

AXEL ANDERSON  
First Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam and Laura Schragar

Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

## AXEL ANDERSON

Bovill, Elk River; b. 1886

walking boss and foreman for Potlatch Lumber Company

2.5 hours

minute page

## Side A

- 01 1 Farmer Nilson, who'd homesteaded near Winnipeg Junction, Minnesota, sent him money for passage. Slept through his stop and woke up at Fargo, North Dakota. A black porter speaks Norwegian and helps him out.
- 06 3 Paid off his ticket by working five months for the farmer. Then worked on a seventy-five foot railroad fill to eliminate the grade and the need for helpers. Axel offers an old Irishman a drink and he swallows the whole bottle.
- 11 5 Piled lumber in Minnesota for \$1.80 a day. Hired out in the woods for \$35/month if you stayed until the job was done and the job is probably still not done. So you got \$1/day (\$26/month) and board.
- 13 6 Railroad men used to go to town every few weeks and blow all their wages.
- 14 6 Partner and he went west on Northern Pacific and got off where they were building a reservoir. Quit after a couple hours because they feared they would be killed by the dump cars. Hiked forty-five miles in one day to reach where a branch line was being build. Wilson brothers hired them and paid their board for ten days until work started and they stayed until the job was done.
- 22 9 Returned to farmer Nilson to help with harvest. Came west again in April and worked for McGoldrich. He was a nice old man, as simple as any lumberjack.
- 24 10 For two years he ran Camp 35, near Clarkia, which had 350 men. Built the whole camp inside the "Y" where the locomotive turned. The cookhouse ran 24 hours a day. The machinist, Ernie Smith, could make anything you told him or showed him, but not if you drew it.

## Side B

- 01 13 (continued) Could get machinery and parts the next day from Spokane. Groceries trucked out from Bovill.
- 02 13 Could tell you where every man was in the woods. Axel explains to Billings, the boss, why he doesn't get tired of the same old faces--they trust and know each other. Axel can tell the crews where to go and they're all gone in 15 minutes.

Axel Anderson

minute page

## Side B (continued)

approx.

04	15	Worked for McGoldrich until July 4th piling lumber in Spokane. Couldn't save money. Went to mine near Wallace and after one trip a half a mile underground he quit.
06	16	Axel decided to take the lowest paying job on the employment boards and that was Potlatch Lumber Company. Scraped up gravel near the mill in the river and worked until there was ice in the water.
10	18	1907 was the "Year of the Wooden Money" because the mill workers in Potlatch got paid in coupons, but he got gold in the woods.
11	19	He did all sorts of jobs in the woods--swamper, faller, whistle punk, choker setter. As whistle punk he'd signal the donkey with a stick on a tight wire and then chase the load in to the landing and let it through the bull block.
15	21	Tight line had to be set up carefully, often with fourteen spar trees on one line. A donkey once sat in one place for eighteen months.

## Side C

00	24	Italians couldn't help in scraping gravel because you felt the power but a helper didn't. Donkeys also run by feel. Making a twenty-four foot splice in the cable in an hour when it broke.
04	27	Coastal loggers almost useless in Idaho woods <sup>bc</sup> cause the techniques and conditions were so different. The setting up of spar trees and rigging for high line and high lead described.
08	29	Hard to keep up with the changes from the old days. The first combine he saw near Deary.
14	32	Worked ten months for CCC in the Depression. Built road on the St. Joe near Calder.
18	34	Piling match stock up to four feet in width. Partner and he quit because they could barely handle the wide boards. Used a pickaroon when the boss wasn't looking.
20	36	The great white pine. Frye halfway house at Collins.

Axel Anderson

	minute	page	
Side D			
	00	37	Drove piling with a steam donkey for Elk River mill in winter of 1909-10. Lived in tents. Walked to Bovill and back in one day in the break-up for some blueprint. Later men complained about a 3 mile hike.
	09	40	Head of roustabout crew. Ole Trumball's homestead used for Potlatch headquarters. Slept in a tent and often woke up with his hair frozen to bottom of the tent.
	15	43	Loaded the stones that are in front of the Potlatch gymnasium. The rock at Whitman College he picked out 4 miles from Elk River. One newsman often came and took pictures of the snow and the logging. Had 9 donkeys working out of Elk River and on a clear day he could hear each one of them. Axel and his crew blew up stumps and levelled off the streets in Elk River.
	24	46	Big flood by Herrick on St. Joe in 1933, 2 days before Christmas when working with CCCs. Axel was in St. Maries when the dike there broke. Bridge built with 2 inch cable near Calder was broken; animals hung in crossarms of telegraph poles.
Side E			
approx.	00	49	The CCC camp was flooded and the captain reported a 95% loss to Fort Wright. Major Murphy called Axel in to make a rough estimate of what they needed. Rebuilding the camp.
	06	52	First CCC camp on Ponderay River had 26 old lumberjacks with the old Wobbly thinking - destroy, not build. Got rid of most of them and got the crew to work with him. You need to have the will of the camp.
	08	53	Gave local people near Herrick help. Building new bridge across river from road to the camp. His dangerous work in the river. Gave tools away to farmers - boss said, "The flood took care of all of it."
	16	57	Farmer near Calder lost 86 head of cattle in flood. Cows crowded by gate to the barn, calves stayed by haystack eating hay. One calf floating on a bale of hay. Milk cows tied to stanchions in the barn drowned.

with Laura and Sam Schragger

July 23, 1974

## II. Transcript

AXEL ANDERSON: Well, that's quite a story. (chuckles). That would be interesting too. It was to me.

SAM SCHRAGER: So how did it come about?

A A: Oh I wrote people. they sent me a ticket. So then a farmer by the name of, their family was Nilson, they come from my home town in Sweden. That was years ago, you know, they had a farm, they took up homestead there in Minnesota--Clay County, it's about thirty miles east of Morehead, between Morehead and Lake Park. They called it Winnipeg Junction them days. There was a branch line that went up to Manitoba in Canada on the N. P. road, Northern Pacific. The funny part of it was, I stayed a week in Norway, in Christiana--now they call that town Oslo, that was Christiana then, that was in 1905. And I stayed a week there, we got on the boat and we went over to Hull, England, then on the train to Glasgow, Scotland. And I waited there a week. Then we were on the boat I guess nine or ten days to get into New York. And got on the train there till we come to Minneapolis, Minnesota. Course I went around with the kids, you know, more kids there, and lots of Swedes, <sup>met</sup> a lot of them when they got off the train. And we didn't get on the train till about midnight, again.

And I thought I could stay awake. And I did till--we'd get over to Winnipeg Junction where I was to get off, they were supposed to meet me. But five o'clock in the morning, here I was sound asleep you know, and nobody woke me up. I woke up and it was daylight, you know, it was all just like it is here. The train was standing still, and I looked up and I could see Fargo, N. D.--North Dakota. And here I was, you know,



just a-comin' over, couldn't talk to anybody. So I sat still, I couldn't get off. So the train started again. Here come the conductor, you know, and he was looking for a ticket. They'd'a took mine, see, the night before, but they didn't wake me up. I was sitting in the chair there a-sleepin'. So he stopped the train and kicked me off. Got my little hand bag, and I got off and I thought, "No use to go after the train!" So I had sense enough to go back, and I walked back to the depot. And those redcaps was around. There was a nigger, black one, and he tried everything he could, you know, to talk to me, and of course I couldn't understand it. Finally he talked Norwegian--boy, then I was right at home, I could understand that all right. So he helped me then, you know. He asked me if I'd had breakfast, and I told him no, I hadn't had nothing since the day before. He said, "You got any money?" And I told him yes, I had a little money. So he helped me in there, they had a beanery at the station, you know. Went in there and got ham and eggs and potatoes and toast and everything. And he said, "Now you wait right here," till the train come a little after nine that morning. Here come a train going east, and he helped me get a ticket on that. So at eleven o'clock that day, instead of coming from the east at five o'clock, I come into that station at eleven o'clock from the west. Nobody there. By god, that was quite a first experience, that's the first one. That was a pretty good experience right there. I was wondering what the hell was gonna become of me. I was all alone!

