

GUS DEMUS
First Interview

Interviewed by:
Sam Schragger

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GUS DEMUS

Potlatch; b. 1892

edgerman, trimmer at mill

2.5 hours

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Side A

- 01 1 Poor conditions where he grew up in Greece. Industry there; irrigation problems. He worked in a bakery on an island away from home.
- 11 3 People heard about America; many came intending to make money and go back. Some succeeded, others failed.
- 16 4 Men who had already learned English acted as interpreters. Working on the railroad was very hard for him at first.
- 22 5 After landing in New York, his group was sent south on another boat. In St. Louis they met up with Greeks who knew some English and were also shipping to Spokane, like them, by train. People didn't want to go to the "wild west". Railroad work was all manual labor. The interpreter got the group the job from the employment agency. There were many other groups from southern Europe. They quit if they didn't like the jobs.

Side B

- 01 8 His first job was building tracks into a Walla Walla cannery. Loading dirt and shovelling gravel. Wages: \$1.30 for a ten hour day. Living sixteen to a boxcar. Having to move in the middle of baking bread. Railroads were the chief industry then. His crew was composed of men from his home town, some here before he was. Refusing a job that looked like a bad situation. It was very tough to save money, but some of the old fellows could. Section work was easier in winter.
- 23 15 Working on construction at White Salmon, Oregon. Work was year-round, without much blowing-in like lumberjacks. Working on the section in winter. Heating boxcars with coal. The foremen were Americans, and watched the men. He was strong.
- 30 15 He came to Potlatch in 1914, after being laid off at Heppner, Oregon. His two cousins at Potlatch wrote and told him to come.

Side C

- 00 16 He got first job at Potlatch by lying that he had worked in a mill before. Working at Potlatch better

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than railroad. Thirty Greeks at Potlatch were from his hometown, Dedemah.

- 08 17 Housing for Greeks at Potlatch. Manure at Potlatch went to Japanese garden. Building burnt down by a Greek who didn't know about hot ashes. New housing for Greeks.
- 15 20 Italians outnumbered Greeks. Foreigners did semi-skilled work.
- 20 21 He lived with his Greek friends. Learning to speak English despite obstacles and little opportunity to use language. He left Potlatch for a while during first world war to work in shipyard on the coast. He joined Masonic lodge in 1945 when only a few Greeks remained in Potlatch, and learned more English. English language is harder than Greek, especially spelling.
- 30 23 At first he was too soft for hard work in America; with bakery hands.

Side D

- 00 23 Most Greeks had to leave Potlatch during the depression. For humanitarian reasons, company had to support men with families, who were in debt. One Greek kept his planer job because he was an oldtimer. When the mill started up again, many were not hired back.
- 08 15 His dealings with William Laird on behalf of Greeks who knew less English than he did. Laird cared for the people. Laird assured the people they'd get their money from the Potlatch bank after a large embezzlement.
- 20 28 Social life of Greeks was separate from rest of town. Greeks were refused membership in the gymnasium during the first war. Greeks played pinochle and gambled some.
- 23 28 Italian social life was a bowling-type game. Italian drinking. The foreman of the green chain started a strike and pushed his own interests.
- 29 30 Huge sales at the Potlatch store brought people from around the country.

Side E

- 00 30 Representing his friends because he knew some English. Friends took care of each other more then.
- 04 31 People held on to their mill jobs then so it was hard to advance. Working past retirement age. People disliked foreigners holding good jobs; they were hard

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to get without speaking good English. Foremen favored their own nationality.

12 33 Immigration slowed after 1915 because of quota. Need for foreign labor to build country.

16 34 Italians didn't want to go to Catholic church in Potlatch. The priest refused to take the foreman for his funeral after death. There were no Greek Orthodox services in Potlatch or the area.

22 35 Greeks were fairly satisfied at Potlatch. Lack of Greeks because the town was not open to competitive business. No beer could be sold.

27 36 Sawmill workers have to keep up with the work flow.

with Sam Schrage
August 7, 1975

II. Transcript

This interview with Gus Demus took place at his home in Potlatch, Idaho on August 7, 1975. The interviewer is Sam Schrager.

SS: I wanted to ask you about where you grew up in Greece, what it was like where you grew up.

GD: Well, if I tell you the truth, it was conditions fifty years ago and now, it's better, a little bit better. Where I grew up, it was a village oh, three hundred people, maybe more, I don't know. We didn't have nothing you know, convenience of any kind. There were no water in houses, you have to pull the water from the well, you know, to use it in houses. And I don't know, conditions were pretty bad then. But they lived through and they stayed bad. I was over there about ten, twelve years ago and they haven't changed much. The only thing they have now is transportation. You see, the United States went over there and built a lot of roads, and they have the transportation now. But they didn't have very much convenience now, electricity, but, as I say, there's no water in house, no electricity. They have to light themselves with the lamps. They have lamps now, at the time when I grew up they had oil, olive oil and they have pot in there where they put the oil and then they light the wick. They light the wick you see, and that's the way they, but now they have what they call the gas, you see, they pump it. They have them, gas lamps. Not everybody, but those that are in stores and things like that, but not in private houses.

SS: Was it farming there?

GD: **Mostly** farming, yes. The terrain is bad, you know, they have a little bit of a land in the flat, there is a flat, I don't know how many miles and that's where they raise their wheat and everything. They used to raise potatoes and they were the best because I guess they got the seed from Germany. They raise good potatoes, that's one good thing. But all the other things, they

have probably some of those, but they didn't have much land, they had to dig in the sides of the mountain, you see, you know what I mean? The mountainside, we had to dig and find water, then kind of dam it there with the rocks. And they use the well for garden or anything, but they didn't have no water. There wasn't much rain. But now they have different system, because they are well enough to buy gas to pump the water to irrigate the land.

SS: When you grew up there, was there much future for you?

GD: There wasn't any future of any kind. When I grew up-- when I left the school-- oh, about a year ^{I guess} after I left the school- I was getting different jobs and my father sent me to an island, where he had a cousin, you know, and he had a bakery. He was baking bread and I worked ^{over there} for three years before I came to this country.

SS: How far was that from home?

GD: That was about Sixteen miles. You couldn't leave there, ^{it was an island} you had to have a boat or something to cross the water. And, of course, in other places where they sent me, I get homesick and I go home.

SS: What did you work for in the bakery? Did you make money; did they give you money?

GD: Well, the first few years, the first two years, I didn't get any money.

^{The family he used to give flour, there was a shortage of flour, they didn't raise nothing in the year then, he used to give flour.}

But after that, I drew salary. He give me so much a month and I had to eat from that and do everything else, although I had free laundry and free clothing and shoes. But he did give me so much money.

SS: Did the flour go to the family?

GD: Yes. ^{At the time}, yeah.

SS: How old were you when you started working for him?

GD: How old?

SS: Yes.

GD: Let's see, ^{I stayed there three years,} I was about thirteen, fourteen years old. Because I worked in different places in town there and I get homesick and go home.

SS: When did you leave school?

GD: School, four years. I had four years of school. Six and four is ten years. Ten years old when I left the school. And then I worked three-four years in different places, ^{there,} and sometimes I didn't work, I'd stay home. And finally they sent me over to this island and I couldn't get away from there, see?

SS: You didn't like it too much?

