

ARTHUR SUNDBERG

Fourth Interview

Interviewed by:

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Oral History Project

Latah County Museum Society

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## ARTHUR SUNDBERG

Potlatch; b. 1899

maintenance foreman and lead man at Potlatch mill.

2.5 hrs.

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with Sam Schrager  
August 1, 1975

## II. Transcript

SAM SCHRAGER: This fourth interview with Arthur Sundberg is recorded at his home in Potlatch on August 1, 1975.

SS: First thing that I was thinking of asking you about was the question of working in the mill. You said to me once that it was, "easy hire; easy fire".

AS: Each department in the mill, that is in the whole mill complex, it was divided up into quite a number of different departments, and they had a foreman in each department and that foreman, he hired his ~~own~~ crew and he fired his own crew. That's the way it used to be. And there wasn't any unions or there was no recourse, if you was fired, you was fired. And that's it! Nobody ever thought about going on up, you know, to top management to complain or anything, because that was-- I never even heard tell of such a thing as that you know. They just took it as a matter of course, you know. They'd hire you right on the spot without any interviews, they never--- well, it was customary for a person, particularly a young person asking for a job, the foreman would kind of eye him up and down and see how big he was and how strong he appeared to be and if it was a job working with machinery, the foreman'd probably say, "That guy right over there, you go over <sup>there</sup> and he'll show you what to do." So he'd go over there and that fellow he would -- he'd tell that guy, "Well, the boss sent me over here, you're supposed to show me what to do." And so he'd probably handle a few boards and, "You do it like this." And probably let you try it there for a minute or two and if it looked like you ~~was~~ <sup>could</sup> doing it, he'd just walk off. That was your breaking in period, and it was just up to you to do it! And there was undoubtedly some, you know, that had previous experience or at least had previous experience of being in the department, even though they didn't work there, because they



didn't have any restrictions on visitors. Everybody and anybody, kids or anybody else could just come and go around the mill there. Nobody ever asked 'em any questions as to what they were doing there, so consequently kids that lived in and around that industry, they got quite a bit of firsthand knowledge of what it was all about as they were growing up. I know kids that'd be seven, eight years old or probably younger than that, they were running all over the plant down there. Kids ten or eleven years old that were running all over the logs on the log pond, just trying to stump one another, running on the logs, so the kids got quite a background knowledge of the industry before they went to work.

SS: How many people would be in the average sized crew? How many would the foreman be in charge of?

AS: Well, that would depend a whole lot on what department it was; now then you take, for instance, you'd start in-- well, the log pond had probably four or five men, and when you get up into the sawmill they probably had probably forty or fifty *men*.

SS: For a single foreman?

AS: Yeah. And then get out on the green chain, why, oh, there would be probably twenty men there. Ten men on each side of this chain pulling lumber. Approximately that. Well then, in the days before they had the dry kiln, the lumber used to go from the green chain directly to the lumber yard on these narrow gauge railroad cars. They had, oh, let's see, I think they had eight electric locomotives and these locomotives would haul green lumber-- they would haul about six or eight big units of lumber at a time. They were coupled together by two and a half inch extra heavy pipe, and it had a flat coupler on the end. And each one of these cars had a castiron or caststeel drawhead on each end of the car-- they would put this pipe into that drawhead and then the man had to drop a

pin in that hole. Well, these bars were twenty feet long, so they were pretty heavy. Well, in making up a train there was a motorman and a switchman on each one of the locomotives and they carried these bars on the side of the locomotive on hangers. They would have to take one of these bars, each one of 'em, and they'd go down along the string of cars that had to be pulled out, and they would stick one end of the bar into this coupler and drop a pin in it and then the other end laid on the ground and they would do that for each car, as many as they was gonna haul. Well then, the motorman, the motor operator, he would move ahead a little bit and then the switchman, he would have to lay on the side of the track with this-- he held the end of this bar on his leg, you see, and he would have to gauge that so that it would couple into this drawhead on this car as he backed up on it, then he dropped the pin in, then jump out and go to the next one. And that's the way they made up their train. Well then, they would take it out to the lumberyard. And at that time, in the early days here, there was about twenty-six or twenty-eight alleys in the lumber yard, <sup>it was extended</sup> after that it was made larger, but to begin with-- and then there was double tracks in each alley, and these alleys were about eighteen hundred feet long, something like that. Well then, this motor crew then-- say this tailend unit of lumber, it had to go into alley 4 East. Well, they'd <sup>throw</sup> pull the switch and shove it into alley 4 East and uncouple it and take the bar out and hang the bar back on the 'loxy. The next unit had to go to alley 6 West, so they'd have to switch over and go down into alley 6 West and drop it off. Maybe there'd be two of 'em to drop off. And that's the way they used to distribute 'em. And then it got into that section of the alley, well then, they had a man out there with a horse and he would hook his chain onto that car and he would pull that down and spot it in front of this pile where it was supposed to be piled.

And then the piling crew, they might have to just push it by hand one way or the other to just get it spotted right, and then they would pile it. Well then-- I think there were about five locomotives pulling green lumber and there was three, I think it was, that was pulling dry lumber, but these locomotives that pulled the dry lumber in, <sup>where</sup> they would haul six or eight units of green lumber-- the same size locomotive hauling dry lumber, they would haul eleven, twelve, maybe fourteen units of dry lumber back in. Well, what they done then when they brought it <sup>is</sup> in then they would pull it up behind the planer and there was several tracks, there was a regular switchyard there, and they would just uncouple all of their units right there and stack the bars up on the 'locoy and then go back for another drag. But, I think I told you the planer, it had twenty-two machines in the planer, and there was a track going into each machine. And then there was two tracks going out from each machine; one track was for the lumber that was on grade for that particular order and the other track was for, what they called, outs. You know, that was the lumber that was either higher or lower grade than what was called for and then that unit would be pulled out and ~~it would~~ go to the lumbershed for stacking up.

SS: Then the lumber went through the planer just when it was on order?

AS: Yeah, that's right. It all stayed in the lumberyard rough, except, as I say, the outs, that went to the lumbershed, and of course, they'd had an order for a certain specie and a certain grade and dimension, well, then, whatever they could of that order, they filled that out of the shed, that was already surfaced. And then the remainder come from the lumberyard to be surfaced. But, oh, in the early years, they didn't do any remanufacturing. The only remanufacturing that was done with the surfaced lumber was that this lumber that come into the lumbershed for stacking up, well, it was all graded again in the shed and then it was stacked in dif-

ferent units in this shed for dimension and grade and so on. But if they had say, a number three board and it was a number three because it had a two foot crack on one end of the board, you know, a check, that made it a number three board, where otherwise if that wasn't there it could be a number one board. Well, maybe the man that was grading in the shed; each one of these graders in there had a hand saw and he would saw off two feet of of the end of it by hand and then stack it up. That would upgrade the board. But that's the only remanufacturing that was done in the early days.

SS: You said that the planer mill surfaced the lumber; what do you mean by that?

AS: Well, it was rough lumber when it come in and then when it come out it was smooth. <sup>lumber</sup> You know, it was planed top and bottom and two edges, possibly. And a lot of the lumber in the early days was just-- it was specified as two-side. Well, that meant that it was surfaced on top and bottom. And then, of course, you had other orders that was specified as four-side; that was top and bottom and the two edges, they were surfaced. But there was an awful lot of lumber shipped in the early years, where the edges were never surfaced at all, I think because of the fact that there was a lot of that lumber that the purchaser would remanufacture it himself, and he would smooth up the edges. But anyway, there was, oh, I'd say that it'd be fifty percent of it, or maybe more, that was shipped just surfaced two sides.

SS: What was the relation between the mill and the WI&M Railroad? As far as the transference of the finished lumber to the railroad for shipment out? Was this really run as a separate operation?

AS: It was, but it was entirely owned by the lumber company. But then it was

run as a separate industry. And they had their own method of hiring and operations, and of course, they had to comply with the Interstate Commerce Commission rules on everything. But it was owned entirely by the lumber company, but <sup>then</sup> it was run as an entirely separate industry, see?

SS: These foremen; if you wanted a job in the mill, you would go down there and speak to the foreman in the area where you thought you might want to work?

