

GUS DEMUS  
Fourth Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schrage

Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

## GUS DEMUS

Potlatch; b. 1892

edgerman

1.4 hours

minute page

Side A

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Mike Stefanos left Potlatch mill to run shoeshine parlor in Lewiston. His cousin runs shoeshine concession in Davenport Hotel in Spokane. Many Greeks left when the depression hit. He went to Lewiston and stayed with a friend who did truck gardening. Government work under Roosevelt. Bad poverty in depression. He worked night shift for McGoldrick in Spokane briefly. He borrowed \$400 for food from a friend, who also gave up his job so Gus could take it; he left Gus \$2,000 in his will.

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When Americans went to fight during wars, Greeks got a chance to advance. Americans got preference over Greeks for jobs. He went as high as he could at the type of job he was doing; he didn't want to change jobs unless he could get more money. He was satisfied with the kind of work he knew. John Meyers, a good mill foreman, was kicked out; he was honest and showed no favoritism.

Side B

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Greeks worked their way up inside the sawmill. Automation of mill and reduction of workforce. His first job was on the slasher: \$2.00 a day for ten hours. Advantage of working inside sawmill rather than outside.

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Unions at Potlatch. More about John Meyers. Fairness of Laird.

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His brother's severe paranoia: he heard voices and became dangerous. The judge's question before committing him to Medical Lake. He got into fights in the Greek restaurant in Spokane. He had osteomyelitis in one leg, which was shorter than the other; he wasn't strong enough to work well, and shouldn't have come to America.

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His visit to Greece when he retired. His relatives needed money, especially his sister.

Side C

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Change in Greek life. He went to Greece to visit, not to stay; living is better in America. What happened to his sister. He never wanted to return to Greece to stay, as cousins who went back to marry. He left his sister's because he was very cold; expense of fuel. How cousins fared who returned.

Gus Demus

minute page

Side C (continued)

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Chance for Greek bachelors to marry. Few who married in Greece came to America with their wives. Some Greeks didn't trust American girls. He tried to marry once.

with Sam Schrager

September 24, 1976

## II. Transcript

Fourth interview

GUS DEMUS

This conversation with Gus Demus took place in his home in Potlatch, Idaho on September 24, 1976. The interviewer was SAM SCHRAGER.

GUS DEMUS: And <sup>Mike</sup> got along alright, but during the Depression, he went down to Lewiston and started a shoeshine parlor, he was in a partnership with another fellow at that time. And when they started <sup>the mill here again</sup> after the Depression he stayed down there, anyway, he didn't come back. He was making pretty good money, you know, in the shine at that time and after that time you see, during the war, he had two, three girls working there for him, shining shoes.

SAM SCHRAGER: Do you think he could make as good money down there as you could make working in the mill?

GD: Oh, yah, and he had a good job here in the mill, he was grading lumber you know. He was grading different species. But he didn't come back. And Mike, he is, well, he's a small man, you know, he can't handle lumber too well. He not too strong, you know what I mean. That's why he stay down there. And I got a cousin in Spokane, the Davenport Hotel, he shine shoes, that's what he's doing. And he <sup>raise</sup> a family. Family of four boys and a girl.

SS: From his shoeshining?

GD: Yes. He had a good job- he was head sawyer in the sawmill here, but he went over there and he got married. He work for the government during the war.

SS: Where? In Greece?

GD: No, no. Here.

SS: Spokane, huh?

GD: In Spokane. And he met a girl there, <sup>he marry,</sup> he's much older than her, but they get along alright. And he raise a family, <sup>they're</sup> grown now, they all gone, <sup>now</sup> except one. He was making more money in the shoeshine than <sup>to</sup> work in the mill.

SS: It must have been pretty good money; the shoeshining then, because I

thought the mill was pretty good pay.

DG: Yes, but in Davenport Hotel it was better because he kept busy. Well, he had a partner, too, I mean, he hired men and <sup>after</sup> his boys got a little older they took the job <sup>themselves</sup> and while they were going to school, you know, they were shining shoes, and he did pretty good.

SS: Did he leave here when the Depression hit, too? Your cousin?

GD: No. He was in Spokane. But he did live here before.

SS: In Potlatch?

GD: Yes, for long time. <sup>There was</sup> Three brothers, you know. One of them died here, not very long ago and the other one went to Greece and got married and he didn't come back, and he died. He was about my age; 84. He died a couple of years ago.

SS: The cousin of yours that left- what I was thinking was that a lot of people seemed to leave when the Depression hit here.

GD: They left, a lot of 'em left, yes.

SS: Is that what happened to most of the Greeks?

GD: Yes.

SS: That were here? They left when the Depression hit.

GD: The Depression spread 'em out. They had nothing here; no work of any kind. And they never <sup>did</sup> give the Greeks a job, because they work in the mill, you see and the mill went down. And they were giving the job to some family men, maybe two, three days a week; maybe one day a week to work in the planer, you see. They were running the planer part of the time, because they were shipping lumber, you know, but they never run the mill <sup>f</sup>or two years because we got Depression. And I left here too. I went down to Lewiston.

