: Well, what happened? Do you know? Before World War I, there were a  
lot of people from Austria and Italy that were around in this country  
working on the section crews and working in the mills and that kind  
of thing; but then I heard that they left around here around the time  
World War I started. I wonder where they went. Or if maybe they still  
were here.

JB: Some- You know Austria was then the enemy, <sup>there</sup> ~~^~~ see, and I don't know how  
it was. The United States, they were helping Italy or how it was.  
<sup>I think that was</sup>  
World War II, when this country went over in Italy and fight it out  
mostly down in the southern part of Italy. And they went up about close

to Rome, too. But I didn't know anybody-

SS: That came back from the United States.

JB: No, because- another thing- I don't see why they would. They got away the first time, so that--

SS: You figure there really was an awful lot more opportunity over here.

JB: Oh, ya, ya, I should say. You bet. Yeah. You got a better chance to make a living here than over there. Ya, I should say so.

SS: I was thinking maybe the big cities, you know, like where they have the auto factories and-

JB: Well, course, <sup>we</sup> <sub>^</sub> was away from the big cities, you know. We don't know much about the big city. All I can say that whatever was going on in town there right around the whole valley, they was about in the same condition; about all the same.

SS: You came over - it was about '27, that you came over here?

JB: I come to Wyoming in 1920.

SS: 1920, yeah, and did you stay there until '27?

JB: I stay there til - well, I went to California I guess - California- when my brother die. He die in a car accident. And my brother he wasn't in California then, he come up for the funeral. And after the funeral, he said, "Did you want to go to California?" "Well," I say, "Okay." He say, "Let's go." I like to see the country and I didn't like it down there. <sup>the work</sup> It was quite a bit cheaper than what it <sup>hard</sup> is up in the mine, and <sub>^</sub> to find a steady job. I didn't go in really the right place, <sub>^</sub> because <sup>that was pretty good.</sup> if I woulda went in the northern part of California, then you got a chance to go in the wood or in the sawmill and stuff like that, you know. <sub>^</sub> Then it was all farming and stuff like that. And lot of Mexican and the wage was pretty low. I work there in one place there where Hollywood is now, digging a ditch. And I got ascaresd

of a snek (snake).

AB: Rattlesnake.

JB: Rattlesnake, and I come pretty near breaking my leg there to get away from it. And well, I didn't like it so, about- right around six months I come back in the mines. And I work in the mine, let's see, about-

AB: '27. 1927. That's when you come back here.

JB: No, I come here '27. I work in Montana after that. See, I work two year in Montana- ranches.

SS: Before you came- before '27?

JB: Yeah. Before I come here. Just before I come to Potlatch.

SS: What kind of work was that?

JB: Well, they have two or three hired men there-

AB: Big ranch, you know.

JB: Ya, ranch. <sup>W<sup>e</sup> w<sup>as</sup></sup> Raising hay and make the hay for the stock in the summer. In the winter feeding them out to the stock, see. They had a band of sheep that used to come up <sup>in</sup> the lower country and they wintered there, the sheep. And I was feeding cow and horses. They had about sixty or seventy horses and I don't know how many cows they was feeding anyway. Take me all day to feed 'em. And that <sup>'s</sup> the way it was. I remember that, my gosh, it get so cold out there. It was just on this side of Butte. And I asked the foreman, I say, "Why don't you keep a thermometer here so we know how cold it was- what to do when it gets cold?" "Well," he says, "if we keep the thermometer the men won't stay." (Chuckles) I come out lots of time and I had just ice all around my cap here, you know. Sweater and then <sup>it froze</sup>. Yeah, that's the way it was there, but I like ranching, just the same.

SS: Was the pay pretty good then there or not?

- JB: Well, two dollars a day and board. (Chuckles) I guess them was pretty good wages them days. Well, my sister, her husband got sick and she was gone to the old country. 1925. I went up and seen my sister, tell her goodbye, and I find another man that he say like to go to coast. Well, I never been this side the country; been to California, so gotta go and see this side country, too, you know. Well, he had a fella here that he knows before he come in this country and he know him from the old country. He knows the address, he was here in Potlatch. Well, I, we did stop here and then we go from the coast there, you know. We stop-ped there and we got a job here so we never got to go to the coast. (Laughe) I work in the same job for thirty-nine years. In the same job.
- SS: What was the job?
- JB: Fire <sup>and</sup> ~~turbin~~ <sup>turbine</sup> operator.
- SS: Is that what you first started doing? You started-
- JB: Fire- fireman. Yeah. And then I work up to be ~~turbin~~ <sup>operator</sup>. You don't have no better job.
- SS: You mean that's the highest you could go?
- JB: Yeah, that's right, yeah.
- SS: Well, when you- why did you decide to leave that job in the coal mine in the first place? It sounds like good money you were making.
- JB: Yah, ya, But anyway, got to <sup>look and</sup> see something else, you know. I was young then, you got to see the world. I went to California. I come here. I see what was going on. You gotta work no matter where you go, and so after I came here, I stay in the same place.
- SS: In Hollywood. Do you remember what you were making on the ditch job? Digging the ditch? What they paid you?
- JB: Oh, I <sup>wouldn't</sup> remember.

- SS: It was probably pretty cheap.
- JB: Ya. Ya, pretty cheap.
- SS: What was your brother doing down there?
- JB: Well, he was running a hotel. Was running hotel.
- SS: How did you get that job as a fireman to start with here?
- JB: Well, it just happened that way, see. Need a man and so I went in and first thing you know, I had the steady job. Somebody quit, see, and that's the way it go, see. You got a chance to work then.
- SS: What was the job? What did you do, for instance, as a fireman?
- JB: You got to walk back and forth in the fire, see. The fire with the fuel, hog fuel, see.
- AB: To make steam <sup>to run</sup> the sawmill, that's what he did.
- JB: That's all. Of course, we have to work night and days and every time.
- SS: How long a day did you work? Was it a twelve hour day?
- JB: No. Just eight hours. Eight hours. But then you know, we had three shift, see. Sometime we change every week and then you change every month. It all depend on how the thing come out. And then pretty soon we change-
- AB: Mostly you change every week, maybe.
- JB: Mostly, yeah. Finally, today, you know, they got so they won't change any more. The new man goes in the graveyard shift and come back in the afternoon and days.
- SS: Did you work five days a week or seven?
- JB: Work seven days when I first started. Every day. That's a long ways.  
(Chuckles)
- SS: I've heard that that was a pretty good job; the fireman's job.
- JB: Well, that's a little better than common labor.
- SS: Did they pay--?



- JB: I think it was getting about forty-five dollar an hour--
- AB: Forty-five cents an hour. (Chuckles) <sup>JB</sup> That's right. Ya. I remember working every day and sometime somebody won't show up and then you have to work a double shift. I never make two hundred dollar  
Never make a month, <sup>hundred</sup> dollar and they were paying once a month ~~them~~ days.
- SS: You mean you never made a hundred dollars in one month?
- JB: That's right. So that's pretty hard thing to go, you know.
- SS: Did that mean- could you put aside any money? Or did it just cost you all the money you made to live?
- JB: Well, the way we had been doing it- I used to bach myself, see. And by doing that I have something left over, see. If you have the board and everyt'ing, it take about all you make <sup>ANYWAY</sup>.
- SS: You mean you didn't live with any of your friends? Just all by your- self? You didn't live with other guys?
- JB: No. No. Well, I did at first you know, then I bached <sup>there</sup> see. I was baching over there. About three years, I think.
- SS: Were there many guys that'd come - where you came from the area, that were here? Were there many guys from Northern Italy?
- JB: There was few. Ya. Two, three, four, ya, they was <sup>about</sup> <sub>four</sub>. John...
- AB: Family . Just closest-
- JB: That's all. Really, I never see anyone from my own town.
- SS: But from the country. From Northern Italy there, or from Austria was four or five people?
- AB: Yeah about four- like here in Potlatch, yeah.
- JB: Used to be- years ago, you know, there used to be a lot of <sup>it</sup> here from Italian. They say there was <sup>about</sup> half of the sawmill down there was pretty much <sup>all</sup>, single men then, you know. Used to have <sup>two</sup> ~~a~~ boarding

house there in Potlatch.

AB: One for Italian people, one for Japan people, you know. But then you know when the Depression just about everybody left here, you know. Went to Spokane, to Lewiston. They said this mill don't open any more, <sup>even</sup> after the Depression, you know. So they went out and find jobs someplace else. So they left. <sup>↳ + of people went</sup> To Lewiston, to Spokane. Through the Depression

JB: they shut down entirely, even the powerplant.

And they build the one uptown just to make the steam <sup>for</sup> the churches and stuff here.