GD: I didn't like it very well, but I got used-- it wasn't very pleasant at first, but then I got used--I think I liked it, it was better. Then I was gone, you know, it was better than at home I had nothing to look for, you see; nothing to eat, ^{even} ~~there~~.

SS: How many kids in the family with you?

GD: Seven. Five boys and two girls.

SS: What is it that was bringing people to America? Did they hear much about America over there?

GD: Yes, sure. When I left there they had been hearing ^{for probably} America, [^] six, seven, years, eight. They all heard about America, but they couldn't get enough money to buy a ticket to leave ^{there}. But they heard about America, yes. Sure they heard. And they thought that America was--- Well, America was a good country, and it is still good country, But they come here with the intention to make money and go back and live there, and a lot of 'em did. But, I, myself, I never had the--After I lived out to here, I didn't want to go back. From here, my cousins, some of my cousins went back, ^{and} got married. They raised a family-- they had a few dollars from here, see. But that way some succeeded and some

failed. Some bought land, you see, with the money they brought from here, and they were living pretty good. But others, others they didn't. It's the same as in America. Some succeed and others fail. Not everybody get rich, you see.

SS: Was most of what people heard in Greece, that Anerica was a land of opportunity?

GD: Yes. And they came with the purpose to get the money, but, of course, a lot of 'em didn't. A lot of 'em stayed here, see? There was many, many Greeks here, havere, they're in position to you know Pantages, who had the theaters? He was a Greek. Another feller here in business they made big money, they got rich. But Pantages, of course, he, I don't know what happened to him at the last. He lost everything.

SS: Did people know that there was going to be a lot of work available when they got here?

GD: Oh yes. Yes, a lot of 'em, a lot of fellows, the Greeks that were here before and they knew the language, they could speak the language, they took advantage of them , you see. They make 'em pay money for the jobs.

SS: Oh, you mean like the contractors would hire...?

GD: Yes, but they are not contractors. They were working for the railroad. There was one fella, he was a head there in the railroad and he had a contract with the company to supply him with so many men.

SS: He would get people to pay him money for the job, and he cheated 'em?

GD: What do you call that? Not cheat, that's not a very good word.

SS: He was the middleman, that's for sure,

GD: Yeah, he was a ...

SS: It sound\$ like he conned 'em, a little bit.

GD: Yeah. Anyway, that's what they was doing. Them fellas that were here before, you know and they understood some of the language, and they contracted. Of course, in the rest of the gangs where I worked here, they had a

interpreter. They had a man next to the boss, he wasn't supposed to do common labor, he was supposed to explain to the men what the boss had told him, and so he'd have to make them understand themselves what they did-- he would tell them what to do. Because the fellas that work^{ed} there, they just came from the Old Country, they couldn't speak the language.

SS: When you came over-- Your father came over first?

GD: My father was here a couple of years before I was. I was ^{still} over working in the bakery and he finally sent me a ticket, you know, send me a ticket for me and my brother and we came here. We came here to Spokane in 1909.

SS: What did you think when you saw this country? What did you think of it?

GD: What I thought of it?

SS: Yeah.

GD: I thought it was alright. The country itself was alright. But the work on the railroad was terrible, because we were working hard them days.

There was no, I was a young man from the ^{bakery} when I came to pick and shovel here, you see my hands were all blistered. I thought then, I thought if I had the money, I would go right back. I didn't like the job, but then after that, after a while, I got used to that, and did pretty good.

SS: How did you get on-- first you came over to Spokane-- Did you get off in New York?

GD: Yes. We had to get off in New York. I still, today, I don't remember what deal it was. But they put us ⁱⁿ from one boat to the other. We were run through the ^{cattle guard} they called it. That used to be island in New York, where all the foreigners is coming-- I think they sold that island. Well, anyway, we came through here in New York and they put us-- not in boat for twenty-four hours, we traveled by boat. And then when we got out there, there was a lot of niggers, lots of niggers.

It must have been in the South, because there was a lot of niggers. And they had to switch the cars on the sidetrack and they had to wait there for quite a while before they took us-- we went up to town and we found some of the Greek grocery stores, they had grocery stores there. And we bought some cheese and things from there to eat, because we were hungry. When we left New York, they give us ^{a box}, oh, bologna and bread and so on. So many things, you know over there. Some didn't eat that, but I did, I liked it, too. Pie, one pie you see, not piece, but whole pie. It was a box and we paid dollar for that box. It was lunch. ^{Box} It was plenty of lunch ^{there} for two, three days. And we got along pretty good.

SS: Then you came all the way-- did you come by train?

GD: Yes, we came by train ^{from} there. From there we came on the Northern Pacific Station in Spokane ^{from} Burlington. I don't know-- ^{We boarded the} Burlington ^{train,} but it wasn't Burlington ^{train} from the East, and brought us over here to West, ^{through} Montana and so on. And once in a while you see Indians, you know. They used to come on the train, we didn't know what they was, they look funny dressed in the Indian costumes. And we asked somebody and they say, "Indians." From St. Louis, Missouri, we met some other ^{that} fellas were here before, two, three years, you know, and they could speak few words English, some like Greeks, and we got along fine. They came to Spokane, they were shipping from there to Spokane through the railroad they give 'em pass, you see, they didn't have to pay. They get pass and they were shipped from there to Spokane, and we got into Spokane just fine and dandy with them, you see, because if we wanted to eat ~~something,~~ they knew a few words and we didn't know any. So that was pretty nice.

SS: They got to ship free because they worked on the railroad?

GD: Because they come here to work. They wanted to send 'em to West, you see, what they called the "Wild West" them days. (Chuckles) They didn't want to come to West, you know. The people didn't want to come to West.

They thought that the Eastern towns were better. It wasn't bad when we came here.

SS: Was this where most of the work was? Out West at this time?

GD: Yes. The Milwaukee was building a new road ^{was coming} to the West. It was hand work, there was no machinery, like there is today, it was all hand work and it required a lot of men, to ^{to build a road} work. Now it is different. We had to work with pick and shovel and whatever they had. And if they wanted- against the mountain or something, they had to blast ^{with} the dynamite and then level it off with the pick and shovel.

SS: Well, how did you get on to work? Did you go to the employment agency?

GD: No. No. ^{No employment agency.} We had interpreter and he went and got the job from the employment agency, of course. It was -- in Spokane, you know there was a lot-- of employment agencies. And there was a lot of people working there, I don't know how many. Mostly foreigners. Greeks, Italians, Austrians, all them countries, you know from ^{all} over the south of Europe. It wasn't only Greeks, more Italians than anything else. And Austrians. The Austrians, they work mostly in the mines, but they did work on the railroads too.

SS: Where did you pick up this interpreter? Was he with you-- was he somebody you met in America?

GD: Yeah, someone from the same country, you see, but he was here before us and he could speak ^{a few words} English.

SS: Was he one of the guys you met in St. Louis?

GD: No, no, he was West. When we came here, there was two, three of those fellows, you know, that acting as interpreters. And a lot of 'em would take a bunch and go out ^{on the road} do the same, you see. They were looking for a better job, you see. If we went some place and didn't like it, why, we quit and go someplace else. But we very seldom

(End of Side A)

did that, because--- My first job was in Walla Walla. We were building a spur track to go into a cannery, where they were canning fruit. To go into the cannery and build a track to go into the cannery. Cannery was new, you know. And, of course, they were building tracks--- not canneries, but--

SS: How was the work organized? Did you have a little stretch that you did all by yourself, or how did they do it?