SS: Oh, yeah? What did you do down there?

GD: Oh, I had a friend there and he ran a garden truck. He was raising



vegetables. And no money from the vegetables either, you know, but they making poor living. Oh, yeah, I went down there <sup>but</sup> soon as they started here, I came back.

SS: Did you live with this guy? This friend of yours? Did you share a place with him in Lewiston?

GD: Oh, yeah, down there, yeah. Sure. I live <sup>with</sup> him, because he had a- well, he wasn't married, <sup>to a woman</sup> he had a hired woman and she was doing the cooking and everything and <sup>we</sup> work<sup>ed</sup> out in the field for practically nothing, just for board and room. It was pretty tough. *In Depression.*

SS: Well, did he own his own business there or was it just- or was he just laboring for other people?

GD: The fella that I stay with?

SS: Yeah.

GD: Oh, he was down there all the time. That was his business raising garden truck, he was raising that. And ~~he~~ <sup>vegetables,</sup> carrots and everything else and selling 'em.

SS: So, he owned the food himself, that he raised?

GD: No, he didn't own the place, he rented. But he's dead now.

SS: So you just helped him.

GD: Oh, yeah, well, I went down there, I didn't have nothing to do here and I had to go down there and pass the time. Couldn't get nothing no place. No job. You can't find a job. And then after the election they did some- Roosevelt got elected <sup>that</sup> time, he brought a lot of boys from the East down here for the- CCC boys, you know. You don't remember that.

SS: No, I heard about it though.

GD: Yeah.

SS: So what about that?

- GD: Well, they brought a lot of boys in. He opened- he tried to give <sup>every</sup> a job, give a job to everybody. Now I work a couple of days a week myself doing work on a highway. There was nothing else, you see. And we were doing hand work in order to prolong the work. There was nothing hurry - the reason they <sup>Roosevelt</sup> did that is to give them a job; something to do. Give them something to eat, because people were starving at the time, it was bad.
- SS: Did you know people that didn't have enough to eat?
- GD: I <sup>was one</sup> myself. I <sup>had to</sup> Well, not enough, you know, he had to leave. It wasn't enough to give each one. See, everything was cheap then, but there was no money. Ten cents for a dozen eggs; but where do you get the ten cents?
- SS: Were there days when you didn't have supper?
- GD: Once or twice, I think. Well, we had little bit, but not much. Yeah, it was pretty bad. That depression <sup>that</sup> will never come back; will never come again unless this country go haywire <sup>altogether</sup>. You see, now the government take care of- we're getting social security. The <sup>younger</sup> men get unemployment and the others get these food stamps and so on, you know. Everybody- And they do that little bit too much. You see some of them fellows on the food stamps, they cheat, you know. Some of 'em are not entitled to and they go and get 'em just the same.
- SS: I'm really curious about what it was like in the Depression <sup>era</sup>. It must have felt pretty awful to wonder where your next meal was gonna come from.
- GD: It was bad. And for family people, too, it was terrible. Now here, the company- those that were married and have families they have to give them something- they give 'em a credit in store. They have to give them something for the families to live, you know. And that's why they kept them and give 'em a job maybe once a week or one day a week or two, three days a week. To raise their kids and send 'em to school, too.

That depression was terrible.

SS: Did you think about going someplace else?

GD: At that time?

SS: Yeah.

GD: Well, I did went to Lewiston, there was nothing here, and then pretty soon, as soon as they started the mills, you see, they gave 'em so much lumber to cut ~~every~~ every year. You see, when Roosevelt got in, he started and give 'em so much. I went Spokane and worked for Mc Goldrick Lumber Company there at nights because they had a quota to cut so much lumber, you see and if they didn't cut it during the day they had to hire night shift to do it and then they could get the men any time over there, men were plentiful in Spokane and everyplace else.

SS: How long did you stay up there? Very long?

GD: Oh, not very long because they cut their quota <sup>whatever</sup> ~~it~~ it was, I don't know how many- oh, about a month, anyway, and then they shut down. And if they wanted more later on, two, three months, why, they started the mill again. You see. They had so much to cut, see. It was set by the government.

SS: Did you have to eat only the cheapest food that you could find?

GD: Well, not all the time. Down at Lewiston there we ~~ate~~ ate pretty good. Them boys were shining shoes and they were making a little money, and of course they loaned it. When I started to work here again after depression, I owe one fella \$400.

SS: How much?

GD: \$400. \$400 was lot of money that time; you see for food.

SS: Was he a shoeshiner?

GD: No. He was here but he was working and I stayed with him, you see.

'Cause I ~~broke~~ broke, I had no money. I was spending it a little bit too

fast, as I was getting it, you see.

SS: What did you spend it on?

GD: Everything. Everything. *(Pause in tape)* He <sup>says, stay here. You don't have to go to</sup> work for nothing, anyway. but he died here fell off the pickup truck.

SS: This is the guy that lent you the \$400?