SAM: How old were you then?

A A: Well let's see, that was in '05, I must have been nineteen. Yeah, just about.

SAM: What had you heard about America before you came over that made you want

to come?

A A: Oh geez, them days, you know, they migrated a lot from all the countries over here. This country was new, you know. It wasn't like it is now. Take seventy-five, seventy years back, you know, this country was new. See in '89 Spokane burnt up, and so you know that's been built since '89. Well you see Spokane now, so there is one example what the changes has been here, right here where we're sitting. When I come here in '07--I put in two years in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Dakota, knocked around. Had a good time, bad time, good times. (chuckles)

SAM: What did you do?

A A: Oh I done every damn thing anybody could think of. I was capable of doing most anything, no matter what I tried I could do it. I used to drive team, I worked on a farm, I worked with that farmer. I think I got there the ninth day of June, and I worked there till the plowing was done in the fall, for the ticket. The ticket cost, I think he paid sixty-five dollars to get me over, them days. And I worked June, July, August, September, October and into November. So we were through plowing and everything, so there was nothing more to do, only take the chores around the farm, you know. So I asked him if he was satisfied, I'd go out and work. He said he was, but he wanted me to stay. That's where I made my first mistake--I should've stayed and went to school, I could have went to school . then see, that winter, and stayed with him. But I couldn't see that, I didn't know, I hadn't seen anything on that farm. So I couldn't tie up on that farm all my life. There I made the first mistake.

LAURA SCHRAGER: Where'd you go then?

A A: Oh I went out. First I started in on the N. P. Railroad; they were

building a new line there. They had helpers. They raised, they elevated the track between Hawley and Lake Park, past the farm there, you know. They put in a fill across that canyon seventy feet higher. That took off so much grade, you know, they didn't need any helpers any more on the trains. They could come right straight through from Fargo to St. Paul without helpers. They had a hill there to go up, so they had to send a helper with 'em always. By god, that took that off. They raised it up seventy feet, you know, that's quite a bit on the railroad. And they could distribute that on forty miles, you know, so they almost come on the level. I worked there awhile, out there on the steam shovel, worked nights. That's where I met that big Irishman that I brought out a bottle of whiskey and give him. And he drank all of it, I didn't get a drop, I wouldn't get a drink of it. He took it all! (chuckles)

SAM: Do you remember this guy's name?

A A: No, I don't. No, I couldn't tell you. By god, I don't know. Maybe. . .

SAM: Oh, it doesn't matter.

A A: That was in 1905. That's a long time ago. Nope, I can't pick him up.

SAM: But you never forgot he drank that whole bottle of whiskey?

A A: No, no, but I didn't buy him any more! And I walked six miles down to town, and got that and brought it up. I thought I'd be a good fellow you know, it was cold. That was in November and December, in the fall it's cold in that country. So when we were going in for dinner, I thought a good drink before we eat would be just right. He appreciated it. He said, "Glug-glug-glug-glug-glug-glug" (chugging whiskey) He said, "Lad, that was a good drink." (chuckles) And he took it all, you could never see it. It didn't faze him a bit. If that'd been me, I'd've been sleeping under that steam shovel. (chuckles)

SAM: Where was that farm you worked on and didn't go back to?

A A: It was there at Winnipeg Junction.

SAM: Winnipeg Junction.

A A: This where I worked then at the camp, that was only a mile from the farm. Part of that railroad come across the farm, that new railroad-- well the old line did too, down in the bottom of <sup>the</sup> a ravine, the creek. It made a swing, curve around it, you know, and come on across, hit the side hill and went up to Lake Park. That took out that swale, seventy feet, you know, on the rail, that's quite a bit.

SAM: So then, where did you go then after you left there?

A A: Oh after that I went up to Duluth, Superior, Wisconsin. I was up around Hibbing up in the Iron Belt, and I was out to Eakley, Red River Junction. I worked for them in the woods first, and then at the mill. A dollar and eighty cents a day, ten hours, piling lumber. Yeah, I worked in the woods there, you know, we went out in the woods, we were four of us. We hired out for thirty-five dollars a month and board. But if you quit, you see, you get a dollar a day for the day you worked. So then you had in order to get the thirty-five dollars a month, you had to stay till the job was done--and I don't know if it done yet! As long as there was any timber you know, that company that's working, you never got through. That's the way they hired ya.

SAM: So when you left you lost that money?

A A: No, no, we got a dollar a day. A dollar and board for each day we worked, you see. But we didn't get that thirty-five dollars; we got twenty-six, (chuckles), twenty-six working days see. Yes, you bet. Then from there I went to Dakota, oh there I had another experience. That was pretty good too. We'd been up on the Mesabi Northern there in the Iron Belt up near Hibbing, Minnesota. There was another kid there, he was older than me though; he was born at Proctor, out of Duluth, his folks lived there. And you know, you got into town and he was broke the first

evening. You know, they worked on that railroad, you know, and they stayed three weeks, two weeks, three weeks, get fifteen, twenty dollars-- into town, blow it, and come back again. I went with 'em one night and we got around the saloon. Well hell, I didn't get even a room hardly till I was broke. They kept a-bummin' the hell out of ya around the saloons. So the next time I come in, and so I got over and got myself a room and I skidooed--I was out, gone. Next morning, I looked up some of them. Well, they said they were broke, and "Do you have any money?" And I said, "No, I ain't got any money." "What happened to you?" "Oh," I said, " they milked me over and it went." But I had my little dollars and not very many, but I had a few.

So that day I picked on this feller to go with me, and I went and looked over the boards. And they sent people out to Leeds, Montana on the Great Northern to build a reservoir. You see they was building a reservoir, they had to work on the dump where they built this dam across the canyon to hold the water, you know, for the locomotives to get water. We drove that first night and the next day, when we got into Larimer I think in North Dakota. Going over I could see they were building a dam there. So I told him--his name was Charlie--and I said, "Let's get off here, it's the same work we hired out for, same road. Let's get off and see, we might get on here. The hell with it." That was <sup>in</sup> North Dakota. So we did. We got off, and we walked back to this camp there, and they said, "Sure, you bet," there was no trouble, we could get on. So we got our little packsacks with us and come out to camp that night, and had supper and got our bed fixed up.

We had to work nights, you know, and they come in there with a trainload of dump cars, dirt, to make this fill--it was about eighty feet high-- to hold water. And there was frost chunk in there, you know, the frost

go down in that country down about four feet. And they dug that with them big steam shovels, you know, and there was chunks coming in there four foot square or more, and they put them in the twenty yard dump cars on the rail. And they loaded them so that all you had to do was knock the pin out of them and they dumped. And this was in April, and it was still cold, frosty. So I tripped one of them cars, and they had it loaded so only half of it fell out, and the car came back again and I damn near got caught under it. So I went over to my partner and I said, "I think we ought to get out of here before I get killed." Oh," he said, "kid,"--he was a little older than me--he said, "we'll stay till we get a few dollars.!" "Well," I said, "Okay," and away we went. By god you know after dinner another train come in, there were thirty, forty dump cars in the train, and they kept shoving it with the locomotives, spot them, you see. And we kept a-trippin' em, there were three of us on there. So we got pretty close together there one time, and five of them damn cars tipped towards us. It pretty near got all of us. So then my partner said, "You know," he said, "I think you're right. Let's get the hell out of here." So we did.

And you know next day we could' have hired out for the farmers there, forty dollars a month and board--but only one. It was nice, you know, in April, the sun was shining, there was a regular breather that day, I guess. So we thought we'd wait another day. Farmer was a-pullin' on our coattail and wanted us to go out. So we said, "No, we'll wait till we get to both go to the same farm." Next day come--here was a galldarn blizzard, and it lasted a week.. There wasn't a farmer in sight no place, and no work. And then what little money I had, you know, that was gone. He didn't have a cent when he left Duluth. So I was feeding him, board

and room you know, and we had a little snort here and there. They went--  
 then  
 so we were clean.