SS: But when you first came here, there were , there were still just a handful of Italians.

JB: Yeah, it just started to slacken off when I first come from the old country, <sup>with her</sup> 1931. The Depression had just started to taken <sup>of it</sup> ahold, see and they started to laying off men.

SS: Well, when you came in '27 were there a lot more Italians here, than there were in '31?

JB: Ya.

SS: A whole lot left just in those four years?

JB: Well, there weren't too many right then, you know. Before my time used to be lot of 'em in here, see.

SS: I wonder what happened to those guys when they left here before you came? I wonder if they just went to Spokane or--?

JB: Well, they find job anywhere, I suppose. I don't know. I don't know what they do <sup>with it</sup>.

AB: Lot of them went to Lewiston, because Lewiston is a much bigger sawmill than here, you know.

JB: Well, but that at Lewiston, it started after I come here.

- AB: Well, Elk River, they have a big sawmill here.  
A lot of Italian people <sup>up</sup> there. They closed that down during the Depression, and then they never opened that up. And this one down here was the same thing, you know. When they started the Depression they said <sup>they</sup> never <sup>gonna</sup> open the sawmill again, so that is why a lot of people left. Lot of 'em didn't believe it, and they didn't, and that's why people left.
- SS: Did you think that people from Eastern Europe, like Greeks and Italian people would have a harder time than these local boys, say, to get ahead in a sawmill? I mean, was there a little discrimination against the people from the old country?
- JB: Oh, I don't know. I don't think so. I think they been doing pretty good here.
- AB: If you have a trade when you come over, <sup>or</sup> you <sup>have</sup> the schooling, too, and the language have a lot to do, you know. But if you don't know- I mean, you know writing is one thing- ~~don't matter what you do in a business,~~ you have to have that, in the language.
- SS: Well, I've heard a couple of people that I've talked to say that it would be harder for them, say as Greeks to get ahead than it would be for somebody that was local, that had been around here for a long time. Somebody that was local would have an easier time in say, getting a better job than somebody that wasn't.
- JB: Well, now <sup>take</sup> like I happen to be myself, work in the one job all the time. So, I don't know- <sup>other</sup> the <sup>people</sup>, they do around here-
- AB: But he was talking about the advantage you could have if you was born here locally, more to go up, you know- a better job. That what he talking about.
- JB: American boys, they have a little preference, ya.
- AB: That what he <sup>was</sup> talking about.
- SS: You decided- you had only been here for a short time when you went back

to Italy and you married?

JB: Ya.

SS: You had only been here for a short time?

AB: Been here three year. '27.

SS: Been here for three years?

AB: Right here in Potlatch.

SS: Did you have a correspondence before?

JB: No.

SS: So when you went back, did you know that you were going to get married to her?

JB: No, I didn't know it. (Laughter) Just happened that way... That's all.

SS: Can you tell me how that came about? Was the marriage arranged back there?

AB: No. I'd never been yet here, myself. he-said no. No.

SS: I've heard that a lot of the parents would arrange marriages among the--

AB: They arrange for him, you know, a girl. Remember your sister. They be arranged for you to marry somebody else. Remember? That didn't count I guess he didn't like the girl or something. They didn't arrange for me. I remember we meet the first time he come up to the house to see my brother, because he went to school. That's why.

SS: Well, I've spoken to people that have come from-- One woman I talked to from Sweden came over about 1927, and she said it was really difficult to leave Sweden, in fact, some women wouldn't leave, like her husband's mother never would leave Sweden to come over here. And how did you feel about leaving--

AB: Over there?

SS: Yes, just leaving to come over?

AB: I really didn't mind because I lost my parent, when I was just a little girl, seven year old. I just had my brother and my sister, so I didn't have much of a

family, you know. So I really didn't mind.

SS: Yes, I think it does make a difference.

AB: Oh, I think so, too. Ya, sure, because then you have somebody and I didn't have anybody. My brother was married and had his own family. So I really was just in the way there because, you know. I didn't have anything, except- well, of course he would keep me there and I was working for, but- it wasn't my family any more, see. Like it was city and all I could get a job, but there you didn't have that chance to get a job, so you have to work for your brother. <sup>or else</sup> Servant, really. <sup>more than anything else.</sup> He was good to me- I can't complain about that.

SS: Your parents died when you were just a girl? Was that during the war?

AB: Yeah, my daddy died from the flu and my mother the year before. She had been sick for a long while and I was six year old and she died.

SS: That flu must have been really---

AB: Oh, yes. Very terrible. <sup>JB: The flu really got a lot of 'em.</sup> <sup>AB: I know lot of young kids</sup> <sup>get it. I was there with my daddy,</sup> I never got it. My sister was, they thought she would die but she come through.

Side C  
AB: Make 'em comfortable. And that's it. That's the high fever, that's all there is, you know. Take care of that one, that be all right. A lot of people just go in a coma. The fever go up to 105, 106, and that's sick you know, for days and days and days. We weren't able to store enough, you know, because <sup>the end,</sup> by they run out of medicine, you know. <sup>they give you a little bit. Not enough to help.</sup> They don't have the medicine that they have now.

SS: The same thing- around here, this country, people died the same way.

Did you stay back there for very long when you went back in 1930?

JB: Six month.

AB: Otherwise, he has to go <sup>in the army.</sup> Mussolini was there, boy, you know <sup>hanging around, Mussolini.</sup> So, he got to hurry up so we can stay.

SS: Did you feel- how did you feel at that time about Mussolini? Did you want to get out of the country then because of him?

AB: Well, he wasn't too bad. He was very severe, you know but in command and everything. But he <sup>helped a lot of</sup> poor people, I can tell you that. He was for poor people more than the other people, you know. H really make a <sup>lot of room</sup> for poor people. I can say that. Jim didn't like him!  
(Laughter)

JB: I don't like it. You come here, they be around.

AB: He was there, you know, and he come up and see me and when he go home he be stop, and they asked him what he do, whether he went, ev everything he went, after eleven o'clock at night, you know. And, boy, if you don't have an answer you go to jail. Oh, yeah.

SS: Were you an American citizen by that time?

JB: Yeah.

SS: You had your citizenship papers here?

JB: Yeah.

SS: So they couldn't do any- really do anything too bad to you, I would think.

JB: No, but anyway-

AB: They follow him around.

JB: That's a big country, you know, so you got to leave when they say

AB: He was a dictator.

JB: Then those that work under him, they has to do their job, just like he says. That's why I don't like it. (Chuckles)

SS: Now, I've heard that the unions- from my reading about Italian history at that time, I've heard that the unions were very strong right after the First World War. Like around Turin where they had all the auto factories, the unions were very strong. The Communist party got really strong for a while, too, and the Socialist Party there and then it all turned around when Mussolini came in and they threw all those people--

a lot of those people in jail.

JB: Yes, that's right. Yeah, he clean up things pretty much, you know; Mussolini did. Look how he got done anyway, first thing you know they hanged him. *Somebody, they got more guts than he did.*

SS: Well, was it hard to make-- You were saying that it was easy to get her to come to America. Right? You had no trouble.

JB: I just have to sent the card here from Washington and come back, you know, and that would take about two months, altogether.

AB: Well, he has to go through Venice to get the, *papers don't you?*

JB: Well, they go to the-

AB: American Consulate, that's in Venice.

SS: Did you get married when you were still in Italy before you came over?  
We get married in that time.

AB: Oh, yeah. *And then we went to Venice to get my passport. To* The American Consul in Venice.

SS: Could you take much of your belongings over here?

AB: No, I didn't take very much *because, we take what we can use, not too much.*

SS: So what did you think of this country when you got here?

AB: *(Laughter)* Scared to death. It all so much different, you know, than *Country* over there. *I think for a person who's here now, today, she should go to*

I think it is good thing like the old country, too, now, because my sister is *dead,* my sister she write to me. Why even in the schools now, they start teaching the kids different languages, especially English, and I think is a very nice thing to do. Because I do not like for anybody to go in any country to stay, you know and don't have any knowledge at all in the language. Because it is just pretty hard. It wasn't so bad for me *because he know, a little bit.* But can imagine you come over here and just don't know anything, that's very bad.

SS: Did you move here to Onaway when you first came over here?

AB: Yeah, uh-huh.