GD: No, no, they all together. The railroad you ^{worked} never by yourself. You-- ^{we were} leveling the ground, and of course, we had to shovel the dirt-- the surplus dirt, you know that was there and haul it away on push cars. Had a car run on the railroad which they hauled the push car and they ^{it dirt and wheel it away in place where they didn't need it any more.} loading,--No, you never worked along with the railroad. When you lay the ties down, then you lay the steel on the top of them, then, of course you got to learn to spike them and everything, so the boxcars and so on they could go on, you see. It was altogether work, that is, they didn't do it alone, by themselves.

SS: What did you make? What was the wages?

GD: Oh, the wages-- the wages was a dollar and thirty cents a day.

SS: How many hours was that for?

GD: Ten hours. Some were a dollar and a half; some a dollar thirty-five. And, of course, there was jobs in different places where they was getting more, probably two dollars a day. But they were contracts, you see, and over there you have to-- they already had taken the job.

SS: Taken?

GD: The other fellows. There was other people. ^{There was a lot of people.} The ^{interpreters} and so on and so forth.

SS: Was it hard work?

GD: Hard work, sure, I'll say it was hard work. It was labor by hand-- al-

ways is hard work. Then the train would come 'round, and work there and hook around and fill all the gravel, ^{in the road} fill the inside of the--because there were dump cars, you see. Some of the cars they were dumping right in the middle of the track. Well, you had to shovel by hand off the track, where it was not needed, you see. It was alright if you have to raise the tracks high enough to put it under there, but where it was not needed, why, ^{you had to} shovel it off--^{the} 'cause it wasn't level, it just was up and down.

SS: Where did you sleep?

GD: Oh, yeah, we had a-- boxcars. Well, not exactly boxcars, they were boxcars, but they were made for people to live in. And they had windows and so on. And that's where we slept. We had to build our own beds and everything. In some ^{on those} they were already built. Let's see, two, four, four is eight-- sixteen people in one boxcar. See they had bunks, of four-- One up and one down, you see. They had two layers. That way while we worked. If we had to move four, five miles, ^{or} ten miles or a hundred miles the box cars ^{would go} with us. One time, I was the baker, and I had ~~baked the bread~~ and we dug the coals in the ground for oven. Burn it with the ties, old ties, you know, and I had just finished the bread and put it in the oven. It was about half done, and then they come around - the train come around and he says you move to a certain place. We had to move to another place, you see, ^{work,} from there, ^{mines,} ~~there~~. So we had to ~~get~~ the bread half done. 'Cause sometimes, you know, we get our order to move. Sometimes even at nights, they come round and move you away from-- 'course they don't move you away, they move the cars. You are in the sleeping cars.

SS: I'm interested in that. And because I know a lot of men worked on that and then worked--

GD: The chief industry then was the railroad, see. 'Cause they're all new

the railroads, see. They're not all the Chicago-Milwaukee, they had a new-- they ^{come here} West at that time, 1907, it's about a couple of years before I come, but they was still working up there in Montana. That pretty rough country over there, see. They had to go through rough country-- pretty expensive business. But they had the money and they built 'em. Then, of course, they wasn't paying very much, but dollar and a half and two dollars a day. Two dollars a day when I came in the spring in Potlatch, 1914.

SS: Was everybody working there Greek? Was it all from the same place, working on the railroad?

GD: Well, yes. There were bunches, see. Now one there would have probably thirty men, or forty. One interpreter would have thirty men or forty. Another interpreter, he probably would have forty Italians or forty different nationalities. But they were separate. Sometimes they were together; worked together. But most of the times, they separate.

SS: Were most of the men that you worked with, men that you'd come over with from Greece?

GD: Yes. Yes, men that I knew. I either come over with them or they were here before me. Most of 'em.

SS: Were many from your own hometown?

GD: Yes, from my hometown.

SS: You started out together then. You came at the same time?

GD: Well, not the same time. ^{Not with all of them} Some were here. Some fellas were here, you know before. They were here maybe two, three years. Two years anyway. But when we went out to work, they were already working sometime, ^{Some of 'em.} And we didn't have buy a ticket because you get a pass, you see and they send you in to the job.

SS: So you met up with some of these guys when you were working?

GD: Yeah. And I knew some of 'em, I know most all of 'em, because they were from the same town.

SS: Did the crew work as one group? You said that if you didn't like it, you could quit and go someplace else. Would that be the whole crew that would decide that they didn't want it?

GD: Uh-huh.

SS: Did that happen to you?

GD: Yes, once or twice. We went to a job out of Coeur d'Alene, I think it was, and they didn't have nothing there, you see. No facilities of any kind, and they had tents to live in. So the whole crew went back and we found different jobs. There were in an employment office, you see, job sometime, you don't get another job right away, you probably have to wait two, three days or a week, and then something will turn up.

SS: But you never walked off the job when you were working?

GD: No. Now, we didn't do that. We just went to one place that I remember and they didn't have nothing there, you see, so we had to quit. It was a railroad, it was a contract, you see. And they were making the grade for railroad, but it was away from the railroad and we didn't have no, and they drop us over there and then they left. So we had to hire some farmers and their wagons to haul our belongings and we walked. I think it was about ten miles, we walked that time from the work, I know the name of the place now, I can't think of it.

SS: It was a town, into the town.

GD: It was close in Spokane. Not Mica, it's another little town there. It was the electric car that took us to Spokane.

SS: Someone that I talked to who also worked on the section told me that it was slavery. That's what he called it. He said it was really tough and

really bad.

GD: Well, it was hard work. You have to work, ten hours, you know. And it was hard work, but you get used to it. You couldn't call it slavery because you could quit anytime you wanted to. But slavery is something that you can't avoid.

SS: Could you save money from that?

GD: Not very much. Things were awful cheap in those days, living, it was cheap. We had some older fellas you know, that they knew how to save money and we save that way, a few dollars, but not very much money. We lived on ten or fifteen dollars a month, and we were getting about forty or thirty five. Thirty five, dollar and a half, dollar thirty five cents at one time. And that wasn't very much, they raise that to a dollar and a half. And we were making about thirty dollars, thirty five dollars a month or forty, and we saved a bit, but not very much. So the old fellows that were here before, why, they knew how to manage. Section is different now. In section you, I worked for section, too, but in the section you don't have too much to do in wintertime, because the track is already serviced during the summer and in wintertime, we didn't have too much to do. But in the summer, you worked, they have to erase raw spots and so on.

SS: That's more maintenance than construction.

GD: Well yes, maintenance. It was maintenance crew. That's what the section is maintenance crew. But they have to work, they're always finding work to do.

SS: Did you meet up with your father when you were working on the railroad?

GD: Oh yes.

SS: He was working with you?

GD: Yes. Not all the time. One time I left and went with my cousin, went

down to Oregon to work in the dam. They were building dam, you know,
and ^{paying} more wages, of course. -----noisy-- White Salmon--

SS: Yeah.

GD: It's in Washington. Oregon is on the other side. 'Course they were
building a pipeline, you know, they were ^{putting pretty} ~~getting~~ big pipe for the water
to go through, for the powerhouse. They were making the dam. I don't
remember now what it looked like. But we were working on the cement you
see, where they were ^{damming} ~~building~~ the water. Well, of course, they dam one
side of the river and then ~~throw the cord~~ ^{on the} other side ^{and then dam.} And they were pay-
ing more money. It was hard work. My father couldn't work there, he
was too old. So I didn't have to stay with him all the time.