So one morning we took out, we heard about a railroad starting out from Devils Lake, North Dakota, into Casselton, towards Fargo on the Great Northern branch line. Went past the Devils Lake; the town is Devils Lake and it's a lake out there, Devils Lake, too, on the Indian reservation. So we hiked forty-five miles that day and no breakfast! And we got over into <sup>town</sup> you know fairly early in the afternoon. There were no grass growing under our feet, we were hiking, and fast too. Had a good early start. The contractors was in the yard there, you know, getting their tents set up, a little office. Their equipment was coming in. So we split up so we could cover more ground and maybe get a job.

And I met up with two brothers, Wilson brothers, they were both Great Northern civil engineers, you know. They were engineers, both of 'em, but they'd a taken a job. And I guess for that some reason, I guess what little I could talk I used what I could, I couldn't talk very much. I told 'em I needed a job pretty bad. So they said, "Kid, you go up town and stay. And just as soon as we get the horses--we got the equipment here, but we're waiting for horses to come in--and then you can get on with us." So I told them I would, but I said, "I can't stay, I got to have a job." And he said, "Why?" "Well," I said, "I haven't got a cent, nonthing, only what I got on my back. I'm broke." And he said, "I'll take you uptown, and I'll give you a room." Well, " I said, "still that's fine, but I got a partner here too and he's a better man than me. If you could take on both of us, " I said, "okay. We'll wait, we'll be here." He said, "Can you find him?" And I told him we split up so we could cover all of them and see if we couldn't get on. By god, he said, "Go ahead." I went and found him. He took both of us in, got us uptown and got us a room and three meals a day, and we waited

there ten days. And we went out with him, and we stayed till his job was done. We never went into town, never left the camp from the day we started till we helped him haul the equipment back into town again and loaded it on the cars. And he never mentioned what he paid us. We got forty dollars a month and board. So I was lucky.

SAM: How long did that last?

A A: Oh we were there in July. Lasted about three--let's see, in April, May, June, and into July, that was about a four month job. He had so many miles, you know, on level ground, it don't take. . . We had this one dump there, I guess, about thirty-five foot fill across a little ravine. All horse work--scraper, plow and scrapers. So we drove teams, worked with the horses. Then we went back to the same old farmer, I helped him through the harvest. I told him the year before, "I'll be back." So there in July I was back there, and in August started in cutting the wheat, and I helped him through the harvest. Went back up around Duluth again, till next spring I come out here and worked on the McAldrich. I come out here in April, worked for McAldrich Lumber Company. You've heard of them? Yeah, McAldrich, I think his boy is, oh he used to be the president of the Commerce people there in town a long time here. The old man is dead. He was a nice old man, I met him several times. He was a nice old man. They logged all that country around Tensed, you know, where you go over from--that was McAldrich's outfit. They had railroad all over there in from Tensed and up to the corner there where you get into Idaho, up over the hill where the highway goes? He logged that country. I went through there when they had railroads in there. His railroad come out of Tekoa, that's where he landed logs on the Union Pacific--isn't it?--and brought them into



Spokane. And over the hill there towards Santa was Blackwell. There were on Santa Creek over through<sup>^</sup>what is that, Emida?

SAM: Yeah. So you worked then around Tensed?

A A: No, no, I never worked there, only just going through. No, I never worked for McAldrich in the woods. He'd come up and see us at Potlatch a lot of times. Old man, J. P. McAldrich, he was a nice old man, hell of a nice fella, just as simple as any of us lumberjacks. I run the camp out of Clarkia there oh for two years, '39 and '40, '41. We had 350 men in that camp. That's a big camp. We had twenty-four skidding cats and an old dozer. I had three assistants; Oscar Hagborn, the one there, and Clark Lancaster, I guess Clark is dead now, I think, and Bill Greenwood, he's dead. They were my assistants. We had three locomotives and twenty-five cats, twenty-four skidding cats and a little old dozer. That was in '39 and '40.

SAM: What camp was this?

AA: That was Camp 35.

SAM: Was that a car camp?

A A: Yeah. Yes, I set the car camp there. Rutledge had started the grade in there, which we finished up after they consolidated, after they emerged, you know, the Potlatch and Rutledge and Clearwater. That's before the Potlatch Forest started in; there was a Rutledge Timber Company then, you know. They built that before they got the fire on Marble Creek, before they put in the Incline, but they never used it. That timber was left in there. We went in there and they had a spur there and I put in a Y, you know, so you can turn the locomotives. And inside of that Y I put that whole damn camp. We had camp cars, bunk cars, enough there for 350 men to sleep. We had two, three dining cars and a cook car. (chuckles) And we were sitting in that Y, rail

all around us, in a pocket, just a little pocket in the hill there. I'd like to go back there sometime and see it. I think the road goes in there to Marble yet. I think the forest service used the old railroad now for the<sup>if</sup> truck road.

SAM: Somebody told me that that's the biggest car camp since the Panama Canal was built.

A A: (chuckles) I don't know of it. It was quite a job to get that in. You only had so much room, you see. And to build that and get it in there, by god I had to measure them cars, the length of them, and figure them out, and get them <sup>set</sup> so they'd all fit in. I set the office car first--that's the first one you set--and then the storeroom, and then the kitchen car, and then a dining car, and then we put four bunk cars. And we cut off that track and slid it over and set another one in. And I put in two bunk cars and a dining car--that dining car set right across from the kitchen, a big one, long, I think that was seventy foot. And then filled out with bunk cars again. And then put in a third track and a fourth track. Then they had a little space in there and I put in--we had a light plant, you know, and showers and a washroom and a filing car, which was for the saw filer to stay in. We had a little corner left and I slid them two cars in, that took up all the space there was. But that was quite a bit of figuring before I could get it in. And the rails, we just cut the rails you know and shove it in, cut her off. And finally we got the main line to go by it and the Y around it, and the main line on the other side going up.

SAM: One dining car was enough for everybody? You had one for each track?

A A: No, we had two, two big ones. And that cook house run twenty-four hours. See, the me<sup>ch</sup>anics, they work at night, had to, you know, 'cause we had

all the machines out in the daytime. So they had to work nights to get 'em ready in the morning. The machine shop, we had that on rails too--had a lathe and a drill press and a steam hammer and a planer. And old Ernie Smith was there, he was the machinist. Any damn thing you could give him, but don't--you could tell him and he could make it, but if you <sup>mark</sup> makkk it down on the paper he was stuck. He <sup>couldn't</sup> couldn't do it. But just talk to him and tell him, and by god, he said, "Axel, I'll get it, I got it." Or bring in a bolt or bring in something, and here it is. "Need quite a few of them, half a dozen." "Okay." But don't--if you mark it down on a paper and draw a picture of it, he won't do it. Nope. Yeah, he was a good old fella, I like that old Smith, he was a dandy. He was good with his team, he was good. Any damn thing on those marions, we had marion loaders you know, they were built in Ohio I guess. And locomotives, you know, the limer shays and little rod engines, that was an American built. And a Heisler, wherever they come from. But he could fix any of them.

(End of Side A)

A A: . . . I think it set there for four years. I wasn't in there--see I had two camps there. In the spring we started in with another one over the hill, up the hill and down the hill till we got down to the railroad and loaded 'em. So we had the two camps then. But they got through, <sup>we</sup> got pretty good.

SAM: Was it much tougher to plan for a bigg camp like that than the usual camp--to plan for the supply and everything?

A A: (chuckles) Well, no, not the supply wouldn't. Of course you just call in, a lot of times, you know, we could call into Spokane, call in in the evening

and you get it by god on the train the next day, to Clarkia. That was all right. For the material for the caterpillars, you know, the cats and the dozer, that was fine, that we could get. Call in, call them in you know, and by god on the next train they'd have it. You know sometimes we had to go to Maries and get it, run down there. A lot of times I'd run down to Maries in the night and meet the train. And the crew was working there, you know, and I'd be back in a couple of hours, three--hand them what they needed, and in the morning the cat was out working. No, and for supply, for groceries, they had the warehouse in Bovill, and you just send in your order, we had phones. Call in--next day the truck come out with a whole truckload of chuck. That took a lot of groceries, for 350 men. A truckload a day, pretty near.