- JB: Yeah, we tried to find a house in Potlatch, but can get no houses them days. They were all filled up so we find a house here.
- SS: I thought this town -- that Onaway was just a little bit more independent because Potlatch was a company town and this was a private one.
- AB: This was no town at all, then, you know.
- SS: Was no town?
- AB: No. They didn't have no light, they didn't have no water, they didn't have anything. In fact, the water, they put in the water <sup>three</sup> years. <sup>ago</sup> Everybody used the well for year.
- SS: Oh, really?
- AB: The electricity came down- my two daughters was born, she was born in 1936 when they put in the electricity. So really, when I come over here, because you heard to much in the old country about America. People go to America look like everything is come out of the spigot you know. And I was just stunned when I come over here, didn't have no water, no electricity. At least over there, we didn't have much, <sup>but</sup> we have that, you know.
- SS: Kind of disappointing.
- AB: Ya. Ya. It was- water and light- that <sup>is</sup> the main thing, you know. We didn't have it. <sup>they</sup> had it in Potlatch, yes, but not over here.
- JB: Yeah, in 1936 <sup>when</sup> the lights come in here.
- SS: You know, we talked about Prohibition here in the '20's. The people around Potlatch say that the Italians made very good wine during that time. That was one of the main ways that there was to get some kind of alcoholic beverage at that time, otherwise it was bootlegged from other places like Spokane.
- AB: Well, he make his own wine all <sup>the</sup> time. <sup>the grapes were so expensive we couldn't</sup> Not all the time, because <sup>afford it.</sup> Because we use to over there, just enough for our own use.



- SS: Do you remember guys who were selling wine?
- JB: Who?
- SS: Do you remember guys who were selling wine at that time in the '20's? Back then?
- JB: Well, I don't know anybody that was sellin' wine. They was sellin' whiskey. Bootleggers, in other word, see.
- AB: Yep. *They're dead now.*
- SS: That was being done all over.
- JB: Oh, yeah. All over the country, somebody bootleggin' you know.
- AB: It was a lot of money, you know, if you can get away.
- JB: Get away, yeah.
- SS: Well, they tell me that among the bachelors there was an awful lot of gambling, too, in Potlatch. Lot of gambling.
- JB: Yes, Yeah, I *think* so, especially when they have a lot of single mens, specially. I can't say nothing about that because I never go <sup>around</sup> much.
- SS: I heard about this bowling game. They told me that, and told me that it was really popular game among some of the Italian men, that they used a ball- what is that? <sup>Bocci</sup>
- JB: They used to have it down there when they have-
- AB: Yeah, was lot of Italian people, *they have the game*
- JB: Italian and Greek, they play, too.
- AB: Greek?
- JB: Uh-huh.
- SS: Well, I heard it was mostly- it was really Italian, but some of the Greeks start playing-
- JB: They still doin' it in San Francisco and them big city like that, they playing that game now. I heard it here not too long ago they still have their Bocci game down there.

- SS: So tell me a little of what Potlatch was like at that time when you first came to work here.
- JB: I t'ink- I never joined any union here.
- SS: You never joined the union?
- JB: No, not dis one <sup>that</sup> dey have now, but I join other one. I finally got tired, they changing union here every season you know. So I got tired I say I won't join no more union. That was the end of it. Dis one is dat de end of it. Dis one come in and den no more come in, see. Dat the way it happen.
- SS: Do you remember when the union first got in in Potlatch? I understand the company didn't want a union here.
- JB: It was a company union, the first one they have, <sup>here</sup> yeah.
- SS: Which one? Is that the LLLL? Or which union I wonder.
- JB: It must have been it.
- SS: The LLL's was a company union.
- JB: Yeah. Dat's de one dey had den when I first come in, and den dey change it- <sup>often.</sup> my God, how. But anyway, I finally got tired, I say, "I'm not going a join no union anymore."
- SS: Do you remember the IWWs?
- JB: No, I tink that was-
- SS: Was this before your time.
- JB: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah.
- SS: When you first came here did you live in a boardinghouse?
- JB: No. No, -
- AB: With some friend of his.
- JB: I board with dem a while until <sup>I</sup> a find a place to bach. I bach myself there for about three years.
- SS: I heard a lot of people would take part of their earnings and send them

back to the old country. Is that the way it was when you were here?  
Send some money back to relatives at home?

AB: Well, if you can help it, you know, we never be able to do that, because we have a big family right away and so we didn't. But I suppose somebody did, some did, to help, you know.

SS: But when you came over there weren't other women from- that had just come over- you know, that were- who had come from Italy and those countries, were there? I mean, you were probably the only ones that were around in Potlatch.

AB: Yes, there was another one; two more. But one it was close to us. Was in town, <sup>probably</sup> about here to Princeton.

SS: Where was she from? The same country?

AB: Oh, yeah, the same country, not the same town. *The north too.*

SS: Did you spend much time with her?

AB: Yeah. <sup>We was friends.</sup> You know when somebody talk your language, you know, that the main thing now. I never saw her before, <sup>I come here.</sup> It was nice.

SS: How did you find it was to mix with the American people that had been here for a long time? Did it take you very long to get to know them?

AB: I <sup>find</sup> a <sup>couple</sup> really nice lady. <sup>One was</sup> She was a <sup>Belgian</sup> <sup>woman</sup>. She was nice. She Marie. Remember? When we was down in the house there. She was a Belgian? Bohemian?

JB: Bohemian.

AB: Bohemia. This lady, she was here for years and years, speak English just perfect. And I remember I was living in the house across and I didn't know- well, she want to ask me something, she ask *Jim*. But I <sup>remember I</sup> was raising a little garden, I didn't know nothing about it, you know, and she show me how to fix the peas, you know, can peas and that. She was the nicest lady. Course she was really old compare what I was, you know. And she was a very nice lady.

- SS: You say she had been here for ?
- AB: She must come from the old country because she talk like them and she ~~was~~ Bohemia(n). Yeah, uhuh. And her husband was an Englishman. No?
- JB: Yeah.
- SS: So did she start you gardening?
- AB: Well, no, we did the gardening, but she <sup>help</sup> : me to can. Tell me what to do and everything like that. So that helped. I couldn't speak very much until my kid went to school and then I started to talk right away because when My kid was little I had to speak English, I have to speak Italian to them too, you they <sup>really</sup> didn't know much but Italian when they went to school. <sup>And that no good either.</sup> Because the other kids they make fun.
- SS: So they learn English in school and then they taught you.
- AB: And they taught me <sup>right away</sup> and I learned just to talk right away, yeah.
- SS: But raising a family you probably were pretty busy, you probably didn't have too much time to-
- AB: No, that's it, you know. You can't go anywhere, so. And another thing you know, when <sup>you have</sup> some Italian <sup>friend</sup> you want to talk, you just go there. And so you don't learn that way. And ~~when~~ my kid went to school and then I really have to do something about it. And before when they was little, I didn't think of thing like that. And-
- JB: And the kid, it don't take long to-
- AB: When the kids, you know they come home they talk English between the children, and <sup>he</sup> ~~don't~~ talk English to me, no, he won't, so I couldn't learn that way <sup>neither.</sup>
- SS: That didn't help too much.
- But you probably didn't have too many people to talk Italian to, either.
- JB: Yeah, that right, around here.
- SS: What about church? Did you go to the--?
- AB: We go to Catholic Church.
- SS: Did you go to the Catholic Church here in Potlatch?

- JB: Yeah.
- SS: That's one thing- I had heard in the early days, the Catholic Church around Potlatch and Elk River- most of the Italian workingmen didn't go. They didn't go to the church at all.
- JB: That's right.
- SS: And I heard that they - I heard, that it was kind of both ways- some people said they didn't want- some people say that the church didn't make them feel welcome enough in the old days, because there were a lot of bachelors.
- AB: No, I don't think it was that way at all. I think- I mean, you come over here and then, I don't know how to tell you, but it just so much different you know, you <sup>just</sup> don't feel like you go anyplace, you know, the <sup>language</sup> so you mix with the other people and probably that's why. You know, Jim didn't go to church til I come over here tither and he was a good Catholic.
- JB: Well, I went to church since I come over here.
- AB: Did you?
- JB: Oh, yeah.
- SS: Before you married? You went to church here?
- JB: Yeah. All the people that I stayin' there-
- AB: The family was a good church going.
- SS: Did many of the single men go to church when you first- when you were first here?
- JB: Well, I don't know, because I think I was the only single man.
- AB: Well the single men they never go to church except two time a year; Christmas and Easter. Single men go two time a year, usually. <sup>family, usually they do.</sup> People with a
- SS: Was there much social activity that went along with the church in Potlatch?
- AB: No.

SS: Just the service?

AB: Went to church and the service, yeah.

JB: The women, they have a-

AB: What they call the Altar Society<sup>meeting</sup>. There was a bunch of lady, more for to be at church, cleaning, they called the Altar Society.

SS: Did you do that?

AB: No. No, because in those day I just couldn't, you know, with my family, just couldn't, no.