SS: Did many of your guys who worked there, on the railroad, did they go in-
to town and blow-in like the lumberjacks did?

GD: Not so much. Some of 'em, yeah. But they don't- they didn't have much
to blow in. And they had to work all the time. ^{Winter and summer} ~~some of~~ The lumberjacks,
of course, they were laid off. They didn't work in the camps during the
months. They work in summer and they make pretty good money, doing gyppo.
And they are making pretty good money, but they had to spend it during
the winter months. It was different in ^{lumbering} and different in
the railroad, because you could work on the railroad during the winter
months in some places.

SS: Did you work all year-round?

GD: Mostly.

SS: When you guys weren't working, would you go back to Spokane?

GD: When we were not working?

SS: Yeah.

GD: Well, yeah. We went to Spokane for another job, if we didn't have
one. But we usually stay on the job. The first year I worked in the

railroad, they lay off the gang. They kept four men in two sections. You see, there was two sections. There was ^{double} section in Ephrata and the other one was going east from Ephrata. And they kept us ^{Here} all winter. We didn't do nothing. We had to watch, Watch the--if there was something to do, why, you do it. And we wasn't doing anything then, because there was nothing to do in wintertime. And that track was all fixed during the summer months.

SS: Did you have heat in the cars? In the boxcars? Was there heat in the winter?

GD: Oh, yes.

SS: You had woodstoves?

GD: Yes. ^{Put belly} Woodstoves. And in the section, of course, they had a section house. And we ^{had heat} there, too. They furnished the coal. We burn ^{the} coal in ^{some} places. And the company furnish the coal. Sometimes if there is a car with coal we go up there and throw some of it off anyhow, whether we wanted it or not.

SS: Did you work for a contractor or the railroad directly?

GD: ^{For} The railroad, directly. This interpreter--contractor, was just working for wages. They were probably paying them a little more, because they knew the language. But they had no contract. They were no contractors they were just interpreters, just drawing wages.

SS: You had no boss then among yourselves, except for the interpreter?

GD: No, no. We had the boss; American man. Sure. Oh, yes. Sometimes two bosses in big train. One head foreman, and one assistant foreman. Oh, yes.

SS: Did they treat you well? The bosses, or did they look down on you 'cause you couldn't speak English?

GD: Well, they looked down ^{up} on you, and you were forced to work, that's all there is to it. And, of course, I was a young man, ^{in them days,} I could do work. They never bothered me. ~~Young and strange~~ - Strong back and weak--?

SS: Mind?

GD: Yeah, you had to have a strong back them days. Now, I don't think I can do anything. Now we talk enough about the---

SS: About the section? About the railroad, I mean.

GD: The railroad. Yeah. Let's talk about Potlatch.

SS: Okay, let's talk about Potlatch.

GD: Okay.

SS: When did you come, now?

GD: In 1914.

SS: How did you happen to come to Potlatch?

GD: You know where I came from? You know where Heppner Junction is? In Oregon?

SS: Yeah.

GD: I was working in the railroad at Heppner and they lay us off. I and my brother. And we had two cousins here and we used to communicate with them. And they wrote us to come over. They were here before. They were here, maybe two, three years before we came here. Yeah, they were here three years. They came here in 1912. ^(End of side B) In the mill. So we come here and I got a job in slasher. The foreman, he asked me if I ever work in the sawmill, and I told him, "Yes." I lied. ^{"Where?" "Down in Oregon."} (Chuckles) And I never did work in sawmill, but I told him, "Yes." So he told me to go ahead and work in a certain job. And ⁱⁿ that job where he told me, well he was a Greek working there, and he motioned to me to come over. So I found the place ^{without knowing,} I didn't know what slasher meant, what he called his place, see. And I got in there and the fellow that worked there, he was off, he had quit. I guess he quit, because he didn't come back. Anyway, I got

a job there. And I'm still here.

SS: Now, did that fellow teach you how to do the job?

GD: That Greek fellow? Well, it wasn't much to that job. It was setting slack, you see. It wasn't skill work, anybody could do it. It was setting slack to cut in four feet, but if you don't cut 'em, it was all right too. To cut them for lath. They were making. It was lath in them days. Now they don't make lath. They use other materials. At that time they were making lath. And there were a lot of men working in the lath mill. I don't know how many, but there were quite a few.

SS: What did you think of this? Of working in Potlatch, compared to working on the railroad?

GD: I thought it was alright. That's why I stayed. I liked it. I like it here because, for one thing, you don't have the train to come over there and pick up the cars and move you probably a hundred miles or two hundred miles, or fifty miles. And you don't have the slides. Sometimes they had a slide in the, Wenatchee and up there some places. They had a slide up there and we had to go in the mud, that thick. And they took us from the section, they pick us up, they didn't tell us where we were going and what it was going to be. Tell you, "Come on". And we went over there, and we were over there all night and all day the next day, and we never did finish the job. The railroad was pretty rough.

SS: That was waist deep mud you were working in?

GD: In the railroad, yeah, when I was working in the railroad.

SS: What were you supposed to be doing? Shoveling out the mud?

GD: Yeah. Shoveling everything. You see, you had a scraper, but in some places we couldn't use it, then you had to shovel mud with a shove. And that's why I liked the Potlatch. The sawmill was alright, because we had the houses here, you know. Not here, but down below we had different houses they were temporary houses, they called 'em. They build them temporary for the people that came here, and then

they found that they could rent 'em to us and Italians and they kept 'em. During World War II they sold 'em, that was late then, that's when they sold all businesses in town.

SS: But you came here by yourself, or did you come with a bunch of guys?

GD: All by myself and my brother. My brother didn't get on here, so he went to work on section. He managed section here. I think they still got a section over here.

SS: But there was already lots of Greek people here at the time you came?

GD: Oh yeah, sure.

SS: About how many?

GD: There was about thirty people from my home town, alone.

SS: Really?

GD: Yeah, they run two shifts, you see. They run two shifts. Oh, there was lots of work, them days. They all work in the mill. The sawmill. All the Greeks work in the sawmill.

SS: What was your hometown again? I didn't ask you that. What was the name of the town?

GD: Dedemah. That is the way they spell it, but it is not the right name. In Greek.

SS: How comes so many people just from your own hometown came here?

GD: Well, there was so many out here in the west. They all came out here, west. There was very few left in the east. You see, if one came, then the other come. They had a correspondence, see? And they say "You come over here, and you get a job." And that's the way I came here. See, I had cousins here, I had two cousins here. In fact, there was three cousins. One is still living, two of 'em died. And I come over here and got a job. ~~We~~ was living down below. See, I told you about it.

SS: How was it set up?

GD: That place there was set up, it was a long building and was divided into two rooms. Two bedrooms and a kitchen and dining room together. There

were four of us living in that place. And a lot of places they were living, probably more than four, because they doubled up, slept together you see.

SS: Was it a long building like a dormitory?

GD: It was a long building, but was divided into small apartments. Yes. Then the water, there was no water in it. The water was on the outside and you have to get it from the pipe. There was a pipe there alright. And the toilets, were the same way, they were separate.

SS: Were the toilets like the ones up here?