SAM: Was it hard to keep track of what all the guys were doing, with that many men? It just seems like a huge size camp to have at that time.

A A: No, I guess, I didn't have no trouble that way. I could pretty near tell you where every one of them was at any time of the day. I could tell you where they were, or who it was. And we were scattered on two, three sections of land. No, that part of it I didn't have no trouble with.

SAM: Well it sounds like for you, you had no trouble at all with that big camp then.

A A: No, for my own self I didn't have any--no, I didn't have no trouble. I got by with them fine, for some reason, I don't know why.

SAM: How big an area did they log out of that camp. What was the area around that they finally logged off?

A A Oh, that must be, I think we had--it must have been three miles up to the divide--somewhere around a two, three mile circle. That'd take in

five, six sections or more. You know how big a section is, a mile square. So it took in quite a little bit of territory. . . That's what I told the boss one time. Billings, he asked me one time if-- he said, "Don't you ever get tired of looking at the same old faces?" So I told him, "I don't know if I could answer that or not. But I'll put her this way. <sup>I said, "You</sup> You put your foot in my shoes. <sup>I said</sup> "We're standing here," we stood in front of Camp 34 I think it was, up on Mason Meadow. And I said, "I got to be able to, when I get out here, to look from here to Bovill. <sup>"</sup> That's about sixty miles. <sup>"</sup> I got men strung out the whole length of that. <sup>And I said,</sup> "There's four train crews and five or six section crews and then we're getting close to camp. Here's Camp 32 down there, and this is 34 up here. <sup>And I said,</sup> "When I get out in the morning, I got to be able to see all of them, all of it, in my <sup>own</sup> mind. I got to know where they are. <sup>And I said,</sup> "You know, here in the morning, there is three, four saw gangs come along, they want a new job. And I tell them. Got the strips all marked out, skidways all built, and I tell them to go down to strip 81 or 37, whatever it is, it's marked, on spur so-and-so." And I said, "They're off, they're gone. And I tell them, "I'll see you sometime today when I get around to ya. <sup>If</sup> If I don't get to you today, I'll get to you tomorrow, but I'll be with you. <sup>And I said, "I</sup> I go from one to another, and they're gone. Here come three, four teamsters, they want a new strip. Tell them the same thing; 'The logs are <sup>all</sup> cut, the skidway is in, go <sup>on</sup> down to strip number so-and-so and go to work, and I'll see ya sometime in the day.' " And I said, " In about ten minutes they're all gone, then it's just me and the barn boss <sup>and</sup> the blacksmith, we're the only three left here." And I said, "It only takes me about fifteen minutes and they're gone. Now if I had a new

crew, if I had new crew--those old faces look pretty good. They believe in me, and I know them, they know me." <sup>And I said,</sup> "They believe in me and I swear unto them. By god they take my word for it, and they go to work." <sup>I said,</sup> "That's the only explanation I can give you." <sup>And I said that,</sup> "Whether it's a button in the cap or a kick in the butt I don't know, but whatever it is, that's the answer!" (laughs)

He said, "I was wondering. You always have the biggest crew of any of our foreman's, and you have the least turnover than any of them." And I said, "You can come here any time from Monday to Saturday, I don't care, any day of the week, and you'll never find a man sitting around the camp there waiting for the foreman." <sup>I said</sup> "I'm always waiting on them. I'm waiting on them." <sup>I said,</sup> "There's nobody sitting around here, they're all working."

Well he said, "I often wonder how." Well, that was it. Oh, I never had any trouble with the crews. We seemed to get along pretty damn good. Oh, you can't--nobody can suit two hundred, three hundred men in a camp, you know. And you know that's nature, that's the nature of the lumberjack, I know it. (chuckles) 'Course we don't pay no attention to it. That's all in a day's work, you know.

SAM: Well, you said that you went to work for this guy in Spokane, McAldrich.

And then after that--is that when you first came down to Potlatch?

A A: Yes, I think, yes. We worked there till the Fourth of July come. And you know, kids then was no better than kids now, or no worse either, I guess. We were all kids. And we got into town, you know, and too much to see, too many places to go. And we worked every day, ten hours a day, piling lumber. And night<sup>s</sup> we stayed at the Inland Hotel, and that's the closest on<sup>e</sup> we could get to, get to the mill. I think it's on, used to be on the corner of Division and there was Front Street then, Trent now--

I think that was the place, or else it's the next block up there, I don't know. But that's the closest we could get to the place of work, you see. We had to walk to work every morning, you know. But you know we had a lot of time, so when the end of the month come we had no money. That was all gone as we went. We got paid every two weeks. Two weeks gone and so was our money, till next payday.

So me and another feller, we took a trip up to Wallace, went up to Mullan up to the Snow Star Mine. And I went down in the hole there a half a mile. Walked up to the inlet to this shaft, they had a little cage, you know, to let you down in. And I got down in there, and I said, "By god, I'll soon, quick enough get under the sod," so I said, "I'm going to get the hell out of here! It's too deep anyway." So I got up. And we were three of us then. So I hiked downtown, and there was a boarding house there, right by the railroad track at Mullan, and I was sitting in there eating dinner--here come the other two, they took the next cage up. (Laughs) None of us stayed there. So that was my mining. I never done tried again. When I got down there half a mile--that's a long ways down, 2600 feet down. That's deep, ain't it? I never tried that.

And then we'd come back down again, we tried on the--they built the Milwaukee road, we went out to Lind on the railroad, on the Milwaukee. We didn't stay there, just overnight, and hiked back again, come into Spokane. And knocked around a little bit when we come into Spokane. And I said, "I'm going to get the lowest wages I can find on the boards." There was employment offices all over on Trent and all the streets coming to; there was Front Street then, you know, where the Milwaukee Depot was built there in 1908. And Potlatch paid the least of <sup>any of</sup> them and I said, "That's where I'm going. I'm going to take that." I'd be damned if I'd run

around anymore. We worked in the yard there, it was in fall of '67. And that fall again we was, after we got through in the river there--I told you, I think, before, we scraped up gravel out of the river bottom for ballasting the yard tracks through the lumberyard?

SAM: In Potlatch?

A A: In Potlatch. And we worked in that water up under our arms and drove a team. Hauled our own slip--just stick the foot on it and it come up. We had dagos first, you know, holding it. Italians were holding the slip and we had a hell of a time to keep those shovellers a-going. We had to pull that up on the bank, you know, so they could load 'em on the cars and take 'em up in the yard. And we worked like hell, turning them horses 'round and 'round and 'round, and <sup>we</sup> never got nowhere. So the boss come around there one day, and I asked him. His name was Charlie Peterson I said "Charlie, "How much extra will you give us if we haul, holding our own slip and you take those boys with you, take 'em the hell out of here?" "Well," he said, "I couldn't tell you, but I'll go up and see the super." I said, "Okay." So he was back in a little bit and he says, "We can't raise you any, but we'll give you two hours a day more. We'll give you twelve hour's pay instead of ten." That gave us fifty cents a day more, you see. And we had two-and-a-half before, and we got three dollars then. So I said, "Take them fellas with you."

After that, you know, we never worked only--oh we worked about, oh maybe three hours a day. In the morning we got out there, you know, and we made a sashay, and we hauled up more gravel, the three of us, we hauled up more gravel than they could load in two hours. We set on the bank there, the sun was up and nice. Dried up for dinner, walked into camp and had dinner and back again. And we made another sashay and got plenty of gravel up there, you know, and then we went and set on the bank



and dried up. When quitting time come we went and took the horses to the barn. And we stayed there till the ice was in the water. That was too much. You know you <sup>dig</sup> in there, you had to reach down once in a while with your arms clear to the shoulder. And we were in about to our necks, getting gravel. And that ice cold water, you know, that got a little too much for us.