GD: Ya. And he left me \$2,000 when he died. But he had a lot of money. He had \$50,000. He made some investments that paid and he made some pretty good money. He made investments on that Sunshine Mining Company, you know and they were paying pretty good dividends at that time. Now they're not paying nothing because they're not working. They been on a strike here for a long time.

SS: So he had some money during the Depression?

GD: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he had a lot a money.

SS: Could you do anything for him in return for the money that he gave you?

GD: I give him his money back, \$400, after I started, you know. And he even have to give up his job because he was doing the same thing down in the mill as I was doing, and go to work on the section to give me a chance to go to work here, you see. <sup>Because</sup> They won't hire single men. He was working the planer at that time, and that's why they kept him here, but they didn't give him maybe one day a week or maybe one day a month, sometimes, because they knew he had the money, see.

SS: You said he quit his job?

GD: No, he quit the mill <sup>when</sup> they started. When they started the mill they shut the planer down and brought them fellas over in the mill, you know for while. And that didn't last very long. And of course, he didn't take the job in the mill but he went to work on the section in order to give me a chance to get the job, you see.

SS: You mean you took his job?

- GD: Yes. He was pretty nice fella. I <sup>was</sup> sorry when he died because even the \$2,000 he left me, it didn't mean nothing to me because I had money then. You see, it was after the Depression, it was in 1950. 1950 he died. He was a good friend.
- SS: When he went to work on the section, was that the railroad work around here?
- GD: Yes. There was a little work <sup>then</sup> on the section and the section foreman was good friend of his, and he get him the job.
- SS: Did they pay less than what he had been making in the mill?
- GD: Oh, ya, he was making less, ya. The railroad never paid enough. They don't pay the same way as <sup>the</sup> mill. They do now, because things changed you know.
- SS: So the reason he did that was for you; he left the mill?
- GD: Yeah.
- SS: He must have liked you.
- GD: Well, he was a good friend.
- SS: Did he come from near where you did in Greece?
- GD: Pretty close, but not from same town. He was oh- I didn't know him before he came here. He came first; I came later and I met him here. There was a lot of Greeks here, you know them days.
- SS: Did you pal around with him when you first got here?
- GD: Oh, no. No, because he was with other bunch, you see, but then gradually the bunch spread out and when the Depression came everybody had to leave. *The Greek* boys, you know. Some went to the old country and got married. Some went different places, where ever they could get a job. There was nothing here for them anyway.
- SS: What about the Americans who were single? Did they have to leave, too?
- GD: Yes. But some of 'em, you know, they had places around here; <sup>they had</sup> stump ranches

you know around here and they made money with that. They work on them. Not very much. Nobody made money at that time.

SS: I was going to ask you, Gus, if you think it was harder for people like Greeks and Italians to get ahead in the mill than it was for the Americans who had been around the country.<sup>1</sup>

GD: Well, yes, it was hard, but during the war a lot of young fellas went to the war, you know, and the Greeks got chance to advance a little bit in the mill you see.

SS: During the First World War?

GD: First and Second World War, too. The Second World War, too. The Second World War there wasn't very many here, but very few.

SS: So the wars were really a good opportunity to get ahead for Greeks?

GD: Well, ya, for us that were here, there were not very many<sup>here</sup> then.

SS: So, if there was a job open in the mill or a chance to get ahead, it might be easier for the local Americans to get it?

GD: Yes, naturally, they have preference.

SS: I'm not sure that's natural, but--

GD: Oh, well it not natural, but they make it. They had preference, you know, before us. But I had my own job and I didn't claim anything<sup>else</sup> because that was as high as I could go. I couldn't go any higher.

SS: This is the job as edger?

GD: No, I was trimming lumber.

SS: Trimming? How come that was as high?

GD: Well, I started there and I quit- I didn't quit, I didn't try to get any other job<sup>than that</sup>. It was good job and wasn't very hard. Pulling levers. You know what that is? Trimming lumber?

SS: Yeah. <sup>GD:</sup> Pulling levers on the trimmer.

SS: But you didn't want to try to do something else, like grading and that

sort of thing?

GD: No. Well, one fella, head grader, asked me, says, "I want you to work for me." I says, "No." because they didn't pay as much for the graders as they pay for the other, the trimmermen. So there was no difference in pay. <sup>The heck with it, I told him.</sup> "Now," I says, "it's too late for me."

SS: If you could have got anything else in the mill, was there anything you wanted to do besides trimming? That would have been a better paying job?

GD: Ya, there was, but I didn't started there, you see. And, I don't know, maybe I was a man that never progressed, you see. I was satisfied with what I had down there.

SS: That's probably better than wanting something that you can't get.

GD: Well ya, and if a fella's used to one kind of work, he does it easier and he's more efficient, more better.

SS: Mike told me there was a foreman that he liked a lot. I can't remember the guy's name, but he had a big Greek crew.

GD: Oh, Meyers.

SS: What was his first name?

GD: John.

SS: Yeah, that's right. Do you remember him?

GD: Oh, ya, sure. I worked for him for years. I worked for him from 1914 until he left in- I don't know when he left- '21- no, '24, '25. And there was no, them days, there was no social security. You got out of the sawmill, you dead. *You're nothing.*

SS: Why did he leave? Do you know?