GD: Yes, like the ones up here, but over there, they were separate. The house, the place was long and then they had separate buildings for each place for a toilet. You see, they had small toilet for each one of us, those place. And of course, here, here in town, up in Nob Hill, they had modern houses. But down town here, they never had box. You go in **there** and you do your stuff and then once week, or twice week, no, once wee or once month, they had a man, he come and empty them in a wagon and houl 'em away. They were hauling them to the Japanese farmer up here and he was raising the best stuff.(Chuckles)

SS: He used the manure for his vegetables?

GD: Yes, vegetables. He didn't own the place, everything was company's here. You couldn't own nothing.

SS: But when you lived there, about how many all told, would you say were Greeks **there** in those buildings?

GD: Oh, about thrity, twenty five or thirty. And there were Greeks and Italians the building was pretty long, you know. It wasn 't one, it was two buildings. But that long one, the one that was the longest, it start fire, you know, I told you how it start fire and burned down.

SS: Well, tell me that again. How did that happen?

GD: It got fire. One of the fellows there, he was a Greek too, he was from the Old country, he didn't

know anything about fire, and he took the ashes from the stove and he put 'em in the box, he put them in a box and left 'em there, you see. And pretty soon, about four o'clock in the morning, them ashes caught fire, you know. The floor and the whole business was on fire and they had enough time to throw their stuffs out, you know their belongings and nobody was hurt. And it burned down the whole business because there was no water, no hydrant there. They didn't have no hydrant, ^{that was a separate} the building, you see for the foreigners. And that burnt clear down to the ground. And what was left, they put it out anyway. ^{They shouldn't have, but they did.} And brought us up here in town, a different house.

SS: How did it happen they had housing available up here?

GD: They did have. They happened to have empty houses, I don't know why. Because the foreman down there, mill foreman, say we can go down to work or they shut the mill down there. And he says, "There's lots of houses, lots of empty houses up town." And they brought us down to this ~~street~~ they were temporary houses, too. But they used them because they found that they could rent 'em to the foreigners. And those houses down there they're not like this here, they were temporary buildings, you know, not durable buildings.

SS: Did you say they had to shut the mill down because you guys couldn't go to work?

GD: Yeah, couldn't go to work. They had to haul it down for a while in the morning, 'cause we didn't go down there. And then, of course, when they told 'em they could get the houses up there, they went to work in the evening. They were working ten hours then. You see in the evening they ^{come} up and got the houses.

SS: Were the people just waiting to find out what they were going to do? They didn't have any place to--

- GD: Naturally, yes. They didn't know what was going to do. And the boss told 'em that there were houses up there for you, and you could move up there.
- SS: Were there about as many Italians as Greeks there then?
- GD: More Italians, and Swedes. But the Swedes work in the yard piling lumber. And the Italians, too. The Italians work on the greenchain. More Italians, there were thirty two Italians work in the greenchain, alone. Others works, you know, other places, here and there, you know, probably fifty Italians maybe more.
- SS: Well, how does it work out that the Greeks worked in the sawmill and the Italians worked on the greenchain?
- GD: That's where they started. They started there, and one by one, that's why. That's where they started. And one by one, you see. All the common labor and the semi-skilled labor, that was done by Greeks in the mill. And it was a lath mill there too, you know. There was a lot of 'em worked in the lath mill.
- SS: Most of the people though, they'd never had a sawmill back in Greece, had they?
- GD: I never saw one. But they learn, you know, it's a matter of time.
- SS: What's the difference between semi-skilled and skilled work, in the sawmill?
- GD: Well, there's a difference. Now it is nothing, it's all skilled, or semi-skilled. But them days, the difference is that they had trimmer, that's not skilled work, that's common labor. And the setters, that set the, that's a skill. You got to know how to do it, you can't get up there and do that work. And my mob was semiskilled. You couldn't put anybody up there, in the cage and tell him to pull saws, he don't know what to pull and what to leave. That was semi-skilled. And the fella that was throwing the lumber on the top of the trimmer, it was common labor.

SS: So what did you do when you got into the mill? Mostly?

GD: Saws on the trimmer-- I was ^{to trimmer} lumber, in other words. And was it to know what to trim, what to cut out and what to let go. You see, you got to get out of a piece of lumber, the best part. And if it's to be cut in two, you do that. But you have to understand. You almost have to be a grader to do that, you see.

SS: That sounds pretty skilled to me.

GD: Yes. It is, if you do it right.

Ask me questions, because I can go ahead and tell you.

SS: Okay. One thing I wonder is how close did you stick with the people that you knew from your own town?

GD: How close I stick?

SS: Yeah, did you stick with them?

GD: Oh, all the time, while they were here. I had one ^{here} that was left here, same as I and left here in 1945, I think-- 1948, I think he left here. And I was with him because we always spoke in our own language, unless someone would come here other than Greek, ^{then we have to} speak English. And it's a wonder sometime how I learned to speak ^{the} English language as well, because down in sawmill, you can't talk you have to use signs. You talk the sign language in sawmill, because ^{its} too noisy there, you can't talk. And over here, when I came home I spoke Greek. And sometimes I am wondering how did I learn to speak English so well. I don't know whether I do speak well now, I don't, because too old, and my mind is not steady.

SS: You speak good. Do you have any idea how you learned to speak?

GD: Wanting to, ^{no reason}. Something that you really want to do, because in order to stay ^{here} in America you had to be able to speak English. I was trying to learn as much as I could. And we went to night school in 1915- 1916. But that didn't last very long here. World War I start-

ed, and I moved to the, over the coast. I work for the shipyards for eighteen months, I think. Then I came back here.

SS: Did you leave because the pay would be better over there?

GD: I thought, yes. It was, but it was more expensive to live there anyway. So you didn't gain very much.

SS: Did you like it better here than on the coast, as a place to live?

GD: Yes. And of course, my cousins were here then, too. That made difference. In fact, one my cousins who was down to Portland, and when I was layed off the yards, when World War stop, I came here with him. And of course, there were a lot of other Greeks here too.

SS: Did you get much opportunity when you were here to speak English? Did you spend most all your time with your friends, and did they all speak Greek?

GD: Yeah. Well, I didn't get no opportunity, but in 1945 I joined the Masonic Lodge. And I have to learn some othere there, but at that time, there wasn't any Greeks, there was only one or two here, and they left shortly after that. And that induced me to learn to speak because I had to. I took interest in work, in Masonic work, I mean. And I liked it. So I studied.

SS: Does that mean in the early years, like from when you first came and into the '20's that you didn't speak much English, and your other friends didn't either?

GD: Well in 20's I think I spoke pretty fairly, pretty good. In '14, '15 '16, '17, '18 probably not. But from the beginning I had been willing to learn as much as I could from the languages. And I tried to master the English language, but found it impossible. Because now, they tell me it's a expression, it's all Greek to me! Well, the Greek language, it maybe hard, but the English is harder, because you have so many words that are homonyms, you call them. They are about the same but they are spelled different. The spelling in the English language is the hardest thing of all. I can't spell now even. And you have words, letters that

are silent. You have many, many, many letter that are silent, you see, and you have to learn to speak them without hesitating at all. In the Greek language, you don't have no silent letters, you sound every one of 'em. The only difference is, that in the Greek language, when ^{you} use two letters together, you call them-----

SS: Diphthong?