Then I went up in the woods on a steel gang, got up to Harvard, later up to Bovill. That was in '07, the fall of '07 when they had the wooden money. You heard of that? It was a panic, you know. The sales were no good, lumber didn't move, and jobs were scarce, and money was scarce. And pretty near all of them, Potlatch issued coupons for the men that all worked around the mill there, you know; they could get coupons and go to the store instead of money, to get groceries. Family mans, you know, lived there. And up in the woods we got money, gold and silver. Twenty dollar gold pieces, tens, fives--not very many, but what few there was. If we had thirty dollars coming, you know, we got a twenty dollar gold piece and a ten, thirty dollars in gold. No paper money.

SAM: Why did they say wooden money?

A A: Coupons. They made 'em themself, you know, good at the store only, you see. Potlatch, they had their own store, and money was scarce, you know, so they'd give them those tickets or coupons, and they could go in there and get what they wanted. They were worth a dollar or fifty cents, two bits, just like money--in trade. I think most of the companies used that, 'cause <sup>money</sup> was scarce. I worked in La Grande for George Palmer Lumber Company there in 1908 for six months. They paid in gold too, everything, never saw any bills. And I don't know when--the bills come in later. Oh, I guess in '12, '14 I guess they started to come in--dollar bills, and tens,

and so forth. But before that you know they always paid in gold and silver. Got a pay envelope--there was your time sheet on there and the days you worked, and the money was in it. They handed you that little envelope and there was your pay and the time clip there; you could check it over if you wanted to, the days you worked and how much.

SAM: I'm just curious, you say that the lowest pay at Potlatch was what made you want to go there. How come? 'Cause the high pay wasn't so good, the job?

A A: Well, there was in fall there of '07 when this panic started. And everybody paid, oh they paid two, six bits, three dollars, two-and-a-half, and you come there and the camps were full. There was no place--they'd let you go to work, but there was no place to stay, no place to eat. So I figured out that the lowest one, I figured nobody go there see, they won't go there. They go for the high wages. I did too first there. Like you say there's always greener on the other side of the fence, so go on over. I did follow that too for two, three years there at first, running around. And you never hit anything, you never stayed anyplace. Always something wrong, where they paid more wages there was something wrong, something else. So by god I went to Potlatch and they were the lowest one, and I stayed with it after that.

SAM: Well what else did you work at there in 1907, after you left the gravel work, when it got icy?

A A Oh god, I done everything that anybody could do in the woods. I was swamping and I was sawing and hauling timber, and I chased the donkeys that winter. I was whistle punk and I set chokers, and I used to trail the--we had a wire strung, hooked up to the whistle on the donkey and strung out to the

back end of the job, you know. They run out there, they were short-line then, they were only a half a mile that the cable went out. The wire hung on trees out there, and fairly tight; and I had a stick and I hit it, see, and you know it hit it and it'd go "toot." One was stop, when they were running, stop. And if you want to back up it was two, from standing still. If you want to go ahead slow you give three: one, two, three. And just like you hit it on that wire, that whistle'd go "toot, toot, toot," and there was a spring on that, you know, shut her off, the steam. Then I had to chase the load in, that half a mile into the landing, and let 'em through the bull-block and in on the landing. That was my job too.

SAM: Let 'em through the what?

A A: They had a bull-block there for a lead block, you know, like--the donkey'd be sitting over where that house is. That landing was big enough for the whole tree length to come in, so they could saw it off, you know--that'd be a hundred feet across. And you had to have a lead block there. And then from there on you ~~could~~<sup>could</sup> take the load anyplace; and we called it a bull-block, that set at the landing. All the logs, every drag come into that same one, and then you changed from there on <sup>in</sup> a circle. Most of the time you run there, oh probably fifty trips a day that I made in and out. Well you know that's a lot of hiking. I used to ride <sup>the</sup> logs, get on the drag and and ride on them, but I had to watch that haul-back was in there tight--you know that'd break your damn leg if it'd slip over and hit ya, break you all to pieces. I used to ride them in, and then I had to run, let 'em through the bull-block, and then run out and be out there ahead of that bull-~~hook~~ again, before that come out. And I had to be out there where the crew was working, you know, and stop it, I had to be there with the

whistle again. And then when they got through hooking on as many trees, eight or nine, five or six trees, whatever they could get hold of, you know, to drag, and pull her in, then I had to be back there again. So that kept me pretty busy.

SAM: Keep you pretty warm, too.

A A: Oh yes, oh I didn't sweat any, but then I kept a hell of a lot of hiking. I made milesthere every day, back and forth. When the drag go, you know, you had to run to keep up with it. But they got closer to the donkey--when they first started, you know, the line was out and the drum'd be pretty small, about a foot, and then it built up. When they got into the donkey that was, oh the spool was that big, then it go fast. So the closer to the donkey they got, the faster the load would go. And the same with the haul-back, you know. When the main line was in, the haul-back drum was almost empty, but before the bull-hook got way out there half amile again, then that drum was fast, so that hook would go pretty fast you know--jump. Oh, it was interesting, I'll tell you. That was the first donkey that I ever seen, the first time they ever had 'em in. And that was in '07 they got them, and they used 'em, oh the last donkey they used must've been in '38 or '9, I think that was the last one we had. They had one there, they called it the Potlatch Special--that had a main drum for the tight-line, and a pulling line and a haul-back, and a little what we call a dolly on the outside for spotting cars with. It had five drums I think, five or six drums on that one. They called it the Potlatch Special. I think that was the only one they ever built. They built it in Portland.

L S: Do you understand all the difference in the lines?

SAM: Uh'hum, pretty well. Why is there some. . .?

L.S: Well, what's a tight-line?

A A: Tight-line. You see we set up poles, spar trees or poles. And we had what they call a shoe, it had a groove, so you laid the cable in that. And then you had to figure out when you go over hills. See, you go over probably three or four ravines or hills, you know, and get up, and you had the tail-hold way up on a hill high. And you had to figure out when you raised them poles, just so when you tightened that line-- we had it laying in there, in each one you had a little cable, a little three-eighth line was used to <sup>just</sup> drag along, kind of a tag line--and lift that cable up and lay it in there, go to the next pole and raise it up.

Sometimes, one road I think we had fourteen of them on one road, a mile long. We had a loading job and then a ground-line donkey on the outside to yard for it, and horses along there to haul in, and just hauled in with that main donkey. So when they tightened that line, you just curve it enough on each one so she'd stay there. You see we used an inch and a half cable for the tight-line --and that was grooved out, you know, just enough to bury half of that cable in it. And we had a trolley carriage walked over there with two wheels on it, two shivs on it, and they were grooved just to go over that cable and stay on it. But no matter where they were, you know, no matter what the pull was between them or so forth--every one of them, the tight-line was tight and pulled down. You had to hold her down or else it'd fall off, you know. Well then you were done, you had to get another one, raise it up again, 'cause you lost the load and the trolley and the whole work. So that was quite a job to get that set. Oh sometimes we get a million feet to the road of logs and then change lines and set her up again--it'd take a

a couple of days to set her up, get a new one, switch her over to a new set.

SAM: How long would it take you to run a million feet, let's say? How many days would it take to run in one place?

A A Oh, a setting? We had one donkey setting that the donkey set there and worked eighteen months on one setting just, eighteen months. We let a job--that was up out of Elk River. I paid <sup>them</sup> six dollars and a half a thousand to put 'em on the car. I give 'em the donkeys set on the car, and they unloaded and set 'em and build a landing as they started. And they sawed the timber and loaded it on the car, six dollars and a half. You see, they were a crew of twenty-one, I think in that crew. And they were there eighteen months before they finished the job. That's the biggest setting that I'd ever seen--that it fit in, you know, to get one donkey to last that long. I don't know how many million feet we got in on that-- a lot of them.