AS: That's right. You would go to whatever department that you thought you would like to work. Now, for instance out in the lumberyard, they had a foreman for the green lumber pilers, and then they had another foreman for the men that loaded dry lumber, loaded out. And then they had another foreman for the pick-up. Now that pick-up was, it was probably, oh, anywhere from two or three to five or six men in that pick-up crew, but they had a lead man that was called a foreman. And what they done was; any lumber that was-- had fallen off or was scattered, and <sup>then</sup> all these cross pieces that was in the pile you know-- each course of lumber that <sup>they</sup> stacked, it had these one-by-four cross pieces on there so that it would make <sup>air</sup> circulation through the stack. Well, this dry lumber crew, that was loading out; it wasn't too long after the mill started where that went on piece work, on gyppo, you see? <sup>They</sup> Got so much a thousand for loading it out. So what they would do, they'd just throw them one-by-fours off the pile to get 'em out of their road, see? Well, this pick-up crew, they would go up and down the alleys and see that those were all put back up to where they wasn't laying on the rails. Just kind of a housekeeping chore. Well, that was another department. A man might go out in the lumberyard and ask the dry lumber foreman for a job, and he'd say, "Well, right now I'm filled up, I just can't hire anybody right now. But, Old Carl, over there - go over and see him, maybe he needs a man."

So, <sup>you'd</sup> go over and see Carl, he was on pick-up crew, and "Yeah, I can put you on. You start in right away." And you'd work at that for a while, but then after, or maybe in a short while, there'd be an opening in this-- where you wanted to start in the first place in this dry lumber crew, so then, you would-- they needed a man there, so you would go over there and go to work. Then Old Carl, he'd hire another man in his pick-up crew. But ~~each~~ <sup>they</sup> one, they hired their own crew, and, as I say, if it was necessary, <sup>they</sup> would fire.

SS: WAS it too hard to move from job to job, once you were working in the mill?

AS: No, I don't think so. Of course, you had to go and talk to that other foreman, wherever you wanted to go, and he'd say, "Well, where you working now?" "Well, I'm working up in the sawmill." "Well, what's the matter with that?" he'd say. "Well, it's just too noisy, I just want to get out of there." And he might then, the first opportunity, ~~he'd~~ ask the sawmill foreman about it, and say, "Well, so-and-so asked me for a job, what do you think?" "Oh, go ahead and hire him, he's no good here anyway." And, that's the way it'd go, see? (Chuckles)

SS: Then he would hire him, would he?

AS: Oh, yeah. But he might be good in that other <sup>one</sup>, because that's where he wanted to be. Well, it was a far cry from the way it's operated now-a-days, you know. Now-a-days you first <sup>have</sup> to go to the employment office and there you have to be interviewed as to past experience and all that and then they might give you an aptitude test as to-- if they think <sup>that</sup> you can put a round peg in a square hole or a square peg in a round hole!! And then, of course, now it's very seldom that you <sup>can</sup> ~~could~~ go directly into a department or a division of the plant that you would like to go into right at the beginning, because a big percentage of the new hires now-a-

days goes on a extra board list, and you're called out to day shift or night shift and maybe one day you'll work in the power plant and the next day maybe they'll call you out to work in the planing mill, and so if you stay with it you'll finally get to where you want to go.

SS: Would fellows want to move around very much in the old days, or would a guy stay for years?

AS: No, the fact of the matter is; you take the average person working in the lumber industry, my opinion is, that it was just a matter of a job, a matter of making a living for himself and his family, if he had one, and they would go through an awful lot of hardships just in order to keep their job and to be able to provide a living. More so than anybody now-a-days. You take anyone your age, I don't think that the person could paint a picture and really get the idea across as to what people actually had to go through. I say, had to go through, that's probably a good way to put it, but that was just the way things were done and if you was going to survive you had to do it, that was all. Now you take now-a-days you see these young people, the young men,- I know I used to get so disgusted with some of 'em-- they'd come down to work in the morning and they'd have on a pair of jeans, no underwear, they'd probably just a T shirt and a pair of shorts, and a little low pair of socks and a pair of oxfords, and they'd come down there and it'd be below zero!! And there they'd stand and shiver and shake, just like that. Well, you know no man can work dressed like that. You have to be comfortable if you're going to work!! And, you know, in my crew, of course, my crew was maintenance and construction work, but I had men in my crew that would come down dressed that way and I used to tie into 'em and ask 'em why in the world they didn't buy some clothes, and they'd mumble something. But then I always kept a lot of my clothes there; I had clothes enough for

half a dozen men of my own. You know, sheep skin lined overcoats and all kinds of rain gear; pants and coats and overshoes and everything else. Well, gee whiz, ~~them~~ guys were wearing my clothes all the time.

SS: We were talking about back then, we were talking about what they had to put up with.

AS: Back then they used to dress, they knew they had to, and if they didn't- you know a foreman, if the fellow had the audicity to come down on the job in the early days like they do now, dressed the way they do<sup>now</sup>, why the foreman wouldn't give one look, and if he was already employed, he'd can him right on the spot!! They wouldn't put up with anything like that. Them days, you take in the cold weather, there was any number of different combinations of footwear that the men used to wear trying to keep their feet reasonably warm, but there was a lot of 'em that wore what they called German socks. Well they were just a felt boot, you know, they were about so thick and they'd have on wool socks and then they'd have this thing on and then they'd have overshoes over the top of that. But, I guess personally I've tried every kind of <sup>a</sup> combination that's ever been thought of for <sup>the</sup> cold weather and the best thing that I ever found was just a pair of low rubbers, 'course they used to make 'em special for that, they don't make 'em any more like that, but they were heavy, you know but pliable and then have maybe one or two felt liners, you know, insoles in there, and then maybe a pair of light socks, then a pair of heavy woold socks on that. Well that was pliable and flexible, you see. <sup>y</sup> Anything that's stiff on your feet, you'd freeze your feet, because your feet wouldn't have a chance to flex . And then the same with your hands. I don't know whether I was <sup>Probably</sup> among the minority, but I figured it out for myself. Long time ago it was customary for men to wear a pair of wool mittens and the wool mittens would be inside of a pair of leather mittens.



Well, I found out for myself, and I put a good many other men wise to it too, and they followed my theory, was that you could freeze your hands in that combination because inside of this wool mitten you had skin against skin on your fingers there, see? Where you could just wear a cotton glove inside of that wool mitten and stay warm, because you had insulation between your fingers, you see. <sup>(End of side A)</sup> Even right now you go around in the winter-time and you'll see these guys, oh they got to get their hands warm, so they go and buy a pair of wool gloves and then a pair of leather gloves, you know, they got to have a leather glove, mitten to handle lumber with. But, their hands are cold, and it's just because your skin is coming in contact with the skin on the other finger, where if you had some insulation between the <sup>of</sup> fingers, then you would stay warm.

SS: How tough was it for these guys in the crews with the foreman? I've heard about brownnosing, for example--

AS: Well, that's true. You would probably find, in some crews, you know, might be one or two in the crew that was always brownnosing around the boss, you know. Trying to win favors. Every chance they got they would slip around the boss, "John Doe over there, he done this or he done that." Trying to get that guy in trouble and make <sup>me</sup> him a little higher in the esteem <sup>of the eyes</sup> of the boss. But I wouldn't say that that was the prevailing thing. It was-- you'd find that maybe with some and then some that wouldn't work at all, you know. Maybe there was some foreman that just wouldn't put up with that kind of stuff. If there was any investigations as to anything that wasn't supposed to be, he'd <sup>figure it out he'd</sup> find that out for himself. But then, there was some foremen that, well, they lacked the intelligence and the experience of a foreman, so they relied on some of these other guys bringing stuff to 'em, you see? You know, if a person doesn't have the qualifications for a foreman, well then, he might

have to resort to some of that stuff. And then, there was some foremen that done an awful lot of brownnosing to the superintendent, too, you know. And of course, that's just as far up as they could go, they never got up to the management top; top management.

SS: Would that be making himself look good at the expense of his crew?

AS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Or somebody else's crew. Now there's been instances where one foreman of say a small crew, he would try to get the idea over to the superintendent that he could run his own crew and your crew! Combine the two together; he could run it all. And maybe if that was done, maybe it wouldn't be too long until he'd want to take in another crew. Well, that would keep snowballing and pretty soon he'd be a superintendent, wouldn't he? 'Cause he'd be running the whole show!! And there was men that had those ambitions. 'Course most of 'em was kinda picked in the bud, they didn't get too far. They did multiply a little bit, but they always stopped it before it got too far along. If a man had a crew here maybe of ten men, well, maybe he was capable of combining his crew with another crew and making it all in one. There was some people that had the capability of doing that, and then there was probably some too that wanted to do that and maybe they had an opportunity to do it, then after they got it they found out they couldn't handle it. Well then, they would get one of their subordinates to take over part of it, you see? Part of the load. Oh, there are lots of different combinations you know that can be worked out.

SS: Sounds like there was a great degree of flexibility in the set up to get that kind of thing. You could have actually, let's say, subdivide your crew and the foreman have one of your men run part of the crew. Sounds like it wasn't too highly structured, is what I'm saying.

AS: Well, that's true, but this subordinate to the foreman, he didn't get any

recognition of being a leader or anything else. That was just between him and his foreman, you know, and he didn't get any extra pay. It was just <sup>kind of</sup> making him look good to his boss, that was all. A glory thing, you know, he didn't get any extra compensation for it or anything of the kind.