GD: Diphthong, yeah, that's right.

SS: Did you-- when you first came, were you planning on going back?

GD: No.

SS: Did you ever plan on going back after---? You said in the very beginning, you did-- you wanted to.

GD: Yeah, in very beginning, because , I came from ^{the} bakery with soft-- hands, you see. (Chuckles) The ^{work was hard} you see, then. I wasn't used to it, I was too soft for pick and shovel. And that's why I didn't like it then. But after I got used to that, why, it wasn't hard, it was alright. ^(END of side C) I went back in 1961, and I was there five months. But I didn't like it because of the conditions. I didn't go with the intention to stay anyway. I went for other reasons.

SS: What about the other people who were here then? Did any of them want to go back?

GD: Them other people, they scattered all over, and those that are left, you know, them ^{that are} living, those that are living probably went back to the Old Country, they had some money. And during the Depression, that's when the Greeks were ^{not here} all together, and there were only one, two, three, four left. Three of 'em are dead now, because he went to California and I don't know whether he is still living or not, but I don't think he is now, because if he's living he'd be ninety years old.

SS: Why did they leave at the beginning of the Depression?

GD: There was nothing here. They shut the mill down. The mill was down ^{here} for

two years during the Depression, and I left here, too, I went down to Lewiston.

SS: They couldn't get any way to support themselves?

GD: No.

SS: I thought the company tried to get work for people.

GD: Oh, to get work for people ^{that had} families. They had to take of them whether they wanted to or not. There were a lot of people here that were caught here, that stayed here, they give 'em probably one week a month. Work one week and one week to lay off. You see, there are a lot of 'em ^{that} got in the hole here, and the company had to give the money, they were in hole in store, and rent. 'Course, the rent, they didn't care, you see, but the store, ^{is a little bit different} is different. Didn't pay the rent at all, they didn't have no money, during the Depression. ^{They had to keep the fellows w/ the families} Of course, they let us off, there was only one Greek that was working down here at the planer, and because he was an oldtimer, they didn't lay him off, but they cut him down. They let him work one day week, sometime. Sometime, less. One day month. And he was kicking, but others didn't have any job at all.

SS: Well, you had worked for twenty years by then.

GD: Yes, yes, I had worked for twenty years and I went down and saw Mr. O'Connor, and O'Connor was the general manager here at that time. You didn't know him, I don't think. And he told me, "Yes, we want you," he says, "we want you to go to work, because we know that some of the fellows that have families are no good, and they can't do the job that you do. But still, we have-- we are looking at the human side." You see it was humanity that they hired them because of their children. If it wasn't for their children, they would be out. And, of course, that happened, as I told you, that fella there that was working in the planer. He went to work on the section and let me have the job here in the sawmill.

And that's how I got on. And one fella ⁱⁿ from *Rock Creek*. Two single men were working and all the others were married men with families.

SS: So you-- was this when the Depression was ending or still going?

GD: It was ending.

SS: It was ending, and then you came back and took his job?

GD: Well, I-- he gave it to me.

SS: Yeah. But by then most of the Greeks were gone and didn't come back?

GD: They didn't come back, no. There was nothing for them to come back.

SS: When the mill started up again, they didn't hire back too many people.

GD: Not very many. No. ^{because they were all} When the mill started here, they run probably six, seven months a year then they shut down in the wintertime for two, three years up to 1940. Then they started up, and then, of course, the World War II come up, then they run pretty steady.

SS: Would you tell me again about your meetings with Mr. Laird?

GD: Oh, (Chuckles) There is nothing I can tell you. Mr. Laird was a--

SS: Are you thinking of an aristocrat?

GD: Aristocrat, that's right. Yeah, he was a aristocrat. There was one old fella down there and his brother-in-law was killed in the woods, in the fire-- forest fire. And this fella had a little money tied up in the handkerchief, and the old man wanted to get that money to go back the Old Country himself, because he was too old to work here. So, he asked me to go down with him and talk to Mr. Laird. And his office then was down at the plant. They didn't have this office here, they didn't have this building here. SO, I says, "I go down with you", I says, "but I don't know whether I can make him understand." So, I went down there, and he took the money in the handkerchief and showed it to me, and he says, "That will go to his widow, because she's entitled to it." I don't know whether I says anything else, because, I told him

that this man is his brother-in-law and he wants to find out what happened to the little money that he had, because he knew that he had some money. And that's why he took it out of his drawer there and show it. It belonged to the widow. And he says, "^{after the} things are straighten out here," he says, "I'll send it to the widow, and he can't get anything." So, I left. I didn't even know what ~~the~~ the widow was then, you see. So, I left, and, of course, the old man he sent and got a fella from Spokane, he was married to his sister-- this fella that died was married to his sister-- and had the - his sister to give him the power of attorney, and that way he got the money and whatever else was awarded him for the death-- the widow for his death.

SS: So it didn't go to the guy's widow?

GD: No, because she gave him power of attorney, this old fella-- ^{to her brother} this was his brother, see? And, of course, he told her that was the best way and the easiest way to get the money is to give him power of attorney and to go ahead and settle the case. ^{with him} And he did. Another time, that I talked to him, I talk a little more English then, but it was up here. And I had to go over there and ask his secretary, secretary was downstairs, and she had a window, and I says, "Miss Kelly, can I see Mr. Laird?" You had to ^{ask} ask the secretary for permission to go and see, and Miss Kelly she call him on telephone-- She says, "Greek fella," she told him, 'course she knew I was a Greek. ^{I was here for a long time then} "Yes," he said, "send him ^{up} up." So- there was two of us, myself and the fella who had broke his leg. And I told him, "Mr. Laird," I says, "this man had accident here in the mill and broke his leg. And he has been laid off now for quite a while, and he like to- he want to know if he can get some money to send to his family." And he told me then that-- he says, "you tell him that we have nothing to do with that now. The State is taking care of that, and he'll be compen-

sated from the State when the time is ripe. He has to go through the State to get his money. But", he says, "if he has family and his family need money, why, he has some friends here, hasn't he? He can borrow from his friends and send to his family, and that's the only thing we can do for him." ^{so I got up and left.} I think he did, I don't remember now, got some money, I don't know how much.

SS:

What was Mr. Laird like to talk to?

GD:

He was gentleman. ^{He WAS Aristocrat.} He spoke to me pretty nice, 'cause I could talk a little English then. ^{He WASN'T hard boiled or anything.} Some people probably had different impression. I think he was nice fella, to talk to.

SS:

Do you think he cared a lot about the town and the people? That he took a lot of care about them?

GD:

I think he did, yes. I think he did. I think he was a humanitarian. He was not, you know, rough customer and didn't care for people.

SS:

Were people afraid of him, do you think? Especially the people who were-- didn't know the town, too good?

GD:

They were not afraid of him, I don't think. I don't think they were afraid of him. There was one occasion here when the bank was owned by the company and the banker embezzled two hundred and fifty thousand dollars from the bank. And all the Greeks, you know, they got scared and they rush over there to the bank to take their money, and Laird went over there himself, or he sent somebody else to tell the people that they're not going to lose their money. The company's gonna pay them every cents. I think he sent a fella by the name of ^{NO,} $\frac{N}{A}$ he himself went down there and told them, "Boys, you can draw your money if you want to, but don't be afraid, because you're not going to lose your money. The company's gonna pay." And it did. Paid everything. And, of course, they put that fella in jail. That's when the examiner came over here

and he stay here, he stay here for quite a while. *Fella by the name of Warner, I think it was.*

SS: When you were-- back in the early days when all the Greeks were living together, pretty much. What was the social life like? What kinds of things did you guys do?