L S: How long would most of your lines stretch?

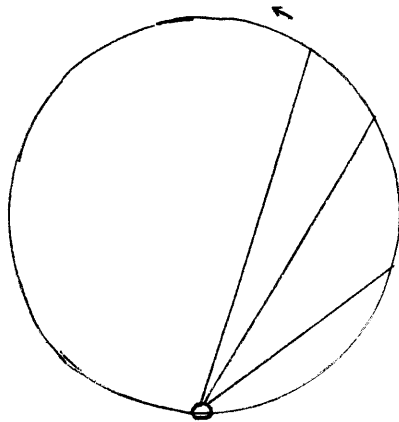
SAM: The early ones were half a mile, the short line.

A A: The short line would go half a mile, and the longest one we had was a mile. But then you see--when you set the donkey and set the first road, you took the haul-back around all of it, and come in. See, around the whole setting, if there was a section, you know the haul-back'd go around the whole works first; and then pull the main line out to the first road. And then after that you see, you could go--like the donkey set here, and you take the first road--you had the landing like this you know, and here was the bull-block, here was the lead and the landing. Then you take the first road like this, but the haul-back had to go clean around there see, come here.

We had the first road there, <sup>and</sup> after that we just dropped off about four hundred feet and switched the line over then again, the drop off again like that. They all come in to the same, and keep on that way till you come back here again. That's the end of it!

SAM: So, you moved from one side just clear across to the other.

A A: Just made a circle, you see. But you had to get--this was the first one you'd take out.



(End of Side B)

SAM: Oh I got a question about these Italians working on that gravel. How come they couldn't do the job right? They just didn't know how to do it, was that it?

A A: No, it's the same--you know, you drive a car. A man standing there to help ya, he can't, he can't figure with you. You're moving it, and he can't keep up with ya. The same with the team. I was driving the team, well I could feel, and I'd set the scraper in the ground, you know, and hold it until we're moving ahead. It's the feeling you have in your own self. I set the foot down on the handle, you know, just bear down on that, put my weight on it, and up come the front of the scraper and she was loaded. And you can drive it in, she wouldn't dip then 'cause the lead was right in front of her. So after she once come up, you know,

she'd go back in again. But the idea was to get it started. You handle the power when you got the line and the horses, you got the power in yourself, in your own hand, and you can feel on the scraper what you can do with it. And they'd set her down too deep, you know, well then she'd tip over. Then you had to turn around, turn around, turn around.

And it's the same with the steam donkey. I used to run them, spell them off once in a while, go in there just for a change, for fun. You got hold of the throttle, you held the throttle, you know, and you held the fixing either by hand or with your foot. And you can feel, it's a feeling you get in yourself. That's something pretty hard to explain, but it's alive--the steam <sup>is</sup> alive and you're alive. And by god you can feel what you can do with it--you either open up and give it a little more or you ease up a little bit on the throttle. And the same when they run a locomotive, that's the same thing. It's <sup>a</sup> part of ya. That jansen bar on that throttle, it's part of you when you sit there in the cab, you know.

I run the locomotive quite a little bit. You open up, and here you got your brake, your air brake, right with you on the train, behind ya. You can feel it all the way! You sit there and watch and you watch ahead of you and watch behind you, but it's part of ya. You understand? You work into that, when you open that throttle it's just as much as your own heart pecking. It's part of ya. You feel just what the machine can do. And you give a little more, sometimes you give it too much, but that's it. If you don't get enough you're stuck and if you get-- sometimes they had a little too big a load and got in a hole somewhere. You knew when that was because you watched the drum and you could tell just about where you was. And if you had a hard place, you know, well



you notched that throttle a little wider and try to get through it, so you don't get stuck. Why sometimes you'd give her a little too much when it was tight, you know, and you break that inch and a half cable. That would take us, oh sometimes an hour to get it spliced and get it back out in the woods again and splice it together.

SAM How did they splice that cable?

A A They roll them. See they came in strands, you know, and they roll them. And you unravel two and take the other end and roll in with it, one off and one on, fall in the same groove. They used to take in a twenty-four foot splice. See that'd as far as from here to that step. And that'd be a six strand cable, and you unrolled it, and then you go the other way again, back and forth till you got enough. Then you had two spikes, you know, what we call marline spikes, put them through the cable, open it up, and cut that hemp core out of it inside. It's a hemp core on all cables, you know, so otherwise they'll wear themselves off from the inside, when the strain is on it going through pulleys and so forth. And then you sink them two ends, bury them. Or sometimes you knot some and go under, and go over and under two, three times to tuck the end and fasten them. But on an old cable the wires are broken, wore so bad, you know, they break. So you'd go in there and open her up in the middle, and just roll the ends in and bury it, so your ends was in the middle of the cable where that little hemp rope was in. And the end of the cable was stuck in there, you know. Oh, I spliced a lot of it. I seen it done on the stage, I saw it on a stage there up in Vancouver, B. C. They done it in four minutes, put in a twenty-four foot splice, two of 'em, on the stage. Two inch cable, in four minutes. Had the cable there on the stage, you know, stretched out, and the two of them, they put in a good looking

splice too, dandy.

SAM: When they first brought in the donkeys, the small ones, the ground lines, did it take a while to get used to how far apart you should be setting them up, would it take time?

A A: No, no, I don't think so, I don't think so. The <sup>Jacks</sup>, you know--once get that in your, you see it once and then you know it. They had them on the coast long before we did up there in Idaho. They go out and take a look and see what they did, and then come up and try to fit it in up in the side hills up there in Idaho. But it was pretty <sup>had</sup> to--you take those hook tenders and rigging men that we had in Idaho--they'd be worth three of them on the coast. Take a coast man--I've tried a lot of them hook tenders come up there, and they were pretty near useless there in that big timber, you see. They had, them days, big timber. Where we had to set up they were plumb stuck, when we said, "Now, okay, here it is." We had high line and they had high lead, you see. There was so much more timber on the ground they could put the railroad up on the top of the hill and log up to it. Where in Idaho the yield is so light, you know, there's so little to the acre in feet, <sup>feetage</sup>, so we had to put the railroad in the creek ~~bottom~~--you couldn't afford to build a road to the top there. So we had to come downhill, and then we had to use a different system and use the high line, you see, instead. We used high lead a little bit there, but not much. We couldn't get the railroad up high enough to use it.

SAM: Well, what's the difference between high line and high lead?

A A. The high lead is, you had the spar tree right in front of the donkey, and you go and anchor your tight line way up on top of the hill there. They only used to go out a thousand feet, eight hundred to a thousand feet,

and we'd go out from half a mile to a mile. And they had no more, just that one spar tree after the donkey, that was all, they didn't use no more. But they had a trolley to go on that one line, you know, they could pull the log in to the donkey and drop it. Where they used to get one log, you know, with a thousand <sup>two thousand</sup> feet in it, we put on fifteen, twenty logs and we only had five, six hundred feet. See the difference? Such small timber, you know, in scale, see, to the big ones.

SAM: Well how come the hook tenders couldn't do the job?

A A: Well he just didn't know how, you know. Like I said, that took quite a bit of experience and know <sup>how</sup>, when you go out there and have a mile and you put up eight or ten spar trees or spar poles. On the coast when they put up a spar tree they went and cut off the top first and hung all the rigging on it; And they they felled the tree, put the guy lines on it and they felled the tree over into it. And they felled it, it set there. And we left them on the ground and got that rigging set up and raised it, and stuck it up. 'Cause we had to put up so many, we put in probably ten to their one on that line, you see. And to get them so they're--you know, you go over three or four ravines and figure how high that pole is gonna be where you get a little pressure on it. . . . Every one of them had to have a little pressure, from the tail-hold in to the donkey. If you didn't, well then that was no good, you see. If you hook on here and tighten this and it'd raise her feet over the next one, she wouldn't come down and hit that spur and take 'em on the side of it, 'cause we had to have a side pull on her too, you see, to hold it. It had to have pressure down and sideways.