SS: Well the Depression was on pretty soon after you came back, wasn't it? I mean, didn't it shut the mill down pretty soon afterwards? 1930, or was it '32 they shut it down?

JB: Maybe. Maybe it was '31.

AB: No, I don't think so. The baby<sup>When Eddie</sup> was born and I think he was still working. <sup>Eddie</sup> Cao~~se~~ was born in '32.

JB: Oh, yeah.

AB: And then in the spring, in '32, the spring, I think, I remember now.

JB: '32 and '33 and '34.

SS: What did you do, Jim, after the mill shut down?

JB: Well, some odd job. If they need me they call me, see. If they don't ~~I~~ have to stay home.

SS: But there was still some work from the company?

JB: Yeah. They<sup>was still</sup> working. **I**n fact, the planer never shut down, you know, they work two- one and two and three days a week, you know.

SS: The planer?

JB: Yeah.

SS: How come the planer could stay open when the mill shut down?

JB: Well, they have lot lumber in the yard, you know. It wasn't working too much, one and two days a week, sometime three, but mostly one and

two.

- AB: Yeah, but you were out of work for more than a year, you remember?
- JB: Oh, yeah. I been out more than two years.
- AB: Out in the woods.
- SS: In the woods, you say?
- AB: He was working in the woods to make wood.
- JB: *Yeah. For ourselves.*
- AB: No, no, what do you call that?
- JB: No, I didn't went out.
- AB: Yes, you did, too.
- SS: The CCs?
- AB: The CCs.
- JB: No, no. I never done that. We went out for ourself.
- AB: I know that, but you worked for something-
- JB: No, I went out, oh, I say about two months or so working the road, you know.
- SS: The WPA?
- JB: Yeah, yeah.
- AB: I thought you work for the CC, too.
- JB: That all I ever done.
- SS: Well, was the company very good during that time to people that worked for them? I mean, did they do what they could?
- AB: The company didn't do a thing.
- JB: They give 'em credit, didn't they?
- AB: What you mean, credit?
- SS: At the store?
- JB: Yeah.
- AB: They don't give you more than *credit* credit.
- JB: Yeah.
- AB: That all.
- SS: That's not much.

AB: No. *I say. 30 days* In dose day you don't have anything, you know. Nothing. Course, they have this card- where they give you the food. They never give <sup>it to us</sup> because we had the house.

SS: Because you owned the house?

AB: Yes. Because we owned the house-- they won't give you anything, dat was terrible. Remember you went down once and they didn't give you anything. <sup>It was terrible</sup> But I don't think it was *the house,* we just came here.

SS: You mean you hadn't been around Potlatch long enough.

AB: Uh-huh. *I think they give us our food. I don't remember. Two times or once.*

SS: Was this the company or the government?

AB: The government. Yeah. - they give you some food, some beans or some-

SS: But you'd been here for a while.

AB: Anyway, they never give it to us. I remember. <sup>after that they never.</sup> They went down once and then,

SS: You see, I've heard that the company was- helped some of the married people that had been around here a long time. That's what I heard during the Depression. Those were the people they gave preference to on the work. But I don't know how true that is. Did they give you much work?

JB: No.

SS: Compared to the other guys?

JB: No, not too much. The only place they work that was one thing in the planer. And I don't know how they do it. <sup>I suppose</sup> They kind of played it up, you know. <sup>Myself,</sup> I never got anything out of it.

SS: Did that really make it pretty rough for the families to get by those years, and did you have any government assistance-

AB: We never had anything.



- AB: We used to raise <sup>chickens.</sup> Than you just go out in the country get <sup>for example</sup> a fifty cents or whatever, you feed your <sup>chickens</sup> and then you got your wage and your milk <sup>so</sup> that help. If you can pick up a sack of potatoes and your <sup>so</sup>, you get along.
- SS: What about the stuff you had to buy from the store? Did you have any cash to buy stuff?
- AB: No, we didn't have very much. No.
- SS: Those were rough times for a lot of people.
- AB: Yeah.
- JB: Yah, you gotta have something, otherwise you don't get nothing. That's right.
- SS: What do you mean? You got to have something?
- AB: I mean like, through the Depression, you know, you went down the store and you don't have no money, <sup>say, "Can I</sup> they charge. <sup>?"</sup> If you don't have something you know- your house don't belong to you, they don't give you anything. Because I remember- if you don't have property, and this man down there he say, "Yeah, you can have credit for thirty days." and ~~that~~ <sup>is</sup> it, you know. What you going to do if you charge <sup>whatever</sup> and then in thirty day you don't have it then. <sup>Got your house</sup> for <sup>sale</sup> before you know, so you have to watch what you doing. Yeah.
- SS: This store; did you trade at Onaway?
- AB: Yeah, Onaway, that what I'm talking about, yeah. <sup>No</sup>, Potlatch we never tried to- big company not for us you know. Big company, they have people, they have money and they don't <sup>help</sup> poor people.
- JB: Yeah, we used to have a store here, where the church is now, store there and that pretty handy then, you know.
- AB: Lot of <sup>family</sup>, they was trading the wood. <sup>where they have all goods here.</sup> Now they have a trailer house <sup>here</sup>.
- And all the farmer bring the wood to this store, you know and change for the grocery.

SS: Well, did you think about leaving and trying to go someplace else or did you figure it wouldn't make any difference in the Depression?

AB: In the Depression? No, really no, because like <sup>I</sup> say, we have the house here, and we didn't know where to go, you know because if you don't know anybody, you know, and beside we <sup>already have</sup> kid, two kid you know so it's pretty...

AB: Yeah, might-be better. you just have to take a chance, you know. And so, we just <sup>decided</sup> to stay.

SS: I've heard the company-

AB: For us it wasn't bad, but it wasn't bad like for American people because we used to, see. We come over and it was very bad <sup>we hit a bad year</sup> we was use to it, you know.

SS: It was easy to make-

AB: Yah, was easy, you know, to make end meet with nothing, really. BUT lot of people like American people or probably people that was here for long time, they know better day, <sup>that</sup> was pretty hard for those people.

JB: Yeah, and you don't have many chance to go anyway. There be depression all over, unless you find somebody that got a farm or something like that.

AB: <sup>have relatives,</sup> If you <sup>you can get something to help you,</sup> got something, find job or something like that. <sup>you in a strange town</sup> Everybody in those day was looking for work so.

SS: You figured like the company store, if you'd asked them for credit, they wouldn't have given it to you?

AB: <sup>I couldn't really tell you</sup> But like I say, ~~We~~ try down there, and that's it so.

SS: I wondered if it would have made any difference there if you'd have been around this country for a long time, like you say, if you'd have been here for twenty years instead of just a couple.

AB: It might have made a difference, I don't know. I really couldn't tell.

SS: It shouldn't matter, one way or the other.

AB: <sup>I don't know how much credit you could get by the store.</sup> We used to buy down there when he was working. It isn't like now, you

know. Now you pay cash. Down there use pay once a month.

SS: At the store?

AB: <sup>they keep a bill.</sup>  
You figure the bill you know. Once a month you check all your bill.

SS: Do you know what the prices were in Potlatch compared to here? The prices of goods- were the prices good down there?

AB: Oh, yeah, I think it about same, down here as it was <sup>In those days</sup> in- <sup>^</sup> They didn't have no sale. They put the price and that the price. You know. Now you always wait until Tuesday when they send out special. <sup>In those day</sup> they never. <sup>set price.</sup> You know what you get. In those day doesn't matter. <sup>They write it there and that's it.</sup>

SS: When you were bringing up your kids there in the '30's, do you feel that you raised them strictly? Or do you feel that you were easy on the kids?

AB: Well, you know in those day they don't have it like they have now- you know, all this, playing bowling and everything. They don't have those thing <sup>like they used to</sup> and all like that, so I really couldn't tell you that. I tried my best.

SS: I just wonder because sometimes the people say that they raised their kids pretty strict. That the kids had to toe the line and do whatever the parents told them, that seems different than the way it is these days. The parents are pretty easy with the kids, and I Just wondered if you-

AB: Well, in the old country, what the father say, that go. But I don't think he never was like that. I think there was too much over there. <sup>of kids over there, they're just</sup> I don't agree with that. 'Cause a lot <sup>^</sup> Scared of his father. I think it is no right. A father should be strict, yes, but <sup>still</sup> <sup>^</sup>, he should be.

SS: Do you think he was scared of his father when he grew up?

AB: Well, I don't know, because he lost his father when he was a little boy, you know. But I know my dad- I was scared of my dad, Oh, yes.