SS: I've heard it said that whether or not you had a good foreman is what made all the difference.

AS: Well, that's very true. They did have some awful good foremen, and where they did, the only way that you could ever find an opening in that particular department would be that <sup>somebody</sup> would die. It was a lifetime job for a lot of men. They worked in one department their entire life, and that was it. They didn't have any desire to work anywhere else, because they liked John Doe as a foreman and they got along good and he was fair and he never asked anything of any of his men that was unreasonable, and consequently they liked to work there, so they wanted to stay there. There was a lot of that, you know. It wasn't all just tooth and claw theory at all. There was a lot of contentment, although they worked hard. But you know, the average man that worked in the industry in the earlier days, by the time he got his day's work in and he got home and he got his supper, he would probably sit down and read the newspaper for a few minutes and then pile into bed. Because he had it for that day, because he was tired; he was tired right down to the bone. And then he would get up the next morning and do it all over again. And that was the routine of the average. And I don't think they complained about it too much, because they didn't know anything different. That's the only thing they ever seen and that's the only thing they ever knew. That's the way their dad lived and that's the way their granddad lived, and it was sunup til dark and pile into bed and the next morning start all over again.

SS: Did most of these folks who just worked in the mill like that-- I know

I've asked you something like that before-- but this makes me think about that again. Did most of them make money while they were doing this? Did they save money?

AS: Very few. Very few. They had to be very frugal. And a man and his wife had to work in very, very close harmony in order to save any money. It was just-- for the average person in the industry-- it was just a hand-to-mouth existence. And that's the reason that they just couldn't afford to take any time off. And it was just almost entirely unheard of for anybody, outside of-- get up into the upper echelons of the industry-- anybody ever taking a vacation. It was six days a week and ten hours a day. There was some men that had jobs that was seven days a week, twelve hours a day. And they just seemed to like it; it was just a way of life, and they just keep agoin' that way. <sup>It WAS</sup> Twelve hours a day and seven days a week.

SS: Did many people have ambition to become foremen?

AS: Well, 'course I don't know the percentage. I think the average person, if the opportunity was offered to him, he would probably like to at least try it because of the fact that he probably would get away from the hard work part of it, you know, because the foreman he would be just patrolling in his department and seeing that everything was clicking the way it should be. And of course, he had to be a man that would make some decisions. You take, oh for instance now, the crew that was loading out dry lumber in the lumberyard, they had just a little cubicle of a shack right in the center of the lumberyard, and there was a man that his job was to write out tickets for these units of lumber. And they was all written out in duplicate. And this hard sheet- I think I explained ~~that~~ to you once before-- that they used on the boxcars where they loaded out, this hard sheet would come out to this man in the lumberyard, and this call<sup>ed</sup> for twenty thousand feet of a certain size and a certain grade and a certain

specie of lumber, and then maybe there'd <sup>be</sup> another ten thousand feet of something else. Well, you could only load out about two and a half thousand feet on one of these cars, so consequently he would have to write out several tickets, you know, because there was one copy of that ticket had to go with the car, that is, with the unit into the planer, And I said it was made in duplicate, I think it was made in about four copies, because the crew that loaded it out, they would keep one copy, and then they would stick the rest of them <sup>in</sup> between two boards in the load, see, they would raise the board up and lay the tickets down and lay this on top and then they would indicate where the ticket was by either a stick, or maybe if they had a crayon, <sup>they'd</sup> make a mark there. Well the, when it got into the planer they would keep one ticket, and then one ticket would have to go to the car where they loaded it. And of course, these tickets all had to coincide as to-- that way they kept track of what was going to the car, although the checker on the dock, he would have to count the pieces in each load and put the exact scale down on this hard sheet as to ~~just~~ what it was. But that's the way they handled that part of it. But then the foreman, he had to make a decision sometimes, because-- you and I was a crew, two men in a crew that was stacking out lumber, so we'd go in there and this fellow in there he would hand us the whole stack of tickets; maybe enough to run us for the entire day, and so we'd look 'em over and this called for a certain specie and grade, and this man in this little house there he would have to put down the pile number, because every pile in the lumberyard was numbered, so you would go there to this pile, that number that was indicated, and when you got there maybe there wasn't enough lumber left in that pile to make or fill out that unit, so you'd see the foreman going by and you'd holler at him and he'd come over and say, "Got this ticket here for so much and there isn't enough in this

pile." So he would give you authority to go to another pile of the same specie and grade and so on, and then it was up to him to go back and make this correction known to this man that was writing out the tickets, see? And, he had to make decisions, but they <sup>usually</sup> <sub>^</sub> were small decisions, they wasn't anything big, And then of course, he had to intervene-- you take where crews were gyping it was just a dog-eat-dog proposition, because-- for instance now, these little railroad cars, they were quite heavy; they were made out of heavy timber and heavy castiron wheels and all that, but they didn't have any power of their own. So, if you and I were, say loading out, and we had ten tickets here, we had to have ten of those cars. Well, we would go anyplace <sup>where</sup> <sub>^</sub> we could find an empty car standing and grab that car. But if that car was in an alley and it had a stick stuck into it to indicate that it was ~~already~~ taken, then you couldn't touch it; if you did, you got in bad! So, you'd probably have to go clear back to the loading dock where they was emptying these cars, and you'd have to push them by hand, clear out to the lumberyard!! And these guys were eager beavers, you know. Two of ~~those~~ cars would probably be a good load for two men, they would probably take six or eight, you know, and bump 'em right together and push the whole string up. Well, they had one man on the plant that it was his job to go around and oil these cars, you know, the journals on these cars, but undoubtedly would miss some of 'em, you know, and sometimes those journals got pretty dry and they moved awful hard. But sometimes they'd get into a squabble over some of them being hoggish, and they was, say, they was ten empty cars on the dock, and there was three crews looking for cars, and one crew tried to grab 'em all, then there'd be a squabble! You was supposed to share. Well then, it was probably up to the foreman to make a little settlement there, you know, he'd have to intervene because that's the way it goes when they're

gyppoing, they get pretty eager.

You know we lived, as you're coming into town, you know this row of houses out there on the flat, they're just opposite the lumberyard, we lived there for a while. And in the summertime we could hear <sup>them</sup> boards aslappin' down in the lumberyard there three and four o'clock in the morning! And you could hear 'em out there at nine o'clock at night! But they was working gyppo and some of them men were really tough and so in order to make what they thought was a lot of money, they'd be out there at three o'clock in the morning, either loading or unloading lumber and you'd hear those boards aslapping down as they throwed 'em down, you know. And instead of working a ten hour day they'd probably work a fourteen hour or sixteen hour day!! There was no limit, they didn't care if you went out there and worked a double shift every day, that was fine as long as there was lumber there to handle.

SS: What was the <sup>theory</sup> of gyppoing? I'm curious about that. Was that a practice that was instituted after the mill had been going for a while?

AS: Oh, yeah, yeah. But it was put in as an incentive-- a gyppo crew is bound to be more productive in the course of a day than a crew that's working by the hour. Because a crew that's working by the hour, it's only reasonable to assume that wherever possible they'll drag their feet, you know. You take even a man that's working with machinery, now like a man that's feeding a machine, putting the lumber into a machine, then there's another man has to take it away from the machine; well now, that machine has to keep running, but they would have an extra crew of men there; relief men that was supposed to relieve a man on the job without stopping the machine. Well, a reasonable time of relief would probably be ten minutes or fifteen minutes at the most. But, if they were working by the hour, well, that ten or fifteen minutes could drag into twenty

or twenty-five or thirty minutes and longer, you know.

SS: This was just for a break?

AS: Well, yeah. They would probably have to relieve themselves or go to the toilet. That was about the only excuse that you had to leave your post. But some of 'em really took advantage of it because, they figured, "Oh well, I might as well rest a while because John Doe, he's running it while I'm gone." Well, there was one bad thing about that, and that was that maybe they had one relief man in the department, and he was supposed to relieve that whole department, maybe ten or fifteen men in there. But if several of 'em took too much time then the others didn't get any time. And it was up to the foreman to kind of watch some of those things and see that they didn't get clear out of hand. Well, when they went on gyppo work and they got paid by the thousand feet of lumber that they handled, well then, they got eager and they didn't want any time off. And when the noonhour come they'd gulp down a sandwich or two and then they wouldn't take off the full noonhour, but they'd just eat a bite and then go <sup>right</sup> back to work. Starting time in the morning? Well, instead of starting at seven o'clock, well, they'd be down there at six and get squared around and then they'd start to work. And then when the quitting whistle'd blow at night, they'd say, "Well, we've only got one unit left to go to finish out this bunch of tickets, so let's just stay and finish that out." That was the incentive that they built up with this piecework, you see. But then these eager beavers cut their ~~own~~ throat and the other's too, because when they got to figuring out the payroll, if the average pay was, say two dollars and a half a day, and here was some men that was making five dollars a day, well then they'd say, "We're paying too much for this gyppo." So instead of increasing the gyppo they would probably cut it a little bit. Well, then they had to work that much harder in order to make



that five dollars. I think I told you before, that the time I loaded cars on the loading dock we got fifteen cents a thousand, that was divided between two men. Well now, a thousand feet of lumber, it makes a pretty good sized pile of lumber, and you had to push that into a boxcar and the man inside had to stack it up for fifteen cents. But then, even there in <sup>the</sup> loading cars, if the lumber was run, waiting to be put in the cars, there was some of those crews there, they put in several hours sometimes overtime. Well, then when they was making up the payroll here was this crew here, "Look at how much money they ~~are~~ making. We're paying them too much." You see, that's what would build up from that, you know.