GD: Ah, there was a fella that *come* and got his job from Elk River. They shut that mill down, you know, and then they run him down here. He was younger man and he was crooked, too, you know, and he bumped him out. Old John was getting pretty old, you know. And they didn't

retire them them days. They let 'em work as long as they could work, there was no retirement.

SS: Did he stick around the mill, or did he just leave?

GD: No, he left. He went to work up in Canada for a while and then he came back to Spokane, and he stayed in Spokane. I think he bought a house in Spokane and he stay in Spokane. He had a little money.

SS: What was his job? Was he the foreman of the whole mill?

GD: Ya. He was foreman for the sawmill. Then another foreman in planer, you know, and in the shipping department. They <sup>have</sup> lot of foremens. They did have then, but I don't know now.

SS: What was Meyers like to the men? What was he like to work for? What did you think of him as a foreman?

GD: Meyers?

SS: Yeah.

GD: He was a good man. He was very good man. He was honest. He was truth. He tried to do the best. If you are good man, you are doing your work and the chance come up for you to advance, he'd give it to you, whether you were Greek or Italian or any nationality. He was honest man.

SS: You mean he didn't give preference to the local boys?

GD: No. Not if they didn't have it. <sup>they didn't earn it,</sup> He was alright.

SS: But you were saying before that the local boys did get-easier?

GD: Yes, there was some, but not all. They probably had it comin'.

SS: Oh, because they'd been around longer.

GD: Ya. <sup>When John was here,</sup> Now in other departments, what they're doing, I don't know. There was fella by name, oh, Charlie- he was superintendent- Charlie somebody I can't remember name <sup>his</sup> last name. You were talking to Mike down there?

SS: What's this Charlie guy? He wasn't so good?

GD: Huh?



- SS: This Charlie, was he crooked?
- GD: Well, he run the whole business, he was an old country Swede. Charlie-
- SS: It doesn't matter, the last name. I just wondered why you mentioned him.
- GD: Oh, well, he was the superintendent of the planer and *the yard.*
- SS: Yeah, I talked to Mike and he told me that most of the Greeks worked in the sawmill.

SIDE B

- GD One by one they got a job over there and they didn't know anything else to do, if they went out *probably* it was semiskilled work, you see, and they couldn't do it. So in the mill there was lot common labor work. And very few, not very many, maybe two, three fellas that work outside. But most of 'em work in mill.
- SS: And most of them started as common labor in the mill?
- GD: Well, yes.
- SS: I mean they didn't start like a sawyer or as edgerman?
- GD: No, sawyer and edger, they got to that later but it's a skill job, you see, and they expect you to do the work, and if you don't know it, you don't undertake to be a sawyer because it's a responsibility *there.*
- SS: What were the types of jobs that the guys started at in the mill? That the Greeks started at?
- GD: Lot a kinds of jobs at that time. But now them jobs are all gone. Machinery took the place of their jobs.
- SS: But in them days, what were the jobs?
- GD: Well, I can't explain it to you because it's so many; so many jobs. They had a job tailsawyer, they call him tailsawyer, he was behind the saw pulling the boards when they come from the- when the sawyer cut them. You see, so they wouldn't get tangled up. *They ball up there.* And they do away with that. They had a setters, they was setting the carriage. Now they don't have

any- nobody on the carriage. Only one, the sawyer, he saw on the carriage and cuts the lumber. It's one man where there was three. It's a quite a difference; lots of difference. There was lots of men working-- (Whistle blows- ) It's twelve o'clock. <sup>Lots of men working</sup> On the mill, cleaning up. Maybe two, three men, four, five men there in the mill that they clean up. And if somebody wanted to go out for, you know, to take a leak, or to go to toilet or something like that they had a man, extra man, <sup>Here</sup> and now they only got one. And he is busy, too, don't fool around <sup>with him</sup>

SS: What was the first job that you took in the mill?

GD: On the slasher. You see, I was- and I didn't even know what that was- he tell me, "You go to slasher." Old John. He point, you know. Well I figure out you know, and one Greek was working there and he motioned <sup>to</sup> me. <sup>come over</sup> All we were doing there was straighten the slabs from the logs. <sup>They were</sup> Dropping <sup>them</sup> on the floor, you know, we had a long chain and carried 'em to the saws and then they were cut to four feet for lath, for making lath, them days. You know what a lath is?

SS: Yes.

GD: Now they ~~did~~ away with that for I don't know how many years. And that's my first job. I had to pull it straight with the saw, you see to trim it on one end, and then cut four foot piece for the lath stock.

SS: But that wasn't too skilled to start.

GD: Oh, not skilled job, no, but I got paid low wages, that was \$2.00 a day for ten hours.

SS: One thing that Mike said to me was that mostly the Greeks were in the sawmill and most of the Italians were working on the greenchain and the yards. And I wondered why it worked that way, that the Greeks were inside and the Italians outside.