That took quite a bit of ingenuity and know-how to do that. So a coast man come in and he was stuck, that was way beyond him. He never seen

anything like that! (chuckles) One of our men come out there, and he was a foreman the first thing! He knew more than the whole damn crews put together. One of our men that come up from Idaho out to the coast, 'course you could stick him on anything, any part of it. Yeah, I seen them logging on the coast there, but you <sup>know</sup> they get a trainload sometime, you know, they get one log and that's a carload! And sometime we put a hundred logs onto a car. That's why the coast there, it was pretty hard for the lumber companies to compete with the coast in prices on lumber. Now I think it's different. Nobody knows what the hell it is now. It's up and up and up now.

SAM: Well, after 1907, what happened in 1908? What did you do then?

A A: I piled the lumber.

SAM: You piled lumber?

A A: I didn't go up, I went back, I worked around Bovill that winter, and then after the snow and the break-up in the spring, I left and went out to La Grande, Oregon, George Palmer Lumber Company. . . .

(At this point we realized that the tape was wound too tightly and was causing a bad flutter in the recording. It took some time to fix it.)

A A: . . . Well, you know now we're through, we're done with that again, and now we're in the radar and all these other things that none of us old folks will never catch up with, it's beyond us. Or we're so far behind there, we'll never catch up any part of it. I don't even try to think about it, what it is now.

SAM: Believe me it's hard for young folks to understand it too.

A A: Well, I see it, I can see it. I've watched young people and see, and some of them, it's terrible, it's awful. And how they live, I don't know.

When you see some people now in towns, I don't know, but in the country isn't so bad. And if you get in where those hippies and that stuff is, it's terrible. And this long hair and stuff, I can't agree with that. Do you? Do you like that?

L S: Well, not personally, really, no.

A A: I can't see a young man, why in the hell he wants to let that goddamn old hair hanging all over him and in the face. And young people now, you know, when you were kids, if you go back that far, you wouldn't have went out like those younger people do now. And they get a pair of jeans, you know, they cut 'em off and fringe 'em up, and cover up a little bit of the middle section, and put on patches, and they look like hell. And I don't think that's sensible. Is it--really? I don't think that. . .

L S: Yeah, things in general though don't make the <sup>kind of</sup> sense that they used to. I think things in the old days were easier for people to understand, you know? Things were more straightforward in a way. You had to work, you had to make a living.

A A: They were themselves then. Just like us old fellahs is now that, you know, you can't change or learn an old dog new tricks. And us old fellahs--that's pretty hard for us to grasp and to follow what is coming up now, 'cause it's changing so fast. Every day almost, every year you know is a heck of a lot of difference from the last one. Each year is getting worse to my way of thinking. And I can't follow it, I can't keep up with it. I'm left behind and I'm willing to stay there too.

SAM: But I see it's same with us. I can understand how machines work, just the regular machines, and how things used to be done. But it gets harder and harder, 'cause I can't understand the new things very well.

A A: No, well that's true in all of it. Progress, they call it progress. But now we get machines to do every darn thing, and hand labor, common labor

is out, there isn't any. And what those people going to do? They can't all live with the pencil. Somebody got to work. I think. You know you take the famer, if it wasn't for the farmer we couldn't even exist. He's feeding us. 'Course he's got machines now, so he don't have to work very much. He can sit in the chair, you know, just as good a chair as this one, and do as much as thirty men did forty years ago.

The first combine I saw was a little Fordson, out of Deary. And I forget the name of it, that fellah lived, when you go to Avon, the first farm on the right side. That was in the twenties I think. I believe that was in the twenties, when I saw him alone doing all that. He was out there thrashing. He was cutting the wheat or whatever it was, and had a little box on the little Fordson tractor, and done it all by himself, you know. And they had the wagon and a truck sitting up there, and every so often he went and emptied out what he had carried, that box he had, emptied it on. And when he got that truck loaded he took it over to the elevator and emptied it and come back; started over again and filled it again, all by himself. And years ago, you know, when I worked on a farm we had--well they first started to get the combine, big, worked with horses, had oh anywhere's up to twenty head of horses pulling or shoving on it, and done the thrashing. And we had that other cutter that they had, you know, made bundles? And we shocked it, and run behind that and shocked it, you know, and then stacked it, and then they come with the thrashing machine and so forth. Now one man can do all of it! He can go out, if the weather is good all right, he goes out there and gets a truckload or two, whatever he wants. And that's in at the elevator at night.

Next day, if it's raining all right, he sets in the house there till the straw dries up again. Next day he goes out then and do some more of it, all by himself.

I guess it's progress, but by golly, you know, the people can't--there is a lot of them left over that hasn't got a job. How are they going to live? They can't all live on this give-it-to-me, rocking chair money. I called it rocking chair money, the first, when they come out with the WPA and all that stuff, you know, in the '30's, when they got a check, you know, for nothing, doing nothing. Welfare, now it's welfare. And I often wonder, I go into the store once in a while down here, and see everybody comes with coupons. How in the hell do they get 'em? I can't understand how they can get that. Young people, you know, come in there and no money, but 'course if they want to buy a cigarette, they go in their pocketbook and they got money. And lots of them, I see when they pay with those coupons or whatever they have, and the change, they get it in money. I guess they won't let 'em buy beer or anything, they got to have money for the beer and cigarettes I think. They can't buy that. . .(Break)

We were well off here in those Western States compared to where they were in the eastern, in Illinois and New York State and New Jersey and in there, and in the South too. They were in a hell of a shape, compared to us.

SAM: In the Depression.

A A: In the Depression there in the Thirties. I was lucky, I had a job always. I put in ten months with the CCC's in the conservation camps, you know. That was a good thing, I liked that. I was lucky, I got a job and I got \$220 a month. Pretty good. Paid fifty cents a day for board. (chuckles)

SAM: Where was this?

A A Well, I was up here on the Pend Oreille River for five months at Ruby.

Oh, that's about fifty, sixty miles below Newport towards Ione, yeah, between Newport and Ione.

SAM: What'cha do in the camps?

A A: I was building the roads. I was superintendent of the camp there in the woods. I was building road. I built twenty miles of truck road in five months. Then the snow got so deep, and then I was transferred from there back to Herrick, up there by Calder on the St. Joe River. I built part of that road up to Avery. I built nine miles of that, from Calder to Finep, I think, that's a station on the Milwaukee road. Yes, you bet, you, I liked it, that was good.

SAM: Well were most of these people in the CCC from the cities?

A A: When I was here in Washington I was with, oh let me see now, the regional forester there in Missoula was--now I forget his name too--and he was a major in the same battalion that I was working in there in France. Ivan Kelly, wasn't it? And his brother, he was a sergeant, he was my stable boss. When we were in France I had ninety-six head of horses, and we were about two hundred rookies (chuckles) in the outfit. No commissioned officer with me. I was on detached service all the while there. That was fun, lots of fun. Worked like hell, all of us. Good bunch. They were from Idaho, and Washington, Montana, all of them I think there in that company, till we got a bunch of New Yorkers towards the end, but they worked more around the sawmill. I didn't get any of them in the woods, in the timber. But that was fun. Worked like hell, you know, from daylight to dark, sometimes a long time after dark.

SAM: You know, where we left off when that tape fouled up, was, you were just gonna start talking about Elk River, about when you first went out there when they were. . .you have a question first?

L S: I wanted to ask you--when you said that you piled logs, what does that



mean you did? You know, you piled logs in La Grande, and then you said you piled logs. . .

A A: Oh, piled lumber, lumber, not logs. Oh, no--lumber, that's lumber, not logs.

L S: Okay, okay.

A A: That's all boards, you see. See, the lumber, the dimension is two inch, they called that dimension. And then we had shop, two inch or inch-and-a-half, and then they cut the inch lumber that they graded in one, two, and three. And they had knotty pines, you always hear that, you have clear--not a knot in it, not a mark on that, that's clear, what they call clear lumber. Like for flooring and so forth, you know. When I was in there around Elk River, I looked after the logging there. Half of the time that sawmill ran, ten years, the last ten years that run, I helped put in all the logs for it. We had three camps. They cut, oh, they cut around 150,000 to the shift, two shifts, 300,000 a day. And I had to get that much out of the brush, you know, and down to them, sawlogs.