SS: Do you think that it discouraged the guys who were working on an hourly wage, to an extent?

AS: Oh, no. No. No, it didn't brush off on them, I don't think. Unless they wanted to transfer from a job on an hourly wage to a job that was on gyppo. And if they wanted to gyppo, <sup>well</sup> ~~why~~ then, the reason they wanted to gyppo was they figured they was just man enough to earn more money. But you had to earn it, there was no other way of getting it.

SS: Do you know about when they started to gyppo at Potlatch?

AS: No.

SS: They were doing it by the time you were-- ? 17?

AS: Well, no. Well, yeah, they were-- but then it was just-- 'Course, the gyppo, the only place <sup>that</sup> they worked on gyppo was piling green lumber, loading out dry lumber and loading the boxcars. And you take the pond and sawmill and green chain-- well, they had part of the planer, they got that on gyppo, but it didn't stay as long as it did in these other departments, because-- you take your earnings in the planer was pretty much controlled because you were assigned to one machine, that was your station, you see, and you couldn't earn any more than what lumber was as-

signed to that machine, so there was really not much incentive there ~~for~~ for gypso. And then of course, the power department, you know the power plant why, you know that was day work. Fact of the matter is, you take the fellows that worked in the power plant in the early years, they worked twelve hours a day and seven days a week. <sup>(End of Side B)</sup> It was just a common <sup>PAY</sup> thing. And ~~then~~ then the night watchmen, well, there was three different routes and the one that-- part of his route took him through the sawmill, he could get in there out of the weather and probably get warmed up for a few minutes once every hour, then the one that took in the planer, and of course, the dry sheds and part of the lumber yard once every hour he could duck into the power house at the planer to get warmed up for a few minutes. But then the watchman that was out in the lumber yard, he didn't have any shelter or no place to go to get warm, because he was right out in the open. You see, all three routes took in part of the lumber yard, but then there was one route that took in the far part, see, so he never had-- and he had to make his rounds once every hour. And each one of 'em was long enough so that just at a slow walk it took you a full hour to make a turn. And <sup>take</sup> in the wintertime when the snow was deep, that one in the lumberyard he had a pretty row to hoe because he had to make his own trail, the snow kept piling up and that was twelve hours a day and seven days a week.

SS: A eighty-four work week!

AS: Then the men that worked in the pump house, <sup>course</sup> that was a nice job 'cause it was warm in there, they run the pumps by steam and everything was nice and warm. Their job consisted mostly of just keeping everything polished and wiped off nice and clean. Everything was painted up bright, you know. Red. But then they had to be there to see that everything was functioning right because these pumps, they worked off 'n a governer, and as the pressure would drop in the water mains, why then these pumps would increase

their speed. But anyway, there was two men that worked in the pump house one on the day shift and one on the night shift; twelve hours a day and seven days a week. And everybody was happy as they could be, because they had a job but nobody accumulated any money.

SS: Were there ever cases where you can remember where the foreman was so disliked by his men, by his crew, that they managed to get rid of him?

AS: There was a good many cases. There was a few cases right here, but you take ~~take~~ throughout the industry there was ever so many cases where the crew, someone in the crew would actually just beat the tar out of the foreman. <sup>physically</sup> Black his eyes and beat him up until he couldn't walk. And some of these foremen were just disliked that much, you know. You take, I don't know whether you in some of your interviews on the lumbering here, if you---probably been some mention made about Charlie Peterson that was a superintendent here for years? Well, when I first knew him he was a yard foreman, and he was one of those brownnose, eager beavers, and he got to be superintendent. But there was more than once when he would wear black glasses for a week or two at a time to cover up these black <sup>eyes</sup> where somebody just beat the tar out of him. And I know there was for a long time there <sup>that</sup> he used to patrol the lumber yard there on a saddle horse, because if some guy'd take after him, he could outrun him with a saddle horse, get out of his way. Well, that's just how much they thought of him. But anyway, he got up to be superintendent, that is a shipping superintendent. 'Course he was <sup>a</sup> superintendent of everything outside of the sawmill, that is he was superintendent of all of the lumberyard and the planer and the shipping dock and all that, you know. And <sup>right</sup> at the last of his career, they moved him down to Lewiston as a consultant and he was a big shot down at the Lewiston plant, you know. So as far as the company was concerned he really <sup>worked</sup> pushed his way up in the ~~eyes~~ of the company. But as far as his

education was concerned, I know that I went to school with his oldest boy, he had two boys, and it was common knowledge that these kids was teaching their dad how to read and write. But still he got to be a superintendent, and it was mostly just brownnose that got him there, but then he was successful.

SS: I would think that if you couldn't get along too well with the men, if the men the men didn't respect him, that it would make it a lot more difficult <sup>y</sup> rise--

AS: That didn't have anything to do as far as management was concerned. They didn't operate a corporation a long time ago, <sup>anything</sup> like they do now. Now, you know any man in any branch of management is really screened as to his capabilities. And industry now-a-days, every lead man, every foreman, every superintendent and every manager goes through just a continual process of education and of reeducation, as far as his getting along with people and being able to handle people and all that sort of thing. But that's something that was never even dream<sup>t</sup> of years ago.

SS: In those days, it didn't matter as far as company was concerned, it didn't matter whether or not-- the qualities they were looking for in foreman or superintendents were not necessarily ability to get along with the men.

AS: No, it was production. Production. If they could point to the production sheet and say, "Looky here now, we averaged two hundred thousand feet a day through this department at a cost of so many dollars, that was it. It never went any further than that. <sup>That was it.</sup> They didn't care whether John Doe didn't like the foreman or anything else, that didn't enter into it at all. It was so much production for so much cost.

SS: Did the foremen have a lot of directives, a lot of instructions on how to operate from the superintendents?

AS: No, 'course I couldn't answer that positively, because usually if there was any conference between the superintendent and the foreman, why, that was usually in private. It might be behind a lumber pile, but then it'd still be in private. And it's hard to say what their conversations were all about. They might be talking about the score of the last Sunday's baseball game as far as I'm concerned. But, yet, you take if a man was assigned the job as a foreman of a crew, then it was up to him to see that that crew turned out so much work, you see. And handled so much lumber, and if he couldn't do it, well, then they would move him out and put somebody else in as foreman. And of course, when they got down to the foreman in most cases they got along pretty good, because actually the foreman yesterday was just one of the crew, you see. Personalities didn't change very much, you know, he was probably chosen to be foreman because he showed some ability to lead and to carry on this particular job. But paywise, why, they would probably be two and a half cents an hour or five cents an hour, at the very most, difference between what the foreman got and what the men in his crew got. It was mostly just that he wasn't doing the physical labor that <sup>your</sup> the crew was doing, but you didn't get much extra pay either.

SS: Do you think the foremen were under much more pressure than the crew, as far as the pressure is concerned?

AS: Well, yeah, <sup>there is,</sup> because as far as the crew was concerned there was very little mental pressure there. It was just a matter of physical pressure. It was just hard labor. But the foreman, he was right in the middle between these other two. He was in the middle between the superintendent that demanded these things and the men that had to perform these things. So, you see, he was right there in the middle and he had to try to make

both of these groups happy, see? So the foreman was always under a lot more pressure that way.

SS: Would most foremen mind if the guys wanted to sneak a smoke? Get off work, have a little rest?

AS: Well, some of 'em, I think possibly in order to <sup>kind of</sup> further their own interests, they wouldn't have to see it or catch a man at it. But if some brownnose <sup>he even</sup> come and tell him that, "John Doe, he's out there in the can smoking." Well, he'd probably write out his time,; give him his time. And then maybe another foreman under the same circumstances, he would say, "Now listen, I know you're smoking, <sup>out there</sup> and you know it's against the rules, but you'd better watch it and be darn sure that nobody catches you at, because if this is reported another time or two, the only thing I can do is let you go." You know he <sup>would</sup> ~~try~~ to ~~reason~~ with him. So there's a difference in personalities in that respect.