GD: Well, Our social life here was among us. We gambled sometime, but not very much, here in Potlatch. The social life between us and the other people-- we live apart, you know. We didn't have too much to do-- because during the War -- some young fellas went down there-- well, I was young, too, then, but I didn't go. Went down to to the gymnasium, they had a gymnasium here, and went down there to join, but you have to pay so much, you know, a small fee anyway, to be a member, and they wouldn't let 'em. But as far as our social life here, we had it among ourselves here. You know how it is. Sometimes we had somebody from the town come ^{down} here, but not very often. ^{At work, we were all Greeks...} And we didn't have not much social life-- we played cards very much, pastime.

SS: Was that---? Oh, pinochle.

GD: Did guys drink very much?

GD: Some. Some did. Italians did, very much. They had--Over there I was never to them. I was living right next door and the other houses, you know, they were all Italians. ^{And Greeks.} And they had wooden balls they were playing with, it's something like bowling, ^{alley} but it was in the ^{open} and they had a little ball. They played that in the Old Country, you know. In my country, too. But here they was speaking Italian, and I couldn't understand 'em. And pretty soon I ^{probably found} to understand some words. But that's the social life everytime they-- Sundays, and everytime they didn't -- in the evenings in summertime, when the days are long, they were playing them balls, all the time. It was kind of funny to watch them. And sometimes we played, too, but not very often, because they owned them balls, see, bought them I guess, or brought them ^{back} from

the Old Country, I don't where. And they drank, too.

SS: I heard a lot of wine came in.

GD: Oh, yeah. These fellas there they played for the drinks, you see. And there was a fella ^{there} that was bootlegging, you know. And the company didn't allow anything like that at all. But it was private, you know, they didn't bother us anyway. And they drank quite a bit. He was quite a ^{drinker}, one of 'em, he was drunk pretty near all the time.

SS: The Italians, did they have one man who was-- who represented them-- their interests to the company?

GD: No. No. They had one man that was foreman, the boss down to the green-chain. And he about thirty, thirty-five men, I think, but he didn't represent them. He thought he did, himself, but he didn't ^{represent 'em.} actually ^{He} was trying to make himself known to the authorities. But I don't think he represented them.

SS: He was just brownnosing.

GD: Yeah. And another thing he ordered them to strike one time. And he ^{did} call the strike, see. And the company give 'em-- they settle up anyway. Because they on strike without notifying the company and the mill stopped. What happened really, the greenchain was on a strike--- ^{Who was out there}

He was married man, and he had two daughters, one of 'em still living down Lewiston. But he was nice fella, he was drinking too much.

SS: You say, he kept working when the men went on strike?

GD: No, no. He was the cause of the strike. He was the one that told, I think-- I'm not so sure now, but I think that's what it was. ^{His doings.}

SS: Were many people sending part of their earnings back to the Old Country?

GD: Some. Some were. Some did if they had families, and of course they had to send 'em to support their families.

- GD: Did I tell you about the sales they had here in the store?
- SS: I've heard them mentioned. They were pretty big, huh?
- GD: Well, this here was the biggest store around the Inland Empire, outside of Spokane. Because they were supporting all the-- it was the outlet for the camps, you know. And there was a lot of people here, there was probably a thousand people working here then. And they had sales-- free coffee and there was fellas-- there was no automobiles them days, it was wagons. They ^{were coming} from Palouse, oh, from all over from around the small towns, they come here to the sale. Oh, it was a big doings. And they were successful, ^{I think they were} making money. But this store was the-- pretty well supplied. You see they had every-- even from ^{Farmington} they were ^{coming}, from distance. The wagons and the buggies, whatever you call them, from all over. I think they were once a year, the sales. During the fall.
- SS: The man that was the store manager, I forget his name--
- GD: It was Mc Donald.
- SS: He was a real wheeler-dealer, wasn't he?
- GD: Yes. McDonald, he knew how to-- he was a business man, and after he left why then, everything went haywire-- oh, not haywire, but they didn't have them sales. But them sales, oh, they were-- big. Big doings. Give free ^{and everything} coffee. But people come from all over.
- SS: Do you think back then that you spoke more--- if you were the guy that went with some of your friends---- (End of Side D)
- GD: That's why they asked me to represent 'em, because I could speak very much English. At that time, 1914, I couldn't speak very good, and that's why I couldn't understand Mr. Laird, what he said. Now at the office down there ^{with} this other deal here, it was later, much later, because they had built a new office here. And he was up in the upstairs, you see, and he wasn't taking everybody-- you had to ^{get} permission from the secretary. Down there, was-- I couldn't speak very good then, but I

can speak a little more than the old man could, you see. And he asked me to, I didn't tell him that I could talk good English. But I told him that I'd do the best I can to help you, but if I can't-- and I went down there, and we didn't accomplish anything because the old man wanted to get ahold of the money. And, of course, he got power of attorney and he got it anyway.

SS: Did you and your friends, did you take it seriously to look out for each other? Would you do a lot for your friends in those days? Or was it more every man for himself?

GD: Oh, well, yes, you do for friends. It was more then than it is now. You know, if you see a friend that you know and he's out of job, and wants help, why, you help him. Now, it's different, because-- now, you see, you have all the Social Security and the Welfare and everything, and you tell him, "If you can't take care of yourself, go to the Welfare."
^{The Government}
But then you-- well, you didn't have to, but it was more of the thing to do, than now, you see. Because you had no other way of getting money probably to go and look for a job-- when he's out of a job or something like that. You do more for them then.

SS: Was it tough for the people to advance in the mill? To get ahead? To get better positions?

DG: It was because, I tell you, the reason was-- the people that had a good job, they won't leave it. They stick to it. And they work them days as long as they could. As long as they could do the work they let 'em work. There was no sixty-five retirement. Which I think is alright. But them days they worked up to seventy, eighty 'til they died. One old sawyer here, he was the head sawyer, and he worked in the-- sawing up 'til he was probably seventy years old. Then he got so old, you know, and he couldn't cut enough lumber and they laid him off from that job and they gave him cleaning up the-- around the planer. And that's what

they did them days. They got them old fellas-- the only job was open was to clean up, and it wasn't anything that had to be done, it was just to give him something to do. And the wages, of course-- ^{SAWYERS WAGES.} 'cause they were paid.

SS: Do you think that there was any job discrimination against people who were foreigners?

GD: Some. Some. If they had a good job, people ^{seen they was a foreigner, they} didn't like it, but then they ^{didn't have} no power to fire 'em.

SS: Do you think it would be harder for a guy who was a foreigner and didn't speak much English to get ahead as far as getting a higher paying position in the mill?

GD: No. I don't think he can because of the language. You see, he got to be able to speak and understand the language. And without that, he's not apt to get a good job. 'Course today, it's different.

SS: I've heard people say, for instance, that if a foreman was a Swede you could expect he would favor Swedish people that came looking for a job over anybody else, maybe. That you could figure that would happen.

GD: Yes.

SS: That could make it harder for people who-- let's say, if they didn't have a foreman of their own nationality to go to.