- SS: Your father was hard on the girls as well as the boys?
- AB: Oh, yes. Yeah, uh-huh. So I tried not to be that gruff, you know, tried to be more friendly. But you have to be strict sometime, too. But I think over there, parent are too strict, yes. *I agree with it. Still they respect-you,* you fear it, more, you know. And that <sup>'s</sup> not good. Then you <sup>don't</sup> be able to talk to them or anything like that because you scare them. You should respect your father and mother and not be scare.
- SS: So you brought up the kids it was more to respect but not be afraid.
- AB: No.
- SS: When did the depression start ending for you? When did things get back ?
- AB: Well, when Roosevelt was elect president. Roosevelt <sup>that was the</sup> start, you know, the business going, pretty good. <sup>Roosevelt,</sup> Let's see was-
- JB: Hoover.
- AB: Oh, Hoover was no good. Roosevelt was the one who-
- SS: In '33 he started.
- AB: And that when it started pretty much the job and thing like that, you know. He was a good president.
- SS: When did the work start again in the mill?
- AB: Well, I think just about that, '33. No, ' 34- Roosevelt?
- SS: No, he started in '33, but it took a while to get-
- AB: <sup>Probably</sup> '33- '34, in there.
- JB: In '34 they to open up.
- SS: Did you get your job back as soon as the mill opened?
- AB: Yeah, uh-huh.
- JB: Yeah, right <sup>after that</sup> ..
- SS: What did you think of the foremen in the mill?
- JB: They alright. I never had nothing to do with him. He alright.
- SS: I've heard some were good and some were bad. Some were strawbosses

kind of.

JB: You'll find them everywhere. They be alright. <sup>Course</sup> Sometime the thing ain't going just as you want it. Anyway, they are the bosses. And if you want to work there, that the way it goes.

SS: What did you think of the big management? Who was the general manager when you came there?

JB: That was Mr. Laird.

SS: He was here when you came?

JB: He was here. <sup>Real</sup> Good man.

SS: You liked him?

JB: Yeah. He was a <sup>really</sup> good man. I see lot a manager after that, you know. Some they complain about it, as far as myself I didn't have nothing to complain about.

SS: What do you think made him a good manager? Laird? What was good about him?

JB: Well, he never go around there, see. <sup>AB: He was fair to the working people.</sup> <sup>JB:</sup> He take them bosses word.

SS: You mean, he didn't go around the mill?

JB: That's it. He don't go around. O'Connor was around here, he was a-round every day, around the mill, you know. Somebody, they don't like that. It don't make no difference if anybody goes around or not, <sup>we</sup> have to <sup>our</sup> job do, anyway, if there is <sup>no</sup> body around or not. They had a card, see and that card'll tell you if you do the job or not, see. So the way it is then and it don't make no difference if the boss is around or not. We got to do <sup>our</sup> work anyway.

SS: But you figured that Laird was better because he didn't snoop around the mill? He took the--?

JB: Well-

SS: He took the boss's word,

JB: Dat's what the men say. As far as myself it don't make no difference, see, because, we don't see anybody that goes around, see. So if they come in the fire room then they see it, but otherwise, you know, but that's a dirty play to go in there, the fireroom, and they usually look in, and that's all, see. They won't come in.

SS: Do you think Laird was fair to the working men?

JB: I tink so. <sup>that's what</sup> Everybody said Laird a good man, Yeah.

SS: Well, some people really liked him, and some people have said that <sup>he</sup> thought he was better than anyone else. That he was kind of highhanded. You know, that he thought he was better. I've heard both ways about him.

JB: Well, <sup>as far as I can see,</sup> I didn't see either one anyway to talk with them. . O'Connor used to come around in the turbon room and see him up there, see. Used to say hello, and how's things going. <sup>and that's it.</sup> I can't say, because I didn't have nothing to do with him. If I was a boss it would be different, see, talk with him <sup>and everything,</sup> it would be different. The big bosses, they won't talk to everybody. There is just a handfull working in the mill now. All they do now, they got one saw, and they cut- all they do they <sup>cut</sup> two by four and two by sixes, and they don't cut any lumber. The lumber come in there from the other sawmills, see.

SS: Your job as fireman, was that pretty hot work?

JB: Yeah. It was very hot, then they <sup>specially, we</sup> have bigger load and everything. The way they do now, that's different, they low the pressure down and everything. <sup>them days</sup> They used to have to work to hold up the steam up, you know. Had lot of shoveling to do, too, you know. We can't have the sawmill that's not working, we has to shovel in the fuel bin, shovel onto fuel. Yeah, and that was really hard work.

SS: Did you have to work to keep the steam up at a steady pace all <sup>the</sup> time or were there times when you had to work hard and sometimes when it

was easy?

JB: Well, when the sawmill working then you get the fuel from the sawmill.

SS: Right.

JB: But weekend, then the fuel bin it won't hold any more fuel so we have to shovel it out, what is left <sup>back</sup> in the fuel bin. That was hard work , you know.

SS: Did you take breaks during the day besides at lunch time?

JB: Just the lunch time, that's all. Yep. <sup>It's</sup> Different now. The sawmill they get two breaks now.

AB: Get three breaks. Nine o'clock and two o'clock and lunch, would be three now.

JB: Well, lunch, they shut off. The way we do down there, they just give enough break <sup>just</sup> enough to eat your lunch, and go right on.

SS: That's what it was then?

JB: Yeah. <sup>We don't get only</sup> Ten minute or half an hour or an hour- just enough to eat your lunch and go right back again.

SS: Did you eat your lunch right where you worked?

JB: Yeah.

SS: How many guys did you work with?

JB: We was two firemen and a watertender there, see. The watertender when the fireman sit down to take the lunch then the watertender would come <sup>and fire</sup> in <sup>til</sup> they get through eat the <sup>if</sup> lunch.

SS: Was he really tired when he'd come home at night?

AB: Yes. <sup>Especially</sup> He has to work <sup>the fire</sup> all the time, you know, every day.

JB: Yeah, walking- lot of walking. Got to walk all the time over them fires, see, and hot in the summer, especially.

SS: So you'd be sweating all the time in the summer?

JB: Yes, just about all the time.

SS: Well, I can see five days a week, but seven days sounds a little bit much.

- AB: Sometime he was working overtime.
- JB: Yeah. Somebody don't show up, see, then you have to work until somebody come. Especially at night, didn't show up at night and then you know you gotta stay the rest of the shift. No time and a half for that neither.
- SS: No overtime, huh? The thing that seems important to me - if you could make enough money there to put some away and save up, or if it took you all you made to live on, then you couldn't get ahead. You know, if it took you all the money you were making to raise a family- I think a lot of people did. Did it take all your money pretty much just to raise a family?
- JB: Yes.
- AB: Yeah, he didn't get very high wages, you know. The people really was making the money was people working down like the-
- JB: The gyppo, see, work in the yard, you know.
- AB: *The lumber, whatever they do,* they was making money, *then they* could save money.
- SS: I heard that a lot of Italian people did the lumber piling and that in the yard.
- AB: Yes, they was making money, yeah, you bet.
- JB: The greenchain?
- SS: Yeah.
- JB: Well, they get the same wages *then we got,* the greenchain.
- AB: He work a contract, you know.
- JB: *In* The greenchain?
- SS: That was probably the lumber pilers.
- JB: Oh, the lumber pilers. That's different, yeah. They make money.
- SS: They worked awful hard, too, didn't they?
- JB: Yeah, long hours, too. Sometime they go down early in the morning. *And stick up the lumber.*



But I don't know. I never done anything like that you know, I know just what it is.

SS: Your friends, when you were married and living here; who were the people that you were friendly with? Did you have some people that were close friends? Other couples that you spent time with?

JB: Oh, yes. They not here any more.

AB: <sup>They're both dead.</sup>  
Ecchers, that's the name.

JB: Ecchers. Michelis and Valors.

SS: Who?

JB: Valors.

SS: What kind of name is that?

AB: That a-

SS: Is that an Italian name?

AB: Oh, yes. That Italian name, yeah.

SS: Were most of your close friends from Italy?

AB: Oh, no, no, no. <sup>We find 'em here</sup> They was, you know, like I said <sup>about Princeton.</sup> <sup>was here and the other time was,</sup> probably, out of town <sup>they</sup>.

But still you haven't seen them over there. You just meet them here.

SS: But I meant like the other friends besides them- those other families they weren't Italian, were they? Ecchers?

AB: Yeah, yeah, they Italian. Oh, yeah.

SS: And who was the other family you named?

AB: Michelis.

SS: Were they from Italy, too?

AB: Oh, yes. And from the north, too.

SS: What did you do with your spare time when you weren't at work? You know on the weekends or that sort of thing.

AB: He worked every day, you know. We don't have much spare time.

SS: When did you start working five days a week? When did that change?