SS: You wouldn't find a foreman who'd just likely just approve it, "It's Ok."

AS: Well, it depends a whole lot on the location too, you know. In the early years there was an awful lot of Bull Durham and Duke's Mixture that was smoked and you could smell that darn stuff for quite a ways, and you take these toilets that they had around the plant, was just a hole in the ground with a building set on top of it and you set down on a two-by-four and there was no partitions or no sign of any privacy at all, and then each one of 'em-- these buildings-- they had a cupalo on top for a ventilator. But, you know, you could walk past one of those and you could probably be possibly in some cases up to a hundred feet away, walking past and you could smell this Bull Durham, you'd know that somebody was in there smoking!! (Chuckles)

SS: Was there often pretty good friendships between foremen and the man?

AS: Yeah, lot of it. Yeah, they had a few foremen around that got out a lot

of production and still they got along so well with the men that the men would just actually, literally, lay their lives down on the line for them, you know. They just liked their boss that much because he was just an awful nice fellow. You know this idea of a boss being a Simon Legree<sup>e</sup>, that was pretty much in the minority, that wasn't really the thing that prevailed all over, but it did in some instances, but there was a lot of 'em that were just really good fellows. They were kind and considerate and I think it really paid off for them because the men didn't try to take advantage of 'em, because they were considerate.

SS: How was it that you got to become foreman? How did that come about?

AS: Oh, I don't know, I didn't ask for it. I think it was <sup>just</sup> something that just kinda, just that the ball <sup>just</sup> happened to roll and stop right there or something. But I think that a man's got to show some qualifications and some ability to lead. Now then, when you start out, you take in my case, and I suppose a good many others, <sup>where</sup> a person would start out just as a lead man, and you'd probably have maybe one man working with you, and maybe there'd be several, but then, anyway, the real foreman or the superintendent, whatever it might be would give the instructions to the lead man as to what he wanted, then it was up to the lead man to understand exactly what he wanted and go ahead with it and put that theory over <sup>then</sup> to these men that was working with him. That made him a lead man. Well then, you work that way for a while, then maybe something would come up to where there was some expansion and then this lead man was made a foreman, and he had more responsibility, took in a bigger scope; probably more men and that's just the way it develops.

SS: Was that something like what happened in your case?

AS: I think so. At least that's the way I always felt about it.

SS: What crew were you on when you became a lead man?

AS: Well, I was the steamfitter in the sawmill. And they had a big modernization program going on where they done a lot of new construction and where they had to make a lot of changes-- physical changes in the plant. And so being as I was a steamfitter, well then there was a lot-- fact of the matter is, the whole sawmill was all completely repiped and changes put in. They put in a big low pressure turbine for generating electricity and so all this exhaust from all these different components in the sawmill that used steam; take the shotgun that drove the carriages and all these steam cylinders, jump cylinders all over, they used to exhaust into the atmosphere. All that exhaust had to be captured and put into a system that went to the <sup>3</sup>turbin that generated electricity. So there was a big job come up, you know, and of course, being as I was working as a steamfitter before this job come on, well then, it was only natural that they put men with me, you know, to carry on some of this work well, <sup>then</sup> it developed from that bigger things and so on. <sup>To where</sup> The last job that I done was to completely change the whole sawmill and you take all this wooden structure that supported the sawmill, we took that out and put in steel, we took out all the wooden floors on the bottom and put in fills and concrete floors and all steel columns and steel beams and changed the machinery around and took a lot of the machinery out and put other machinery in and rebuilt the entire sawmill. And then I retired.

SS: When was the first foreman job that you had; when you did this first changeover?

AS: That was in 1924, and then I retired in 1964, so that was a period of about forty years, that I put in there as a lead man and foreman.

SS: How would you say that your own attitude about the way to deal with the men working with you fit? What was that when you were a foreman and lead man?



SS: Well, I had the opportunity right up until the time I retired of pretty much choosing anybody that worked in my crew, although they did come through the employment office, but I could either take 'em or leave 'em. And then every man that's hired in the latter years, why, he wasn't considered as a permanent employee until he had put in thirty days. So if something would show up in a man's work or his qualifications within that thirty days, well then, you can turn him back to the employment office. But that's something that didn't happen very often, except where we had a big job and had a lot of extra men. I know we had to have some extra welders one time and so they sent some up from the plant at Lewiston to help us out. Well, <sup>there WAS</sup> <sub>^</sub> this one guy in particular that they sent up here, he was probably misinformed as to the job that we wanted him to do but all he wanted to do was stand there with a stinger in his hand, and any work that got done, why, somebody else had to do it, and then when they got it all laid down, then he would weld it. That didn't work out in what we wanted, we wanted a man that could lay out steel, cut it, fabricate it, put it in place and weld it. So I sent him back to Lewiston. I couldn't use him at all, because I had other men that was doing what we wanted to do and I couldn't have one man just standing there as a king pin, just all he done was just held the stinger. And then, for tearing out timbers and stuff, we had a lot of bullgang work you know, and it was just men that was just-- grunt men, you know-- some of 'em would-- were real good and then others wouldn't qualify at all, because it was a fact that they were afraid. Things around 'em scared 'em and they'd just stand there and they wouldn't touch a thing unless you was right there to tell 'em, "Take ahold of that and lift on that." "Help them men lift that timber." And you couldn't do that all the time. So what you got to do, <sup>you had to</sup> <sub>^</sub> just weed 'em out. You'd have men that if there was timbers to be moved--

if there was three men to do it, then all three men had to do their equal part. And those are some of the conditions that you would run into.

SS: Did you think of yourself as being tough with the men?

AS: No, never. Never, because I worked-- I was just one of the workmen for so darn long that I don't think that you could go through some of the old time books and find some of these fellows and ask 'em about it-- I don't believe that any of them would tell you that I was tough, because that's something that I never wanted to be.

SS: I don't believe from the way you talk, you would have been. I'm sure that you'd be fairly understanding.

AS: Well, you know when you got men that are qualified to do the work, and are journeymen carpenters or welders or whatever it might be, well, you know it just kind of falls into a routine there that every morning you would probably roll out some blueprints and say, "Well, now, this is it, we're gonna do this today, this section right here!" They'd understand what you was talking about, and maybe there was some details that they'd want to ask questions about. And during the day they'd want to come back and check on the blue prints and whatever the work might be, and you just worked right with them and explained to 'em what it was and everything was fine. They just went ahead with their work and everything was fine.

SS: What about your experience with the higher-ups back in the earlier days, I'm thinking of the '20's?

AS: Well, I got along good with the lower echelons of the higher-ups, but then the top brass, I didn't get along with 'em at all! One reason for that was that-- you know, going back to the days of the IWWs, you know they were-- I think possibly that they created a lot of difficulties, but then they were blamed for a lot of things too, that they shouldn't have been blamed for. That is my personal belief. <sup>(End of side C)</sup> Wobblies, they were called. Of

course what they were trying to do was to organize the men. They started out in the logging camps, you know. Then of course, they never got down around <sup>the</sup> ~~any~~ lumber mills much. But anyway, it put enough scare in the top management of the lumber industry to where the lumber industry formed and developed a union. It was run by management. But it was supposed to be a union for the men, see? Because what they wanted to do was to keep organized labor out, ~~of it~~. So this union that was developed was called the Four Ls. Let's see, The Loyal Labor--

SS: Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen.

AS: That's what it was. <sup>ANYWAY, IT WAS 4-LS</sup> Well, that was just one hundred percent controlled by the management, you know. And there was some representative of the management that sat in on every meeting. Of course they tried to make the men think that they had a union, you know, and they was running things. Well, then of course,-- I believe the Supreme Court made a ruling after a few years-- it might not have been the Supreme Court, but anyway, there was a ruling made that this Four Ls was illegal, because it had members of management as part of the <sup>g</sup>governing board. Well then, they tried to develop another kind of a lumber union and they operated that for a few years where management didn't take an active role in the meetings, but they did from the outside, see? They had men that represented them, so it was really not much difference than the Four Ls. So finally organized labor, they come in, and they tried to organize. And of course, this town here, this company, was a closed town, you see, the company owned all the houses, they owned everything. So they wouldn't rent 'em a hall. These labor organizers, they wouldn't rent them a hall to meet in. So they went over here to Onaway to a independently owned hall and they advertised that they was going to have some meetings over there. So just through curiosity most of the guys working here would go over there and hear what

them guys had to say. And of course, I was one of 'em. Well, it finally got down to where they took a show of hands as to whether or not the men in this hall at that particular meeting thought that they should try to organize. And of course, the hands went up all over the place, so it made 'em think that they wanted a union. Well then, they come down to the point where they was going to choose somebody to represent them to the management as an organized union. Well then, everybody hung back, nobody wanted that job! They all wanted to join. And so, I don't know, some of them, they pointed their finger at me and I said, "No, I don't want it." Just like the rest of 'em. "Ah, come on, come on, just until we get organized, see, then we'll have an election and we'll elect somebody else permanently." And I said, "Well, if that's what you want, OK to get the thing started." So I was appointed to represent the organized labor, and it was up to me to go and confront the top man, you know. So I asked for an appointment. I called the secretary and asked for an appointment to see him. And of course, the word got there long before I did, because there was stool pigeons all over the place. And so of course, he didn't have anything-- he couldn't help himself, he had to grant this interview, because the law was starting to get tough. So when I come into his office he was setting there at this big desk, and boy, his face was just white! He was so durn mad, you know. And so, I talked to him and asked about wanting to rent a hall, so he couldn't refuse me, because the law was on my side, see, in that respect. But, gosh, he was just sitting there gritting his teeth, he was just white. And so, we got the thing started and that's as far as I ever went. But, from that day until the day that that man died he hated my guts!! But still and all, I did raise up in job catagories <sup>on</sup> around the plant, but not because he wanted me to, it was just 'cause my own hard work and ability <sup>that</sup> put me up, not because he had anything

to do with giving me any promotions at all.