GD: The Greeks maybe were smarter, they got in there first probably and they

stay there, you see. And the Italians, why they work on the greenchain, I think they were paying little bit more, too. Now out in the yard they were contracting. They were-

SS: Gyppo.

GD: They were gyppoing. They were making little more money. Not only Italians, but Swedes. All the Swedes were yardmen, you see. They gyppoed, most of them. And there were other jobs, <sup>account</sup> the stackers all over the place. But, the Greeks, most of 'em was in sawmill.

SS: Had any of the Greeks that you knew, had any of them worked in the sawmill back in Greece?

GD: No sawmills.

SS: No sawmills there at all?

GD: Huh-uh. Not in that part. <sup>Not in Southern part where</sup> I came from. Maybe very few in extreme north. Up in Macedonia where they had little timber, but not very much. There's no sawmills. Most of the timber over there is from Austria- Austria was the most, Austria was closer to Greece, you see.

SS: Did you think it was better to be in the sawmill - working in the sawmill than the other places in the operation?

GD: It was better because you were indoors, you see and no rain, no snow, no nothing. You could work year 'round without getting wet. And in the greenchains, it was pretty cold them days. <sup>We</sup> had to wear Mackinaw Coats in the summer, sometimes, when it was cold. And that's why the Greeks stay there, because they didn't want to get out in the cold weather, even if they made little less money.

SS: Sounds like maybe there was a little better chance to advance inside the mill, too. I mean there was all these jobs.

GD: Oh, it was- they advance, there wasn't very many. Edgerman and sawyers, that's all. They had four edgermen and four sawyers. And the <sup>SETTERS,</sup>

of course, they was getting more money because they were allowed to saw you see, gradually. And if the sawyers quit, why, they had one of the setters take his place. There was only four of them.

SS: So most of the jobs inside the sawmill were unskilled. They weren't highly skilled?

GD: No, they were semiskilled, they call 'em. Some. You have to know little bit about it. And after the union come in here, they classified them as skilled or semiskilled or when they become a member or something like that, you know.

SS: Do you remember when the AFL started in here? When they started a union?

GD: <sup>I was here.</sup> I joined the AF of L, and I stayed as long as they were here, but they had trouble, trouble them days. And I guess the CIO- I mean-

SS: CIO.

GD: They went- they had a-

SS: Election?

GD: Yeah, they had election. <sup>Then</sup> They went on a strike over here, too.

SS: The CIO did?

GD: Uh-huh. But didn't last very long.

SS: What kind of trouble?- You say trouble, what kind of trouble did it have in those days?

GD: Well, they- the trouble was that some of the CIOs wanted to join <sup>the</sup> union so they could get all together and go to strike, but it didn't work.

But the CIO won the election, and they <sup>had the</sup> agency, you know, -

SS: The local?

GD: Yeah, they had the agency there they could do anything they want. Although they couldn't force you to join the union, at that time.

SS: Do you think the CIO got more for the men than the AF of L?

GD: Well, now, they are both--

SS: <sup>The same. But</sup> I mean, those days.

- GD: Well, yeah, the CIO were more radical. You know, they was a little bit- they were asking too much. But now they are same, both. Same thing.
- SS: Well, this Meyers: Mike was telling me some about him. Some stories about him.
- GD: <sup>They didn't fire anybody.</sup> But they reprimand him and sometimes they lay him off, two, three days or week. Punish him that way, you know. He was alright.
- SS: Did the men spend any time with him outside of work? Off of work?
- GD: No. No, he was divorced. He had no wife. He divorce his wife, back East before he come out this way. And he was living alone. He and another fella lived together for a while, and then the other fella quit, <sup>I guess or something</sup> and he live alone. He was boarding some woman over there, German.
- SS: Did he spend most of his time with management? Meyers?
- GD: Oh, he spent his time at home. And when the mill was running nights, he had something to do with that, too, you see. He had to see that the night shift was running, too.
- SS: Another thing that Mike told me was that once some of the guys tried to kick some of the Greeks out of the sawmill and get the jobs. I think this was maybe in some hard times, and he said that Laird defended the Greeks and said they'd been there for a longer time, they got the jobs and they earned them and they're gonna keep 'em.
- GD: Oh, yeah, they were honest. As long as you do the work, why, they kept you. Laird, he was the general manager, <sup>he run</sup> the whole works, you know. <sup>Everything</sup> Below the company. It isn't like now.
- SS: Well, you figure that once the Greeks started getting in the sawmill then they just kept on getting in, after they got a start in there, and that's how they got so many in the sawmill?
- GD: Yeah.