- AB: It change about, oh, I don't remember that.
- SS: After World War II?
- AB: No, I think it started before. I think probably you work about ten years working every day, then just started six day, you know. And then five day.
- SS: So you really didn't have time to do things like take a little trip or-?
- AB: Oh, my gosh, <sup>money for that.</sup> we never had any. No way! First three year <sup>after</sup> he was here went down and see his brother in California, and that has been; Craig is eighteen, eh? Graduate from high school about eighteen.
- SS: Who is he, Craig?
- AB: My grandson. Eighteen when you graduate from high school.
- SS: Yeah. Eighteen.
- AB: So it be seventeen year, <sup>first vacation we take</sup> he went to California to see his brother. Well, we take vacation, like up to Laird Park and like that, you know.
- JB: Go to Coeur d'Alene on the Fourth of July.
- AB: Usually the company <sup>they</sup> have picnic every year and sometime at Coeur d'Alene and sometime at Laird Park. We raise our kids, we had a cow and a garden and a peeg, and <sup>a rabbit</sup> we have enough to take care of without---
- JB: Yeah, there has to be somebody at home all the time.
- SS: When you used to get together with your friends; what would you do mostly? Just sit around and talk?
- AB: Yes. You talk about old country most, about old time, you know, thing like that. How they was there and now they were here, <sup>and whatever</sup> you know. No matter how long you gone from your country, never forget it. That's <sup>'s</sup> one thing, you know. <sup>It's still your place.</sup>
- SS: Did you ever go to dances around here?
- AB: No.

- JB: Say, where you from?
- SS: Troy. I didn't grow up there, though. (PAUSE in tape)
- AB: You have to be really lucky some time, you know, people, to get along. But <sup>you</sup> also have to have a <sup>brain for that</sup> and we don't have that, you know. But I mean, you know people smart and they can go to school or something and then you can go someplace, but just common people. <sup>I think</sup> We have a good life here, much better than we used to.
- SS: Well, I don't know if it makes any difference between- if you are common people or if you're not- <sup>language free,</sup> a better job. You speak your,
- AB: <sup>I think if you have an education, more, that counts a lot. You can try for</sup>
- SS: I'm sure that your kids must speak, you know, be just as much at home in this country as anybody whose grandparents and great grandparents were born here. That was your daughter I met, wasn't it?
- AB: Yes, yes.
- SS: She could have been the sixth generation American as far as you could tell.
- AB: Oh, yes, they don't speak any Italian at all. <sup>They only understand a little bit.</sup> Because like I say, when they start to school I try not to talk--<sup>just for that</sup> so I can learn.
- JB: And then they forgot all the Italian.
- AB: And then <sup>when</sup> I learn and then we always speak English, you know. I remember when I got my citizen: paper, oh, my gosh, I was scared to death and I remember the judge say, "Oh, you're doing great." <sup>different to study, what they ask you. BUT I might say yes to something,</sup> <sup>I was like that. Because they give you whatever,</sup> I guess I give the right answer and I didn't have no trouble, but oh, it is a frightening thing you know.
- SS: Did you have to spend a lot of time studying for it?
- AB: I did, quite bit, you know. And learned from <sup>my</sup> kids. <sup>Our family is</sup> it's different

was another girl, 'bout the same age as my girl. And she come over  
 and she had some special with me. Gave me  
 this book, you know about the government, the right and then  
 be here in this country before be a president. Things like that.  
 be elect- who 'supposed to be, how MANY years, and I learnt it.

SS: One thing that I wonder about myself is and I don't really think that there is enough equal opportunity in this country yet. I do feel that the bigshots and the people that have a lot of money have a lot of extra advantages.

AB: Oh, yes, <sup>definetley</sup> I can say that.

SS: That's how I feel about it.

AB: You just take in the trial, you know, like people done something. Rich people done something, they don't get hardly anything, but the poor people just steal some bread probably because he's hungry, but he's got a big <sup>penalty</sup> That isn't fair to me. Because he have the money to buy lawyer and everything like that you know. Then they got hardly anything.

SS: The law- like if somebody embazzles, you know, takes \$50,000 from another company, from his company, and runs away with it, he might get a year in prison or something or two years, and a guy steals a bunch of transistor radios, he'll get twenty.

AB: Yeah, that is not justice. I have to tell you that in the old country there is not that kind of law.

SS: There isn't?

AB: No. The law is for everybody, rich or poor. You don't get away with nothing. I never heard anything in the old country like this here- I don't know now- but all the thing they do <sup>here</sup> - they punish a guy right there then and that <sup>is</sup> the end of that. Because then other people got scart to do that, because they know they be punished. But like here, they do it because they know they can go free, <sup>the more they</sup> do.

They just let it go. Yeah, but over there, that <sup>is</sup> one thing you can say about the law, <sup>the law</sup> is equal and is strong, you know.

SS: That's interesting.

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AB: There is no such a thing here, no such thing, you don't get away <sup>with</sup> nothing, not if you're rich or you're poor.

SS: The Watergate cases were good examples of the way our law works. All the bigshots get- slapping on the wrists.

AB: And so- you betcha.

JB: Just like that girl in San Francisco, you know.

AB: Patty Hearst.

SS: Yeah, Patty Hearst.

AB: She probably get about seven year now. She supposed to be thirty-five- she start at thirty-five year, now she <sup>down</sup> back to seven <sup>probably</sup> by the time they finish -

SS: She'll be out in six months

AB: Right. <sup>could.</sup> Of course, these people, they are millionaires. They can hide anything they

I don't know the girl or anything like that.

JB: But that's the way it goes.

SS: I don't know what it's like around here so much, but I know like in Bovill that a lot of these guys that worked for the company for fifty years or more than fifty years. I know two people out there that are getting thirty dollars a month pension from the company after working for them for over fifty years and they didn't start a pension I guess until after World War II, I guess they didn't have any pension at all. But even so, that's awful low for having spent most of your life working for one company.

AB: <sup>Example</sup> here, my husband. He work twenty-seven and he got fifty dollar. The people ten year now, they probably get two hundred dollars

a month from the same company. That isn't right.

JB: Well, the union.

AB: I know, because the union. But it isn't right, I know. They should go back and start, you know and-

SS: Yeah. They should.

AB: Because after all they work for the company, they build the company  
That's  
up. . the people they did. *All the people just going in now.*

SS: Well, when did he retire?

AB: '65.

SS: '65.

AB: No, '66.

JB: Be ten year now. *Next month.*

SS: When did they go over to the steam turbines?

JB: They still there.

SS: When did they start?

JB: Oh, they started right up when the power plant started up.

SS: Oh, I see.

JB: They used to make their own juice.

SS: Oh, that's right.

AB: They used to heat all the town with <sup>the</sup> steam you know, because the town belong to the company there, *til ten years ago.*

JB: They sold it here about ten or fifteen year ago.

SS: Do you think they- the company made money off the town?

JB: Oh, yeah. (Chuckles)

AB: Yes. They owned the steam from the power plant.

SS: And so they made the profit.

AB: Oh, yeah. *Because they pump those houses, not very much*

but nothing fancy about it. So they really didn't put in too much money.

- AB: The rent<sup>t</sup> that people pay, they take it out from your check. They don't wait for you to go and pay. So the rent<sup>t</sup> was sure, you know. Like there is lot people<sup>now</sup>, you know, they might wait a month or two to pay, and then they just took off and go, you know. But that was sure money because they take<sup>t</sup> it out from your check before you get the money, see.
- SS: Well, you know, they talk about- they used to talk a lot when I studied in the history of the early days, they used to talk about, 'rags to riches'. You know in America anybody could start out in rags and make it to riches.
- AB: <sup>that's what</sup> They think in the old country you just go to America and you get rich right away, you know. That's what I think about it.
- SS: Is that what you grew up believing?
- AB: Yeah, believe in over there, yes they do. They do.
- SS: Well, it isn't the truth.
- AB: It isn't the truth. Probably for a few you know, But most of the people, they have to work like anyplace else. Course, you got opportunity to work here and make life better.
- SS: But to make a lot of money, it seems like a lot of times you do it at somebody else's expense.
- AB: Well, if you want to be an honest person.
- JB: If you<sup>are</sup> a trade man especially, you can do awful good here in this country.
- SS: A trade man, you mean like a plumber or that sort of thing?
- AB: Yes, that right
- SS: Carpenter?
- AB: He never have any chance to do that you know, to learn that.
- SS: There's a big difference between . the skill<sup>ed</sup> unions like the AFL and

then the industrial ~~like~~ the CIO was.

JB: Yep. Of course, take like myself- we had education, yes, but not enough to amount to anything.