SS: Is that all you spoke to him about, was renting a hall?

AS: That's right, and <sup>then</sup> telling him that we were going to organize a union. But I was the fall guy. <sup>Right there.</sup> If they was going to organize a union somebody had to do it, but I was never elected to be the president of the union or nothing else, I was just appointed temporarily, see? But, boy, he hated my guts, <sup>I tell you,</sup> because I was the one that brought the news to him that they were going to do that. If I hadn't of, somebody else would have eventually done it anyway, I suppose.

SS: What year was this?

AS: Oh, gosh, I don't know. It was about the time that they passed that Taft-Hartley Law. I can't tell you what year that was.

SS: Was it before the Depression?

AS: No, no. It was after the Depression.

SS: Was it the AFL or what was the big over-all union that was coming in?

AS: Well, the AF of L is the one that started it, you know. They was men that represented the meatcutters' union in Spokane, they come down here and there was men that represented the steelworkers and they was men from different groups of the AF of L that come down here to organize this thing. And, boy, I'll tell you right now, when organized labor gets the bit in their teeth, they're going to do something. They're going to just about do it. Well then, of course, they got this lumber union the IWA-- isn't it something like that they call it?

SS: I don't know the name.

AS: But anyway, it's affiliated-- it's strictly a lumber union but it's affiliated with the-- well, I don't know, it's been so long since I've had anything to do with any of them that I've forgotten--

SS: Was it hard for them to organize at that time, when they came in here?

AS: No, no it wasn't. You know some missionary, evangelist can come in and set up a tent or rent a hall and the people come there just through curiosity and before the night's over, <sup>with</sup> maybe that evangelist has converted a hundred people! But then maybe the next day they've lost most of their conversion. And that's the way it is with organized labor. You know they put up a few handbills here and there and they get the word out they're gonna have a meeting and they want everybody to come out! Well, everybody's curious as to what they've got to say and what they got to propose, so they come out and they tell 'em, you know that, "You've got to organize because, if you don't you're just gonna work for these small wages the rest of your life. If you're ever gonna get anywhere, you've got to organize." Sure, everybody'll write their names down on the cards, fine, it only cost you two dollars to join and it'll only cost you a dollar and a half a month <sup>for</sup> dues, you know, there's nothing to it. Well, the average union member, all he does, all he contributes towards organized labor is pay his dues. But it's these-- well the organizers and the officers of the union is the ones that really does all of the work and gets all of these raises and gets all these different benefits, <sup>that men finally gets</sup> but the average union member, all he does is pay his dues. That's all he ever contributes to being a union member.

SS: Do you know why you decided to take the ball in that case and go to the "big cheese?"

AS: oh, no, but I don't know, it's just-- some people are just born kinda cut out for doing things or moving things, you know, somebody's got to be a prime mover on things and it comes natural to some people. You take as far as you being able to speak in front of an audience, that's something that never did bother me. I was always more or less of a good speaker in front of an audience. And, I don't know, just more or less comes

natural.

SS: Did you regret it after?

AS: Oh, no, no, because I'm bullheaded too, you know, to a certain extent on somethings, because once I make up my mind to do something, well, then that's it. I won't back down <sup>from</sup> for anyone. I'm still the same way, you know, always will be.

SS: But that was it though. After that you didn't have any more to do with the organization.

AS: Oh, no, no. That was the end of the-- that part of it. And of course, you know, then of course, my status with the company was so that I couldn't be a member of the union. Because I was representing the company, see? As a foreman.

SS: You were a foreman at the time you went to see the-- ?

AS: Well, I was a lead man, you know. I had men working with me, but then, shortly after that, well then, I was actually put in as a foreman where I would hire and had the authority to fire and kept their time and assigned men to their jobs and all those sort of duties that a foreman would do. And as a representative of the company, of course, I wasn't eligible to belong to any union. So consequently I never did belong to that union.

SS: Do you think looking back on it that it hurt you as far as advancement? Or did it make any difference?

AS: I don't know, I sometimes think that it did, and then other times possibly not. I worked on a salary for a long time, oh, a few years, and then when that Depression come along, well then of course, they cut down on everything. But a good percentage of the people that worked here, they was given enough work so as to pay their rent and their hospital fee and their lights and water and so on. So as far as cost is concerned, the company cut down their costs right down to the bone. So of course, I was taken off my salary and I was put on hourly rate. And of course, my

earnings on the hourly rate was just, you know, nothing-- I had fairly consistent work but the pay was-- oh, we only got twenty-seven cents an hour. And probably four hours a day, is all we got, 'cause they divided up what little work they had, they divided it up as much as they could. So when things got better and they got to running steady again, well, I wasn't put back on that salary, I was kept on the hourly rate, although I would periodically get an increase. And so I never questioned it very much. But then they come out then-- they called a meeting down here at the Lewis and Clark Hotel in Lewiston <sup>with</sup> by the top management of Potlatch Forests. And they called in all the supervisory personnel of the company from all their units, and they discussed a plan that they had been thinking about and was thinking about putting into practice as a pension plan. And the original setup was that a man would have to be on the supervisory job for ten years in order to qualify for this company pension. And this company pension would amount to about-- let's see, what was it? I think it was sixty percent, I believe it was, of his salary would be paid out as a pension. That was including social security. So time went on and on, and of course they had changed management here several different times but then they changed the rules and they made the rules that they paid this pension to just salaried supervisory personnel. Well, I was an hourly paid supervisor. And so the manager come to me and said, "Well now, Art, we've been thinking about your retirement, whenever the time comes-- I had a long way<sup>5</sup> to go yet-- but if we put you on a salary you'll have to take a cut in pay, because we don't pay any of our salaried men in your category as much money as we pay you." He said, "you're the highest paid man in your category that we've got anywhere in our organization." And I said, "I don't want any cut." "Well," he said, "that's just the way it is, but still you've kinda <sup>got to</sup> look ahead to when you do retire."



But, it wasn't put to me, you know, to where it was very clear on this thing. Well anyway, <sup>then</sup> they changed managers and the new manager he called me in and he said, " We've been **checking up on your status** <sup>here</sup> on this pension," he says, "and it says that a man has to be salaried for ten years, but you've only got nine and a half years to go to where you're retired." "And," I said, "what about all these other years, don't they qualify?" "Well, according to the rules that they've set up, they don't. But," he said,-- he was going to take it up with the top management down at Lewiston to the president of the company in my behalf. So I said, "Well, OK." So it wasn't long after that until he left and they got another manager in, and then he said, he'd look into my pension. And he said, "Don't worry for a minute, we're gonna get it for you." Well, they changed managers three times -- four times-- and every one of 'em was gonna get it for me. But when I retired I got the same pension as the run-of-the-mill employes would get at that time, and it was fifty dollars a month. Where I should have gotten at least four hundred. So you see, it was just the-- well, <sup>this</sup> <sub>it</sub> started out with this manager that I told you hated my guts, started out right there. And I blame him for just fixing it up so that it'd keep me off from it, you know. So I'm losing, oh, I'm losing at least four hundred dollars every month and have been now for over eleven years.

SS: Was he still in the operation?

AS: No, he was out. You mean the one that didn't like me?

SS: Yeah. He was out when they came up with your pension plan?

AS: No, no, he was here.

SS: He was here?

AS: Oh, yeah..

SS: So you figure that there was a great chance that he had to do with --

AS: At least that's the way I always felt about it. Now I could be wrong, but then that's the way I always felt.

SS: Were there very few people in that class you were in that were being paid an hourly wage?