- SS: Say, instead of working outside on the greenchain.
- GD: Yeah, that's right. They just happened to get in there, I don't know how from the beginning, I guess they started in the mill and then one by one. And there <sup>were</sup> some that work outside, but not very many. Not very many. You know in comparison in group. Very few.
- SS: I heard that-- You had a brother here?
- GD: Yes.
- SS: What happened to him?
- GD: He died. Mike tell you?
- SS: Mike said something that he went haywire. Something happened to him, but he didn't tell me what.
- GD: Oh, he was sick. He was in Medical Lake. He died. He went out his beam, out his head. He <sup>suffered,</sup> what they call that? Kind of a mental disease. Oh it been long time; he's been dead for long time. Paranoia. Paranoia. You know what that is?
- SS: Yes. You get fearful of everything around you.
- GD: Yes, fearful and you know, you hear noises, you see and that is dangerous. I took him all over. I took him to Portland- I went to Portland one time and one doctor there told me if he was my twin brother, he says, I turn him in. Put him in the asylum. And I didn't do it then, but then later he got worse, you know, and he was dangerous, you know. Because he was under the influence of them noises <sup>he was hearing</sup> and he was liable to kill somebody. So I turn him in.
- SS: Did he trust you? Your brother?
- GD: Oh, yeah, well he,- he has to go before this judge, you know. I took him over in Spokane, he was in Spokane and he lived in Spokane for year. He's got to live for one year in order to go <sup>in</sup> the- ~~Spokane~~ <sup>Spokane</sup> asylum. In other words, I don't know what happen. We took him to <sup>the</sup> judge and judge ask him only one question. He says, "You hear voices?" He says, "Yes."

- "Who is talking to you?" He says, "The degenerates." And that's all.
- SS: The degenerates?
- GD: Degenerates. You know, people that- He was seeing things, you know, that were not real. Ya, it is disease, <sup>just</sup> same as anything else.
- SS: Yeah. Did you have any idea how he got it? How it started?
- GD: It started gradually, <sup>or</sup> apparently, I don't know. I don't know how it started. But then he got to be worse, and worse and worse until- I was going to send him <sup>back</sup> to the old country but they have no facilities over there. One doctor <sup>Howes</sup> in Portland, he told me, "There is no other place like United States, except in Germany, that have a few places like that where they keep 'em. But in the other places, other countries--
- SS: Do you think he was getting so he was dangerous to other people?
- GD: Yes, those noises, you know, that he was hearing. <sup>Directing</sup>, it might tell him to go and kill so-and-so fella. Kill me. He did that one time. He got a knife but he didn't use it. Got a butcher knife and I was staying with him.
- SS: To take care of him?
- GD: Oh, no, he take care of himself. But he was getting wild some time.
- SS: So, he threatened you with the knife?
- GD: Once, yeah. And, as I say, the situation was I better take him in because he might kill somebody else or he might kill himself. And over there he's safer, anyway. In Medical Lake; he died there.
- SS: Did he live for long after he went in?
- GD: He lived for quite a while. I went a couple times to see him, but I couldn't get nothing out of him. And he didn't want me to- "You let me alone." He says. That was sad, but it could happen to anybody.
- SS: Yeah, they say that ten percent of the people in the country have mental illness. Ten percent, that's a lot of people.

- GD: Yes.
- SS: Did he keep working in the mill as this went on? As he got worse?
- GD: No, he stay in Spokane. And I had to send him money, you know sometime, to live on.
- SS: That's while he was waiting to get in there? Or this was before?
- GD: Well, I couldn't, you know, it cost money to stay in Spokane ~~and another~~ thing<sup>is</sup> while he was hanging around there, he was fighting with everybody in the Greek place there, you know. The <sup>Greek</sup> restaurant where he was eating. And he was from my own hometown, one them fellas that own the place. And he wrote me and told me, "You better come over and take care of him, because he's fighting with everybody." And he couldn't kick him out.
- SS: He couldn't kick him out because he didn't want to?
- GD: Well, he didn't want to, no. He didn't want do that, because he knew me, you see. He came from same <sup>country, same</sup> village. We were raised together. And that fella dead now.
- SS: Was this while- was this during the time that he was waiting before he could get into Medical Lake, or was this before you decided to put him away?
- GD: Well, I decided because he wrote and told me that he's fighting with everybody that was there, see. And he says, "You must do something." So, I study the situation and it was expensive - it was good place for him anyway. There is no other place- and the Medical Lake, they have pretty good place. They good care of him.
- SS: So that's when you took him to the judge?
- GD: Yes. Well, before you take him to the asylum, the judge has to examine him. He has to send him. He has to order him. The judge has to order ~~them~~ in the jail and from there they take him in.
- SS: And he had to live there for a year, in Washington, first? Before he



could go.

GD: Yes. Before he come in, Washington, yeah. <sup>Otherwise</sup> you had to go to Idaho. But there's better place, over there. Oh, he lived three years there, not very many.

SS: Was he older than you or younger?

GD: Older. Older, and he had a stiff leg, you know. When he was young he had what you call osteomyelitis. The one leg was shorter than the other. And he had a pain when he was young fella. He suffered terribly. It was mistake anyway. The old man shouldn't brought him over in first place. But he's gone now. Poor guy.

SS: He shouldn't have brought him over because he would have a harder time in this country.

GD: Yeah, well, he wasn't strong enough to work on any job, you see. Some job that you can't do it. He did work down here alright, he work as edgerman, but he couldn't get along with his helpers, and he finally quit. *Quit or they fire him, I don't remember now, it's been a long time.*

SS: You know, Mike said that he and you both were easier about money, spending money, you know, enjoying it, having a good time than a lot of guys were. That some guys would try to hold on to every cent they made, but you and him both were guys that lived pretty good when you could.