AB: <sup>Eight</sup> grade was not very much, you know. Of course in the eighth<sup>+</sup> grade I think they learn high school over there because over there they are more strict, you know. When you go to school, you learn.

SS: Did they have you study Italian history when you were in the eighth grade? Well, history of Italy, I'm talking about.

AB: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SS: With all the renaissance and-

AB: Yes, I used to know it, I don't remember it any more, but <sup>I loved</sup> that. That my best subject. My worse was arithmetic, I never could get that.

SS: The history- the Roman Empire.

AB: Yeah, all this, yeah. We learn all this- <sup>empire, learn all about it.</sup> I like that. <sup>I always did.</sup>

SS: Florence is such a great city, too.

AB: What?

SS: Florence was a great city.

AB: Florence, we never been down there. Course, in those day <sup>they</sup> didn't have no car or anything. Course now they do <sup>too,</sup> they don't have the many they have here, but they do yes. If you <sup>ever</sup> go someplace you had to go on train.

SS: Well, did your good friends that were here, did they stay here til they died?

AB: Yes, uh-huh. Oh, yes.

SS: They were older than you?

AB: Yes, oh, yes. They was much older than we were.



SS: Had most of them been here before you came?

AB: They were here before, yeah.

SS: These couples?

AB: Oh, yeah.

JB: Yep. Now we just about dead. All these people here in Onaway.

AB: Yeah. *Ur and Gambetti and that's it.*

SS: Well, I guess I should get going. I hadn't realized I had stayed here-

AB: I enjoy it.

-----  
SS: to Lewis-

AB: *Two or three times went*  
-----to Lewiston, to Spokane, and two or three went to Lewiston.

SS: And they never did come back?

AB: No.

JB: That the one only one, George and I here.

AB: Here now.

SS: And then *Vinico* is still- he was here-

AB: He was here til he went to Lewiston, yeah. *He was working for the Potlatch.*

SS: Was he here when you first came here?

JB: Oh, yeah.

SS: I've tried to talk to him. Do you ever see him?

AB: Oh, he come up- *(pause in tape)* I never know where they are, but I know them. Oh, yes.

SS: Came over- married and came over.

AB: Oh, they usually come over and get marry, oh, yes. Course usually the man come first, and you know, they get job and everything, you know,

SS: I've heard other times of men going back to get married and then coming back over here. And sometimes they leave their wife behind and then come over.

- AB: Yes, sometime *you don't get a job* and probably that why the reason.
- SS: Did you find it- like I heard like I mentioned before that sometimes women didn't want to come over because they preferred the old country-
- AB: The old life.
- SS: Have you known that to be true in some people?
- AB: In my case, no.
- SS: You, no. But I meant like other women that you knew.
- AB: I really don't know, because like I said, whenever they left over there they <sup>never</sup> come back, you know, they always stay, so they don't like it. Oh, I don't know- *It's pretty hard, no matter what, leave there.*
- I always remember my oldest sister, Maria, she always said, "Don't go over there," she say, "Because if you go, never see you." And I thought I come over <sup>in this country</sup> and just stay here for a few year then go back, you know. *And we was young* and she was right. But I didn't believe her, you know, I say, "Oh, no, I come back and see you again." She say, "No, you never see me." And she was right. And she was quite a bit older than me, about twenty year older. I guess she know what she was saying, what she was talking about.
- SS: Maybe because she had seen it happen before?
- AB: Her husband he was <sup>here</sup> in <sup>the old</sup> country. He was in America and then he went back and he never come back, <sup>here</sup> you know.
- JB: Yeah, I know, I know. And he got kill in the war.
- AB: Yeah. And he was here when he was young boy, then he went back in the old country; marry my sister and then they just stay there.
- SS: And then he went to the war?
- AB: *In* 1914, he went to the war *and in October* in August, he got killed. And they have a little boy, he was born in June and he went to war in August

didn't get to see this little boy and he got killed. He went to the front right away. He didn't even know how to hold a gun or nothing, they just sent 'em in just like a bunch of cows—<sup>and that's it.</sup> they sent 'em to the pasture.

In Greece, you know, when they having the first big fight. <sup>Or whatever it was.</sup>

JB: I guess against Russia.

SS: They were going to send them off to die.

AB: Right. It was <sup>marry</sup> about a year, year and a half, and they had this little boy four months old.

SS: Which sister was this? You had more than one sister?

AB: I had two sisters.

SS: This was not the oldest? The one that was twenty years older?

AB: Yes, this was my oldest sister, the one I was telling you about.

SS: You weren't sure that you would stay here at that time? You thought you might go back?

AB: I thought so, you know.

SS: That you would maybe go back?

AB: Yeah, I thought so for few year then I come back. And she told me, "Don't go, because you never come back." I say, "Oh, yes, I come." I said. And she was right, you know.

SS: But with Jim being a citizen I'd thought he wouldn't be too likely to go back to stay for good.

JB: Well, yeah, yeah. You can come back anytime, you know.

SS: That's true, you could.

ASB: But then, you know, over there <sup>in the town</sup> you can come back, but there isn't anything to do, you don't have nothin' you don't have anything. There no job there, that's for sure.

SS: I wonder what people did do before they could leave the country and go someplace where there was more opportunity.

- AB: Well, lot young boys, I remember they used to go to Trieste or Taranto. That's a big city. And they do job like engineering the train or those kind of job like that. I know lot boy <sup>they</sup> do job like that, you know. In the big city.
- SS: Had people been coming to the United States for a long time, do you think from where you lived?
- AB: I can remember, oh, my gosh, yes. I know from our town, like I said, my husband's sister <sup>they</sup> was married in 1913, I guess, yes, he die- and he was <sup>here already</sup> over and come back, you know before 1913.
- SS: I heard a lot of people were on the section gangs when they were first building the railroads in through this country. They were railroad men.
- AB: Uh-huh. I suppose. I don't know what my brother-in-law was doing, because like I said, I was just a little girl, but I know he was here before he marry my sister. What job <sup>did have</sup> he I don't know.
- SS: Would you say that a lot more people were going to America than anyplace else?
- AB: If they had a chance they could. Oh, yes.
- SS: To me where you lived they would go to America rather than say England or some place.
- AB: Oh, yes. In our town they do. Oh, yes. <sup>'Cause a lot of people</sup> you know, <sup>they</sup> don't have the kind of money to do a big step like that you know- <sup>another thing</sup>
- JB: You know, there no law then, they might change the law, too, <sup>but at that time..</sup>
- AB: It fifty-five year now- fifty-six. year we been here in this country.
- JB: Just can't remember too much about it. (Laughter)
- AB: I remember, I go back I know- to go back there I could fly. But you know we went to Trieste, that was a port, you know, <sup>to the</sup> big boat. And it take <sup>this</sup> teen day to go, and I stay <sup>this</sup> teen day in bed.
- SS: Really, you were that sick?

headache,  
do like that, I get a terrible  
Even know, the waters,

AB: That sick. And when I get off of the boat I said-  
just to mention the boat again make me sick. And I say, "Never, never  
again." I <sup>know</sup> gonna die before I go on another boat, I say. <sup>Because we got a girl in California</sup> A plane is different,  
we went couple time to see <sup>the plane</sup> her in and I just love it. If you don't  
get sick <sup>on the boat</sup> it is a beautiful trip, you know. <sup>great.</sup> You can see so much, it's just  
But if you get sick, forget about it. Couse, in those day they don't  
give you anything, now they have all this medicine. <sup>The view, it was</sup> just perfect. <sup>I could enjoy every minute.</sup> Thirteen days in a boat  
is a long...

SS: When you first came here in 1920, what did the country seem like to  
you?

JB: I come from <sup>France</sup> well, really Belgium. That's where I took  
the boat. <sup>Rotterdam</sup> was a port.

SS: Did you land in New York City?

JB: Well, yeah, we stop in England <sup>a</sup> there little bit and pick up  
some passengers, and then <sup>went</sup> to New York.

SS: Did you then come straight out by train to Wyoming?

JB: Yeah. Four days, and night. Oh, boy, that's a long ways <sup>that just like it is now.</sup> off. I remember  
I never forget that. That a long time to be in a train. (Chuckles)  
Oh, we change it once in Chicago.

SS: Did you talk to anybody on the train?

JB: I can't talk!

AB: Couldn't understand it.

JB: Yeah.

AB: I mean there wasn't any Italian people in the train.

JB: No. In fact, I was alone when I left home and I find people there on  
the boat, you know talk Italian, that all. But after New York then  
I didn't see anybody til I got to Rock Spring then I got some-

body else to talk then.

SS: Your family.

JB: Yeah.

SS: Like you say, like coming home.

JB: Yeah.