AS: No, I was about the only one. That is, not only in this unit but in the whole PFI organization.

SS: Everyone else had gone back on a salary?

AS: Yes, although you take long as I was on the job I was making more money than any of 'em.

SS: That's really too bad.

AS: Well, we'll survive. But <sup>then</sup> I think for the work that I done for the company, I don't think I was treated right in that respect, because I think you can go right down to Lewiston and check with any of the brass down there and ask what they think about my work, and I think I'd get a pretty good rating from any of 'em. Top man down.

SS: I want to ask you about the IWW activities we touched on a little bit. What's your understanding of what their aims were and what they did in the camps?

AS: Well, I'll tell you, to start out with, I think the <sup>v</sup>principal aim at the beginning was to get clean beds and decent food in the camps. In the time they started, before that-- every man had to carry his own bedroll. They had wooden bunks built in the camps, but then every man would go down to the barn and get an armful of straw, bring it up and throw it in that bunk and spread his own blankets on it, and that was his bed. And the food-- Of course, I can't tell you this from first hand because I wasn't there--but from all the men that I talked to, was that if the camp foreman, if he could run his camp at the least cost, he would raise himself up in the esteem of the company. But if he would raise the cost by

ordering real good, expensive food for the men, why then he didn't stay there very long as foreman, because it cost too much to run his camp. They would buy the very best timothy hay and they bought the best grade of oats and they hired the very best blacksmith to shoe their horses, and they bought the very best harness and equipment for the<sup>v</sup> horses, but when it come to feeding the men, well, they wasn't any of the camps that had any refrigeration but nevertheless, I know that they was meat that left this store down here-- they wholesaled, you know for all the camps, meat was shipped out of here that actually maggots were crawling out of it and they didn't want to cut it up for the meat market here so they shipped it to the camps. Well, you know that word gets out and the men put up an awful howl about that. And I know that in the camps, as well as in some of the boardinghouses that when the meat got tainted to where it would actually smell bad, well then the cook would throw in a bunch of salt petre in the pot to kill that, and of course when you put a piece of meat on your plate that meat was just as red as it could be from that salt petre. Whenever you get a piece of red meat after it's cooked, well that's salt petre. And the men would have dysentary and they'd be lined up there, just in a big line, you know waiting to get into the john. And running in every direction as far as that was concerned. So the food, in some cases <sup>were</sup> was pretty bad. Well, that's one of the things that the IWWS was trying to eliminate. They wanted good food and they wanted clean beds. They didn't object to hard work. They didn't object to working in the mud or in the deep snow, in the cold or in the heat, they didn't object to any of that but they wanted-- when they come in, they wanted a good meal and a clean bed, and that's what they fought for. There wasn't anything wrong with that. But at the time, (End of Side D) asking for all these things, well then, they were radical men, see? Anybody that would ask for stuff like that; they're radical, they're bol-

shevics, you know. They would picture 'em in the cartoons in the newspaper with big horn rimmed glasses and chin whiskers and a bomb in their hand, you know. That's the way the cartoonists would picture 'em, you know!! Well, at the same time, that is, the same period of time-- the farmers around the country-- there used to be an awful lot of smut in their wheat, I've<sup>seen</sup> the blower on some of these threshing machines, you'd think they were burning coal, the straw coming out was just a black cloud of smut. So every once in a while there'd be a threshing machine'd explode and burn. Well, the IWWs done that, see. Well the IWWs didn't have anything to do with the<sup>m</sup> farmers, they were up here in the woods. But nevertheless, in all the newspapers--<sup>o</sup> you go back into the archives of some of these newspapers you'd see where this threshing machine and that wheat field burned and the IWWs done that. And this locomotive jumped the track and the IWWs done that!! Well, they got blamed for an awful lot of stuff that I don't think they had anything to do with at all.

SS: Were the representatives, what you heard, of the IWWs in the woods, were they just in a lot of cases lumberjacks?

AS: Yes. In all cases. They were men that-- well, payday comes-- most of the men would head for Spokane, for the weekend. Get drunk; spend all their money and come back to camp broke. But while they were in Spokane or<sup>in</sup> Seattle or in Portland or wherever they might be, they were around the lumber industry, why, some of 'em were picked<sup>out</sup> as an individual by organized labor to try to organize the men in the camp. Well, you know, organized labor for a good many years before that period sure had a rough row to hoe in the Midwest and in the East, around steelmills and the coal mines and stuff. You know it developed into a civil war back in that part of the country, you know between laborers and management. And of course,

some of those representatives got out into this part of the country, and of course, at that time lumbering was a pretty big thing all through Wisconsin and Minnesota and then jumped 'way out here. But it started out some guy probably pulling a crosscut saw in the woods and he'd talk to his partner and probably convert him and then those two would talk to two others and so on, and pretty soon, why, they got together to where they began to make some demands that they was either going to get some clean beds or they was going to strike and <sup>they was gonna</sup> tie up this camp to where you can't move a log. So what did they do, the management called on the sheriff. So what does the sheriff do, but he organizes a homeguard. He deputizes everybody that he can get ahold of, and in some cases they issued a whole bunch of 30-30 rifles and boy if the Wobblies come around here, <sup>well then</sup> they was gonna shoot 'em, see? But that's the way organized labor got started..

SS: Well in the camps, I've heard that there were strikes, or at least one strike in most of the lumber camps out here, that work did stop.

AS: Oh yeah, there was undoubtedly <sup>several</sup> work stoppages and of course, they wouldn't stop very long until they'd get 'em going again, and when they did they had clean beds and they had better working conditions. And then another thing too, <sup>well</sup> they're responsible, I think, for the eight-hour day. You know, along with other organized labor because ten hours was the standard workday all over-- in any industry, as far as that was concerned.

SS: Do you know about the bullpen that they had in Moscow? For the IWWs?

AS: Well, I heard of it, I didn't see it but I don't think they ever put anybody in it. Might have throwed a few drunks in there or something like that. It was just something that I know the top management here, we seen the sheriff over here ever so many times and he'd be up in the office with the general manager talking things over. And then it got to where the sheriff then went up on the street and everybody'd come down the street,

every man, why, "Come on over." and he'd deputize 'em.

SS: That's how they dealt with it in Potlatch?

AS: Oh yeah.

SS: The IWW didn't make inroads here?

AS: No, they didn't do anything down here. <sup>They</sup> It was all in the logging camps.

SS: What's the militia that was formed here? What's the story on that? I've been told that that was what they used to keep the IWWs out.

AS: Well, that was formed at that time, but they never had anything to do with the IWWs. Fact of the matter is, I was a member of that militia myself. I've got a panoramic picture here someplace about that long, showing everybody in the militia, you know, in that picture. But it was something that was sponsored and organized by top management, you know through the law enforcement officials. And, oh, they were scared, you know. The management was scared, I think they could see the handwriting on the wall that labor was determined to organize and there was no stopping 'em. And of course, I think even when you got to top management they <sup>probably</sup> had the same picture of a union man. And organized labor is just a bunch of anarchists, you know, people with bombs and was going to destroy the whole world. That was the <sup>r</sup> picture of what was to come.

SS: Do you think though that the militia was sort of a disguised threat of the possibility of what management would want the town to do if the Wobblies tried to organize?

AS: Well of course, you take-- if a man was sworn in as a deputy sheriff and then if he was called on by the sheriff to do some patrol work or something, <sup>like that</sup> he'd pretty near have to do it. But that doesn't necessarily mean that he'd have to fire a gun or to shoot at somebody, you know.

SS: Was there any talk that you can remember when you were in the militia that you might have to defend against the--

AS: Oh, yes, yeah, yeah. There was a lot of talk about that, and the fact of the matter is, I think possibly I might have been just as gullible as most of the rest of them, because you take -- the Wobblies were something new to all of us, you know, the fact of the matter is, we never had any personal contact with them. And our knowledge of the Wobblies was what we read in the newspapers and what we were told by the officials. And there's no reason in the world why a person shouldn't believe what they read in the newspapers. You know, whatever you read in the newspapers was gospel truth. There was no such thing in the beliefs of the average person that the newspapers would ever tell a lie! They published facts! (Chuckles) That just shows how gullible people are, at least how gullible they were. Fact of the matter is, you know the average American citizen, he was just a plain, hard working person that didn't want to bother anybody else and they didn't want to be bothered by somebody else, and all they wanted to do was work every day and just make a living. And that was the primary goal of the average American citizen, whether they lived in New York State or in Idaho.

SS: Do you think that what the IWWs did in the woods had positive effect on the improvement of conditions in the town of Potlatch?