GD: That's right. That has some bearing, because he will favor his own nationality. But if he don't have them, he ^{ill} hire someone else. ^{Provided} they're doing the job, too. Because, he is apt to lose his own job if he gets people of his own nationality who don't understand or don't do the job. One fella told me one time that-- I was grading lumber there, you know, for changing ^{fellas} them ^{when one would go out.} saw. And he says, "If you were a Swede, you could have this job." Grading." You know, grading lumbars, because the head grader, he was a Swede, you see, and he says, "If you was a Swede, you can have this job." I says, "I'm not."

SS: I've been reading about-- that there was a lot of feeling around that time, 1910-1920, in there, there was a lot of -- they call it nativism. I don't know if you ever heard them use that word. They say that there was a feeling a lot of people had-- some people had-- that was really anti-immigrant. They didn't want new people, foreigners coming into the country at that time, some of these people. And it's funny, because they'd come in themselves back earlier, but now they were saying, "Well, if we have foreign people coming in, it's going to change the country in a bad way." And so, there was a lot of people that were opposed to immigration. And I think probably, from what I read, they say there was prejudice against these new people coming in, because they were changing their attitude about immigrants.

GD: There wasn't much-- there wasn't very many immigrants coming in from 1920-- 1910. 1910, yes, lot of 'em, but not in '20's. From 1910 to 1915 and probably-- well, in 1920, some, but not too many. Not too many immigrants. They put that quota, and they can only come so many from each---

SS: Yeah, I think the quota was a part of that deal. Because they were trying to stop people from coming in.

GD: Yeah, they did. They did stop 'em. There was only a hundred people come from Greece. And that quota was full all the time.

SS: A hundred people a year?

GD: Yes.

SS: Do you think that-- do you remember there being prejudice against the people when they first came over here? I don't mean just Potlatch, but out West?

GD: No, because they needed them then. They needed them to build the country. And without them it wouldn't a been built. But later, there might have been prejudice. Well, like now, everything is built. And you get a bunch of foreigners-- for instance like these refugees--

SS: From Vietnam?

GD: Yes. (loud whistle) ^{people resent that, don't you?} I think a lot of, I think now, I don't know. Because you had to give 'em something to do. You got to give 'em a job to support themselves and families, if they have them. They have families, too, don't they?

SS: But like, you say for instance here, they didn't want-- they couldn't be in the gym at first. I heard that the Italians weren't made to feel welcome at the Catholic Church, at first. When they first tried to go there, so they didn't go for a while.

GD: Yeah. Well, I tell you, the Catholic Church-- the Italians that were here were very few that went to church. Not because they didn't want ~~them~~, because they didn't want to go themselves. And the church, the Catholic Church, I don't know what they believe in, but at one time that fella there, that ~~Nosio~~, that I was telling you about being the foreman on the greenchain and being the drinker, he never did go to church. And when he died, they never took him to church. And these Italians that were here, you know, they were mad about it, but I don't think they could do anything. And I actually, I'm not Italian, but I knew this fella here, and I know the Greek Orthodox Church is the same, too, but they never do that, they take 'em in church anyway.

SS: You mean that the town didn't do it? The church didn't do it?

GD: No, it was the Catholic priest. I ask him and says, "Why didn't you?" He says, "I had orders from the Bishop ^{from} Boise." Whether that was right or not, I don't know. The Bishop didn't know anything about this man. ^{I think it was him.} He was a young fella.

SS: Did you--Was there a practice of the Greek Orthodox here? Did the men have any services here?

GD: No. No, it's the church in Spokane, but not here. Not here or nowhere else around here.

- SS: But you didn't get together among yourselves to have any kind of worship?
- GD: No. There was a priest come here one time and he stayed here for some time, for two, three days, I think. And he had services here. But that's a long time ago, and he never did come back.
- SS: Was there any way then that the men could worship? Did they do it on their own or just have to forget about it?
- GD: Well, they do it on their own, if they want. It's up to individual. The church is alright, if you want to go to church it's okay, and if you don't-- you don't have to go to church to be a good Christian. I go to church here. I used to. I don't go any more because I got too old, but I can't go to church in the Greek church, I go to the Presbyterian here.
- SS: In the early days did the other Greeks go to the churches in town here? Or did they just not?
- GD: No. ~~No~~ Other Greeks, no. After the Greeks left, you see, it's since the Depression that the Greeks left here. And the last two or three, ^{that was here} they go to church if they want-- once in a while. I used to go quite often.
- SS: Do you think that most of the-- Well, how do you think that most of the Greeks felt about being here? Do you think that most of them liked the work and were satisfied with it or wanted something better?
- GD: Oh, yeah, they were satisfied. That's why they stayed here, ^{those} that were here. Oh, well, they like something better, but, you know what I mean, they were in no position to get anything better. And, some, not very many, had left here; went into business for themselves or did something else.
- SS: Do you think many people believed in the idea of getting-- about being able to get real rich here?

GD: There wasn't much change. You can't get rich by working. Now, if this was open town from the beginning there would be lot of Greeks in business here. Not lot of 'em, but there be^{en} some, like in Elk River, there was one. And Elk River^{'s} small place, it was. But here it's a bigger place, and there'd been some, but ^{being} ~~a~~ company's town ^{they didn't permit} anything intoxicating liquor. They couldn't go into business, you see. Had business here, the confectionery was run by Americans, and they made money, some of 'em. But it was a straight business, you know. They didn't sell no beer, because it was permitted by the company.

SS: Do you think there was any difference of how well people could do in a company town as compared to a town-- here as compared to Elk River? Was this a better place or a worse place?

GD: This was a good place, if it was open like Elk River but it wasn't. And that made difference.

SS: I don't mean just for business, I'm thinking of working in the mill.

GD: Working is about the same, there isn't much difference. Working in mill you have the same thing here as you have in Elk River, when the mill was running over there. You see in the sawmill, ^{I don't know whether you know} it's the job you got, you have to handle it yourself, because the machinery force you to do it. If you don't take the lumber and put it on the trimmer and it don't go out, it's gonna pile up, and you have to stop. And if the edgerman or the sawyer gets plugged up and he don't keep it going, why, it's gonna get pile up and they have to stop the rig; the saw, stop sawing. So, it's each one has to do his work in that mill. Now it's moreso. Because there's not very many, you see. It's the sawyer, one edgerman and that's about all, and the trimmerman, of course.

SS: Did you work at that all the time you were in the mill? Trimming?

Gd: Yeah. I started, of course, on the spotter. Spotting lumber.

SS: On the what?

GD: Spotting lumber. Spotting the lumber to trim it. You have to spot it--
Have you been in a mill?

SS: Yeah.

GD: Well, you've seen them fellas throwing the lumber on there? Well, they
are spotters, you see. They're supposed to spot it, if they ^{don't} spot it, you
stop and make 'em pull it or push it one way or the other to get the most
of it, see? Near right. And the fella upstairs up in the cage,
is the saw puller-- that's what they call them. Saw puller and spotters.
Of course, the saw puller gets a little more money, *than the other.*

SS: You worked as a saw puller until you retired.

GD: Uh-huh. Oh, saw puller and spotter, because they changed this business
there, you know. They're trying to get the work done with two men and
it ^{was} impossible. I don't know how it sounds, but anyhow they pushed us.

SS: *End of*

END OF INTERVIEW ONE

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins 12-02-75