SS: Did you ever see any accidents in the mill? Any bad accidents in the sawmill?

JB: No, no, I didn't see any-

AB: You did, too!

JB: I know man got kill when I was down there, but I wasn't there.

AB: He got kill in the same place he was working.

JB: Well, on the greenchain. He was oiling the greenchain and he got tangled up with the overalls and stuff and he got ground up in the greenchain.

AB: The Bergen over there, <sup>remember</sup> Bergen over there.

JB: Oh, yeah,

AB: He was working with you, same place.

JB: That's right. Yeah, he was running the engine and he got kill when he shut it off- and I don't know what happen-

AB: I thought when he go blowing the whistle something fell off-  
He was blowing the whistle-

JB: NO. no, he shut off the engine-

AB: And something backfired-

SS: He shut off the engine, and somehow he got killed?

JB: Yeah. I don't remember just what happen. That's been quite a while ago. I can't remember <sup>right</sup> now just what it is.

SS: This guy who got killed on the greenchain: do you remember who he was?

JB: His name was- Patter- Patter-

AB: Patterson?

JB: <sup>I guess</sup>  
was his name.

AB: Oh, I don't know. I know the other one Jesse-

JB: Huh?

AB: I know Jess Bergen.

JB: The one that got kill there, shut off the engine, his name was Bergen.

AB: Bergen, Jess Bergen?

JB: Jess Bergen. <sup>He was living just a little bit out here.</sup> I don't know just what happen, it been so long, you know. But anyway, he got killed. <sup>there</sup>

SS: Did they call this Onaway when you first came here?

AB: Uh-huh. Oh, yes.

SS: But all it had was the one store? And that was the only place of business here?

AB: Yes. Oh, they had a <sup>little</sup> gas station and sold <sup>little bit</sup> thing, you know, like pop and stuff like that.

SS: I heard that some people would come here to shop instead of in Potlatch. People from Potlatch.

AB: That's <sup>right</sup>. Oh, yes, I remember that, oh, yes. <sup>I don't remember the prices but I don't think they was that much different.</sup> <sup>didn't have no refrigerator</sup>  
In those day we have to go store every day because in those days <sup>we</sup> so whatever you need - especially summertime, you know. If you buy meat-

JB: We used to have a icebox- buy ice, you know to put in it. Just a small thing.

SS: Did you cook on a wood stove?

AB: Oh, yes. Until after the second war, I guess, that <sup>is when</sup> we buy that one. The second war. The end of the second war, I think.

JB: Yeah, right after. Well, they started out before the war- after the war that they couldn't get the part-

- AB: No, he talking about the stove now. When we buy the stove, you know.
- JB: Oh, yeah.
- SS: What were you talking about?
- AB: When we buy this refrigerator, we buy that around the Second World War, too.
- JB: Because I remember they fix it because they didn't put in the right-
- AB: Copper, or whatever they use-
- JB: Copper that-
- AB: I <sup>kinda</sup> like the <sup>wood</sup> stove, you know, I didn't mind. Course it is dirty, you know, that's one thing I don't like about it, but I <sup>kind of miss it.</sup> We still got one down the basement. We use it in winter time, it's cold. Because our house is only with electric heat. Everbody's cold, it's pretty hard to keep <sup>real</sup> warm. We can, but it cost you more. We use that down the basement. I used to can down there. It was kind of stove like this one.
- JB: Used to wash down there.
- SS: Washing used to be a bigger deal, too.
- AB: Oh, my gosh, yes. I get my kids wash <sup>'em</sup> in the tub, you know. Now those kid complaining, they don't know what work is, no way! Washing and drying and everything. <sup>No compare.</sup> And you have to do it, you know, you just do it and you don't think about a thing like that. Do whatever you have to.
- SS: Would you write down the names of those- of your friends? (pause in tape)
- What did the men do for a living? Did they work at the sawmill, too?
- AB: Yes, all three. They all work down the sawmill, don't they?
- JB: Huh?
- SS: What jobs did they do?
- JB: Well, one was kinda mechanic. He fix anything.
- AB: He was a mechanic. He was working there in same place, but course- he <sup>keep up the machinery.</sup>
- SS: Yeah.
- AB: He keeps up the <sup>machinery.</sup> He working steady and he make lot of money- , <sup>pull the lumber.</sup>
- SS: Piling lumber.



- AB: Yeah.
- SS: What about...?
- AB: <sup>John?</sup> He was working in the same place when you did.
- JB: Oh, n o, he was working in the back of the shop. See, they have - they got a *electric truck* and *motor* and stuff and it was all electric, see, and he was charging off the battery down there, stuff like that. That what he was working at- John.
- AB: Yes. Now what was Tony wife name?
- JB: Eda.
- AB: Oh, Eda.
- SS: And they had come - had they all come from the south of Italy?
- AB: No, no, they come more from north.
- SS: They all came from the north.
- AB: Oh, yes from north. <sup>they farther north than we are.</sup> Yes, they talk German real good because they was so close to the border, yes. And in the summertime they used to work for this German, <sup>I guess they had a lot of German people.</sup> They had this big ranch <sup>es</sup> over there, what you call it, I don't know and they work for those people. And so they speak German <sup>real</sup> good .
- SS: You said the Valozs lived- did they live at Princeton?
- AB: What?
- SS: You said one of the families lived as far away as Princeton?
- AB: No, I mean in the old country. <sup>you ask me</sup> If this <sup>family</sup> live in the same town.
- SS: Which family is this that lived so close? To you.
- AB: To me?
- SS: Yes.
- AB: These two here.
- SS: They both lived here?
- AB: Yes. And this one they live a little bit farther up, you know.

- SS: Well, here, where did they live? Did they live in Onaway or Potlatch? These families.
- AB: They live in Onaway, right here. <sup>All three</sup> This family they live in Onaway for many year, and then they moved to Potlatch. This two, they never did. They come over here, they die here, all four.  
*Kind of give you the detail.*
- JB: <sup>^</sup> They come from Italy.
- SS: That's very interesting that they stayed and that you had good close friends that come from near the same place.
- AB: *It's a lot different if you are all alone, you have somebody. Like I say, eventually you talk and make friends. Make a lot of friends.*  
There a lot of American lady that are good to me. You make lot friend. But those lady friend- you know, she can't because she don't talk. I never forget the first time I went to the- <sup>hospital</sup> there was two time <sup>s</sup> when I <sup>had</sup> my kids- *Can you imagine yourself in the hospital and say "How old?" in English?*  
I never forget this lady, she <sup>is still</sup> here and she was the best nurse and she just help me to much. Then was two, three other nurse that they was just young kids, and I thought they was doing nothing and I saw peoples laughing at me you know- End of Side E
- AB: *I'm sure this other girl, I was talking Italian, they were laughing, couldn't be helped, but I thought they were laughing at me. They WAS probably. This girl was a little bit older, this one nurse. I never forget 'em. I still remember.*
- SS: Well, you had these close friends, that probably made it slower for you to speak English, too, since you must have been speaking to them a lot in Italian.
- AB: Of course, <sup>that's no help.</sup> like I say, you just have live it. Jim never talk it of course. *It was pretty hard for him, I suppose. You get your kids, you can do it some. If I don't have probably, this friend around to talk,*  
<sup>^</sup> I think personally you should just go ahead and go to school, you know that the best thing. Take night course or something. That the real <sup>W</sup> way to do it, you know.
- SS: Yes, but it's harder to where you have to go to take the class,

- AB: Yeah, and <sup>in those days</sup> we didn't have no car or anything. You have to go to town of Onaway.
- SS: The people from Italy that left in the Depression? Were they married couples, too, that left.
- AB: Oh, yes.
- SS: I don't think the Greeks were over here in couples around here, the same way. Do you remember?
- AB: I really didn't have much to do with Greeks.
- JB: I think they only got two Greek now, down at Potlatch.
- SS: I don't know anyone besides Gus, I think he's the only one left now. Did you know the <sup>Poviches</sup> at all? There from Elk River and Bovill? They were Austrians. Povich, they called them.
- JB: I didn't know them.
- SS: Of course Elk River just went down all at once.
- JB: Elk River went down...
- AB: Through the depression they just go down. I know a couple of Italian families...
- JB: People up there.
- AB: Now they do a little better, before they just didn't have anything to do- I mean there wasn't any job or anything. <sup>Except people who work out in the woods Logging</sup> they still for Potlatch.
- JB: <sup>I suppose they are.</sup> That all they doing now.
- AB: We know couple Italian family- they was never given a good job up there and they have to leave the house and everything and they move here in Onaway. And then he can't find job here <sup>he went to Lewiston.</sup>

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, July 20, 1977