AS: Oh yeah, you know, that's very true. Because when you take when <sup>labor</sup> they were organized and of course, they got this eight hour day, well of course, all the lumber producing mills had to go on an eight hour day, and of course, I can remember how they used to cry that they was just gonna go bankrupt, they just couldn't make it, you know, if they was just gonna work eight hours a day, <sup>that is,</sup> the management felt that way. But then I guess they found out when they got to checking all their accounts and their books, that men would probably produce as much in eight hours as they did in ten hours, because they weren't as tired, for one thing. I know just in recent years they--Louis Young was the chief engineer down

here at the plant, and of course he was the superintendent of power and maintenance. He was my superior. Well, they turned the management of the sawmill over to him, although they had a sawmill foreman, and they used to always have an extra man that was supposed to relieve these men on the job-- various jobs-- because where you're working with machinery that machinery has to keep going. So, consequently, the last man or two in the crew, his relief would come at ten minutes before twelve o'clock, or ten minutes before four o'clock, so what did he do? He'd just take his hat and go home. He had ten minutes coming and by the time that ten minutes was up, why the shift was over, see? Because, too late getting around there. So management, they seen this guy going up the hill, going home, and they seen that for quite a number of times and finally they began to question as to how come that feller left his job and went home ten minutes before twelve o'clock. Well then, they tried to explain that he had this ten minutes relief coming and he didn't get it until ten minutes, before twelve. Well, so Louis Young he come up with the idea that they'd do away with that relief man entirely. That way they took one man off the payroll. But, at nine o'clock and at two o'clock they would shut the whole thing down for ten minutes. That way everybody took their break. At that time they could smoke or they could go to the john or they could do whatever they pleased, but they had ten minutes and no more but before that a man was supposed to have ten minutes, but he took twenty minutes or he took twenty-five minutes or he took thirty minutes. And that's the reason that this man didn't get around to get his relief until ten minutes before quitting time. So when they had this break then at nine o'clock for ten minutes, and at two o'clock, that's all they got was ten minutes. So top management, <sup>then</sup> they began to holler then, "Oh, gee whiz, we can't do that, we can't shut the whole thing down, the whole



plant down for ten minutes. You're gonna lose production." But when they got to checking the production sheet they actually had higher production than they had before, when they kept it running. So there was quite a lot of controversy about that for a while a lot of static, but it wasn't long until the whole Potlatch organization adopted that plan. They use that plan in all their plants. And I think <sup>that</sup> if you go <sup>all</sup> to the industry-- lumber industry-- all over, you'll find that's <sup>so</sup> true.

SS: Do you know about when he instituted that change? Roughly.

AS: Oh, he retired in '54 and it was somewhere around 1952 or somewhere around in there when he put that into effect.

SS: I wanted to ask you about-- you know you said that you were probably gullible too back when the IWW was fighting to improve the conditions. When do you think you started to see, or changed your mind about it?

AS: Oh, I think it was <sup>probably</sup> several years afterwards, because, fact of the matter is-- you know the average person really didn't come in contact with anything that had anything to do with 'em at all. You know, we read in the newspapers and of course, that was the only line of communication we had <sup>them days</sup> then, was the newspaper. And so you'd take the newspaper's word for it.

SS: But what would have changed your mine? Did you have a chance to talk to some lumberjacks who were involved?

AS: Well, you would actually see and talking with people they'd tell you about how much the conditions had improved. And then of course, you'd start forming your own opinion as to who should have the credit for this improvement.

SS: I know that in some of the printed literature that you read, the lumber companies like to take the credit for the improvements, themselves. To say that in fact they wouldn't make any of these <sup>i</sup>mprovements until they got rid of the Wobblies, and then they made the improvements. I, myself, haven't bought that.

AS: Well, I think probably they're true, and <sup>then</sup> again the other side might be true. Now then, any man that was known to be a member of the IWW, he was canned. So after they got 'em all weeded out, why then they probably brought on these improvements, but still, the IWWs wasn't given the credit for it. You see, the company was given the total credit. But they used to have secret meetings; everything had to be secret, you know. I attended one meeting one Sunday <sup>UP</sup> in Spokane. There was a bunch of us up there just cATTIN' around and so we heard about this Wobbly meeting <sup>UP</sup> in the hall there, and so we went up there, 'course they'd have it on Sunday. And to listen to some of those guys talk, boy, I'm telling you right now, they had a lot of high hopes and aspirations for the people in the logging industry, you know. If they could put over some of the things that they said they was going to work for, why, you couldn't help but see it their way. And as far as signing up members was concerned, I think that pretty near a hundred percent of the people that worked in the logging camps carried their IWW card, but they never let anybody see it. They didn't want anybody to know that they were IWWs. And of course, if it come down to a showdown whether or not they would be any asset to the IWW, that's something that's questionable, you know. If it got down to the point where they was going to can everybody that belonged to the IWWs well, the majority would probably tear up their card or burn it, you know so that they wouldn't be identified as an IWW just to hold their job. But, nevertheless, down deep the seed was already sown, and these same men would have some bearing on any improvements in organized labor that they would have in the years to come.

SS: When you were at that meeting, was that the same time that they were fighting out in the camps?

AS: Oh, yeah.

SS: Do you remember anything else about it?

AS: Well, there was just a lot of speeches, you know. Different ones'd get upon the platform and make speeches as to --by golly, how they're gonna have to make improvements and this and that. You know, the whole country, you take in the Midwest and the East, they were in quite a turmoil over organized labor too, you know, at that time and had been for a good many years before that. But you take all the police force in Spokane and Seattle and Portland, boy, they was right up on their toes. You take the City Fathers-- it'd go from industry management to the City Fathers and to the police force and, boy, anybody that wanted to stick a knife in somebody that was probably all right, but if they thought there was a Wobbly in town they wanted him in jail!! Where he couldn't do any damage.

SS: Why would it be that they never got a foothold in Potlatch, as compared to the lumber camps? Do you have any thinking on why?

AS: See the lumber camps, the primary purpose there was to get clean bed and good food, and in town pretty near everybody was living at home or living with somebody. There was an awful lot of families in town that kept boarders. Well, those people had clean beds and they had good food. They didn't have the conditions to fight for that they had in the logging camps. See? About the only thing they had to fight for down here would be shorter hours and more money. And that come quite a few years later.

SS: Did it take a long time to get the eight hour day here, as compared with out in the woods?

AS: Oh no. It all come together, because it was all one company, you know, as far as this company was concerned. You know if the company agreed to it, well then it was company-wide.

SS: Do you know about when the eight hour day came in, roughly?

AS: Well, it was right at the tail end of World War I, I'd say along about 1919, somewhere around in there..

SS: Do you remember any strikes ever occurring in Potlatch? I've heard that

there was a strike in the mill here.

AS: Yeah, yeah. After they got-- after the organized labor got a union going here, and had been going for quite a little while, why they called a strike here and I drove through that picket line down there every day for -- oh, I don't know how long it lasted-- two or three weeks or such a matter. And they had pickets across down here by the<sup>3</sup> railroad depot. Of course, that's as close to the plant as they could get. But then, the pickets never bothered me because I wasn't a union member and I was just part of the supervisory staff down there and they never attempted to stop any of us going through. But anybody that just had an ordinary job-- now then, the union was quite fair at that time I thought, because, the union, they told the company that they would permit men in the power plant and all their guards, the watchmen, they would permit all of them to stay on the job, because they had to maintain fire protection. But then they did stop all production of lumber, although the supervisory staff, that is, I didn't get in on it, but then those that were in the lumber end of it, they processed some lumber and loaded some cars. But<sup>then</sup> the union stopped 'em from pulling them cars out. So it really didn't do any good, you know, to load out any cars because they wouldn't let the train go in and get 'em. They were striking for more money, that's <sup>what</sup> the way it was at the time; higher wages. And of course, whenever they did prevail and get higher wages and better conditions, whether you belonged to the union or not, everybody got it. It wasn't just for the union members. And 'course it's hard to tell what it will be in years to come, but in my estimation right now seems like they've got the whole world by the tail! You take now, the company pays for all medical protection for a man and his family, <sup>that is, pays</sup> through this Medical Service Bureau, you know. And then, I think there's a twenty-five dollar deductible for all dental work for a

man and his family. And I know there's ~~is~~ one family out here in the country, he works down here-- and in particular where I think there was a man and his wife they each had a set of false teeth made and they have six kids and they all had all their teeth overhauled and I think they had a bill there of over fifteen hundred dollars to ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> dentist, all company paid. And then every man gets a paid vacation according to the length of time he's been there, but the average vacation now ~~it~~ runs about a month. Some of 'em, you know, get six weeks paid vacation. And then common labor is getting five dollars and some-odd cents an hour. Now, in a few minutes from now, if you'd turn that thing there on Channel 6, you'd see the Job Employment Bank of the State of Washington list the jobs and all the good jobs that require a lot of skill they're paying two dollars and a half an hour and two seventy-five an hour. Three dollars is a real high pay, all over that they're advertising.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins 08-15-75