GD: Oh, not much difference, some didn't spend no money, they save money and go back to Greece. But some did and some didn't. It's a matter of- Oh, I saved little money and I went to Greece and spend it. And I came back. I'm not sorry now I did. I went to see how the country was after so many years. Fifty-<sup>three</sup> years. I went over there and saw the people that I left when they were six, seven years old and they were old- old men now, <sup>like</sup> I was. My sister, <sup>I</sup> left there, she

was going to school. *When I saw here over there, her teeth were going to  
heek. She didn't have no teeth, nothing.*

Terrible. Terrible living over there. So I stay five months. I says,  
"Goodbye."

SS: I think you mentioned to me that your relatives wanted the money- some  
money that you had, too.

GD: Oh, they wanted; they got some, but not all of it. They were in bad  
shape, you had to help 'em. My sister over there, she was a  
widow with two kids and her husband was no good, when he was living.  
He spend money, <sup>when he was in hospital</sup> and they went broke. And everything was on the-  
what you call- they was going sell off, (END of Side B)

SS: Bankrupt. Yeah.

GD: Almost, <sup>Bankrupt</sup> You had to help 'em. I couldn't. You know.

SS: Did they figure that you were rich because you were American?

GD: Oh, they know that I wasn't too rich. They knew that I had a little  
money. I didn't tell them. But people around there, they talk.  
*The go there very often. The customer, you know. If they wanted  
a shine, they'd go there. They didn't shine their own shoes,  
But most of them do now.*

SS: When you were back there, Gus, in Greece, did you get a chance to see  
any of the old kind of customs, like the celebrations that they used  
to have? Do they still have that, like Easter and holiday--?

GD: Oh, yes, I happen to be there <sup>at</sup> Easter, yeah. But they don't have that  
like they used to have, not as elaborate, you know. They kind of get-  
ting away.

SS: I heard that they were very colorful in the old days.

GD: Yeah, they was, they were colorful. They had *lamb's on spears*  
and everything else. They do now, but they don't have as much. You  
see. They celebrate. I don't know, they got a little money. They  
seem to travel a lot. You see, *Uncle Sam* 'build highways over

there, you know, and they got good transportation. They travel from one place to the other. And before, they didn't have that. Now they go to Athens <sup>pretty</sup> near every week. Soon as they earn anything they some travel with the boat, some with the bus. They got two ways. And if you go with a boat then you get seasick, why, you're out of luck. (Chuckles) My niece, you know, a girl, she got sick, sick as a dog she's vomiting. I told her I would take her down. They got a place down below <sup>there where</sup> they got bunks, you know, beds that pull down to sleep. But you have to pay.

SS: What made you decide to come back to America instead of staying over there?

GD: Huh?

SS: What made you decide to come back here instead of staying over in Greece?

GD: What made me?

SS: Yeah.

GD: (Chuckles) I didn't want to stay, I didn't go there to stay in the first place. I went over there to visit. I didn't want to stay there. I didn't have nothing there. And here, I didn't have nothing either but it's better country to live. What the heck, what was I doing over there? If I was there <sup>I would</sup> probably been dead today. Pretty near been dead here! (Chuckles) Now, this thing:

SS: Well, you know, Gus, with so many people- so many of the people going back to Europe from this country in those days, so many of them. It seems like so many went back; what was your thinking about that? I'm just talking about say in the '20's and '30's. You never did go back, you wanted to stay here, didn't you?

GD: Oh, ya, sure. what made me go back. Mostly I joined Masonic

Lodge here, long time ago, thirty years ago. And I was representa-  
 tive for <sup>Greece</sup> and I thought I'd take a trip and see my sister and the  
 other relatives. <sup>I got a</sup> Lot of cousins <sup>went there</sup> back, fellas that work here, you know  
 went back there and married. And I enjoyed the trip but I spent a  
 lot of money because my nearest folks, my sister, was in bad shape and  
 I had to help her. I couldn't get away. That's the reason I spend  
 money. <sup>Now</sup> They sold everything from there, I have to give them a power of  
 attorney to sell 'em and I didn't ask for money or anything. They  
 won't send anything anyway. And they moved about ten miles from over  
 across the sea, they and my niece, she got married there to a boy. I  
 don't write to them now, and they don't write to me because I <sup>got</sup> blind  
 and I can't write anyway.

SS: Well, back in the '20's when so many of the people came over here for  
 a while and made some money and then went back to the old country, did  
 you think about going back to the old country, or did you really always  
 want to stay here?

GD: I never had no ambition <sup>never did want</sup> to go back and stay, because this the best one  
 in the world to live in. <sup>I went over there to see and I saw.</sup> And I knew it before I went, but I didn't  
 know exactly.

SS: All these other guys, why did they go back? Your cousins that worked  
 here.

GD: Two of 'em got married, you see. And they bought piece of land, and  
<sup>whoever</sup> they get married there, <sup>the girl is</sup> supposed to have something, you  
 know.

SS: What? The dowry?

GD: Yah. They got a dowry. And they thought that they could be- make liv-  
 ing with that. But I never thought of that, I never expected that or  
 never thought anything of that kind. I thought this was good country

to live in, and I was going to stay with it. Greece is poor country. Those that have money they live a very good life in the big cities, where they have ~~CONVENIENCE~~ but in the rural districts, like my hometown, they don't have nothing there. They have no electricity; they don't have a darn thing. They cook in a fireplace there, and that's where they do all their cooking and everything else. And the fireplace does the heating and cooking. When it's summertime they let the fire go out, but they have to build a fire, you know, <sup>in order</sup> to cook. They don't have no stoves or anything. Some have, that have money, but if they don't have no money, is nothing. <sup>stay away</sup> In the wintertime it's cold over there, too, sometime. I had get up four o'clock in the morning to take the bus. I told my sister, "I'm going to Athens." I rent a house over there in Athens, anyway, and I just went to visit. It cost me lot of money.

SS: You decided to- at four o'clock in the morning you decided to leave?

GD: Yes, pretty cold. There's no fire. <sup>That</sup> Little fire there, didn't give no heat in the fireplace. And I said, "Goodbye, I'm going to Athens." Athens, they have everything there but cost money, you see, costs just as much- it cost two dollars a day for coal oil for to burn in the stove. Cost money, you see, cost two dollars a day for coal oil for to burn in the stove.

SS: Oh, that's too much.

GD: It's pretty high; pretty high, the oil and coal oil and gas- gas is terribly high. I don't know what gas was but it was up to a dollar, dollar and a half a gallon then. Now, it's <sup>another</sup> two, three dollars, I don't know, maybe they don't have any. They use coal oil, they have engines in the automobiles to burn coal oil instead of gas. And all them taxi drivers and things, you know, they are set so for different

kind of oil; coal oil.

SS: Well how were your cousins doing that had worked here and gone back?  
How were they?

GD: They doing dead. They are dead now. One of 'em did pretty good. He owned lot of land <sup>there</sup> and he was pretty good. But the others, not get along, not very much. But now they both dead. They ~~died~~ died about two years ago. So, there no living over there- and for men of age, you know, <sup>I was</sup> seventy years old when I went over there, I didn't think it was a place for me to stay. And if I want to get married, I could get married here any time, at that time. Now, I can't get married, *because* I'm blind and I'm handicapped and I'm sick.

SS: You know, one other thing that I was going to ask you, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup>, was about this business of being a bachelor, say back in the '20's, you know, the teens and the '20's and the '30's? Was there much chance for all these bachelors like yourself and other guys to get married?

GD: To get married?

SS: Yes.

GD: Oh, ya, there was. Some of 'em got married, but not all. It wasn't much chance as it is <sup>here</sup> now, because we're living together and we never mixed with the people of the town, <sup>here</sup> or the girls or the boys. And, we couldn't speak <sup>the</sup> English language. That's another thing, you see, that kept us from getting married. And now that we learn, we got too old.

SS: But there was no- say like- there weren't any Greek girls around, were there?

GD: No Greek girls, no. I had one, <sup>Greek girl here</sup> but she came when she was ten years old and she's married to some young fella, some young fella here. Her father was businessman in Chicago and she came to San Francisco and she met this, <sup>her first husband</sup> <sup>killed</sup> got in the war and she met this boy from

here, fella by the name of Larson, and she's been here for ten years now, or more. More than ten years. <sup>Twelve</sup> But she's not here in Potlatch. They started here and they didn't like it. And they saw <sup>that</sup> there wasn't much chance for advance and they went down to Quincy, Washington. That's where they're at and they own a farm- two, three farms over there. They got a lot of money. And she got two, three kids. One kid is, <sup>her first daughter, one girl</sup> she's married and she's got <sup>two more, I think</sup> One is twenty years old and the other one, I don't know, he's <sup>little</sup> younger.

SS: These guys that went back to Greece to get married; did many of them bring their wives back over here?

GD: Not very many.

SS: I wonder why they didn't come back with their wives.

GD: Well, as I said before, they got the dowry, you see, piece of land there and they start to work over there to raise something to eat and live there. That's why. And they didn't speak very good English. They says, "To heck with going back."

SS: It does seem to me a little too bad that there wasn't more chance for the bachelors to meet the American girls around here.

GD: Well, there was a chance; some chance, but they didn't trust 'em. They didn't trust the American girls, those boys that had a little money, you know. They say, <sup>Maybe</sup> I marry her and she'll take my money- spend my money and then kick me out. That's another thing. Although I never thought that way because I didn't have no money in the first place and when I did have money, why, it was too late. I was too old. I tried to marry one one time, but she didn't <sup>it was during World War I</sup> - she was working on town site, <sup>Her sister is</sup> my next door neighbor now and she's a widow.

SS: This girl- she wasn't Greek though?

GD: Oh, no, from here.

SS: She was from Potlatch?

GD: *She's gone first now.*

End of interview

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, March 17, 1977.