Yeah, I piled lumber in Potlatch some. We had two inch, they cut--one time there when I piled there before I got up to Bovill we had, they call it match stock. They cut it two inches out of white pine, and they sold it to the Diamond Match, and they didn't split the board. Some of them come four feet--and how in the devil would you get that on your lap, and reach four feet out there and hold it and get it on the pile? That was hard work. So we asked them if we quit there, me and the partner, one day. We told them we couldn't handle it anymore, we held it down there for a couple of months. We had twenty-one cents a thousand board feet, you know, for piling it. We had to pile it on crossings, two by four crossings.

But those big boards, you know, to get up there twenty-four feet high, stood on top of the loader on the track there, and get up as much as we could reach up there, and then top it off, and then start a new pile again when we couldn't reach it anymore. And we had a pickeroon--there was nobody could reach over there and grab and pull them boards to you. So me and the partner, oh he got himself tied in with the blacksmith there, he made us a little pickeroon with a spike on it, you know, like this? And a handle with a knot on it, so it wouldn't slip. And the man on the pile, you know, he reached over, he'd pick it there and pull it, but that made a big mark on it. And we had to watch, you know, when the boss come along, we had to hide that. (laughs) and stay there and grunt and lift, get along the best we <sup>could</sup>.

And so, one day we told 'em we had to quit. I couldn't hardly hang any overalls, nothing left. And my partner was the same. And he wouldn't let us go, and he said, "Why, stay a little while longer." And I said, "We stayed as long as we can. If you split that, anything above three foot <sup>"</sup>split the board, then, I said, "we'd keep on piling. But if you don't do that, we got to quit, we just can't take it." And after that I guess they had twenty-five or thirty gangs tried 'em and nobody to take that job. And then they cut her all down to twelve inches. Geez, it was the best job in the yard then. If he'd a done that I might have stayed there and piled yet. We'd have made a lot of money then. At twenty-four cents a thousand, we could put up a hundred thousand and that'd be eleven dollars a day for each one of us. That was big money at two dollars a day, day labor. You made five times what you cold by the day.

SAM: You say with three foot long you had to reach over so far. . .

A A Wide.

SAM: Oh wide, I see.

A A: Wide, you see, and they were two inch thick and four foot wide. And you know when you stand on the pile, the board come against you here (at hip level), and reach over and hold it--well it couldn't be done, you know. That's impossible. Nobody could do that. And them head men there, you know, couldn't see that! Anyway it was terrible. So we told 'em if you split 'em, anything about three feet we could handle--reach out thirty-six inches, we could handle 'em, you see. But <sup>when they</sup> come in four and five feet, you know, that was impossible, you couldn't.

L S: That's fantastic lumber to have. . .

A A: Oh god, oh I'll tell you they were heavy. Green lumber, you know, just come out of the woods. Felled them the day before, and they come through the sawmill the next day. . . I was in Chicago when they cut the big pine--eleven feet on the stump, thirty-two thousand feet of log scale in one tree.

SAM: Where did it come from?

A A: That come from Collins, just about four miles back of Collins, out of Bovill, you know, when you go from Bovill to Clarkia. Collins is where you cut across the railroad going to Clarkia. There used to be a halfway house before they had the railroad in, they called it Collins. Their name was Frei. And I know the old folks, and I knew Jack Frei. When I left Bovill he was still there. And one of them had a boarding house in Moscow, I think <sup>that</sup> was Sam Frei. I used to eat dinner there with 'em once in a while in Moscow. It was not on the main street, but the next one over going toward Palouse, next street over, what the name of it is, I don't know. He had a house there and he served dinners, him and his

wife. I was in there and had dinner with them several times.

(End of Side C)

SAM: . . .It was when they were just putting in the railroad (in to Elk River)?

A A: Yes, we were there. They were building the grade that winter. The rail come in the Fourth of July in '10, and I come in there in the first of November I think in '09, walked in from Bovill. And the boss come there-- we were there until April, in the break-up. They hauled in a little steam machine, steam hoist donkey, what we called. A little boiler, burn wood. Of course we had a lot of water and lots of woods, so we could make steam. And the pile driver--we drove piling all that winter for the mill.

That whole mill set on pilings. We used thirty-five foot pilings. We had a forty-five foot lead, and drove some of 'em down thirty-five feet in the ground before they stopped. We drove every pile until it stopped, and gave 'em three, four licks. The hammer weighed 2600 pound and a forty-five foot lead, you know--lift 'em up there, twenty-five foot lead, and let 'em fall. Then we had a follower that held them in the lead, held the pile, and you know that hit pretty hard. So we drove 'em down there over thirty feet, every damn pile that was under that mill. And that was hundreds and hundreds of 'em, maybe thousands of them. And we drove that all that winter. So when the rail come in there they could haul in lumber, you know, and it was all set to start to build the mill.

The foundation was leveled off to those pilings, and put the timbers on 'em and build a mill on top. That was all on foundation. And the machine shop and the boiler room, we drove piles there--zigzagged 'em

two feet apart, you know, so we could put in like this way, they put 'em two feet apart. And then they dug out and cut them down, and they put a cement foundation on top of them pilings, and around the top of it, two foot. Then they put the rest, a brick building on top of that. But the piles underneath there was down thirty-some feet in the ground, and they were two feet apart. And then they built the brick walls on top of that, for the heavy boilers, you know, and that stuff to set on. And the heavy machine, you know, that big flywheel that run the mill there-- oh, let's see, that was sixteen foot I think. It went over into the mill to rule all the machinery in there. That belt was ten foot wide, I think. And I don't know how long--oh it must have been about fifty feet long I guess. They were about twenty-five foot over to the mill.

SAM: What was it made out of, the belt?

A A: I couldn't tell ya, I don't know. I don't know what that was made out of.

SAM: Well what was it like living there in Elk River? There was nothing there that winter, was there?

A A: We lived in tents the first winter. But then just the minute the rail come in there, here come the lumber from Potlatch. Two trains, come up with two trains every day. And they could only haul four cars at a time, four car loads. And they had a locomotive on each end of it, so if they got off the track some place, one would help the other. 'Course the track was pretty rough, you know.

L S: They'd get off it a lot?

A A: Oh, yes, they got off the track, you bet (chuckles). One would help the other, you know. And they put in sidings, you know so they could set out.

And if the one engine couldn't get on itself, they had to get rid of the cars so the other one could probably pull 'em on, back 'em up.

Yeah, there was a lot of fun them days (chuckles). Oh, I was gonna tell ya, I walked in there in the break-up in the spring. It was in April, and the boss come to me, and I was the youngest one in the camp, I think. And he said, "I want you to go to Bovill, we've run out of blueprints for the mill site," you see, for us to drive piles on. And he said, "We've got to get that." So I picked up, after breakfast, you know, I picked up my snowshoes, there was six feet of snow. And places there on the first meadow out, or Øviatt, the second meadow out, I had to hit the water, belt deep. And get over, and I made it to Bovill in four hours on snowshoes. And I was there and dried up and had a dinner. And the train come in about one o'clock and I got the mail. And I had supper with them in Elk River at six o'clock, I ate supper with them. Twenty miles each way, forty miles-- walking. Two dollars, and I paid for my own dinner. That's a little different from today, isn't it?

I often thought about it later years. Here the last ten years I had a pick-up, company one, and drove around. And ask somebody to go out, "You go to camp so-and-so," and it'd be only three or four miles out, you know, from Elk River, "Well," he said, "how in the hell am I gonna get there?" "Well," I said, "Jesus christ. Your legs are all right ain't they? If they ain't, well then you got no business out there. Walk it!" "Oh god, no." So most of the time I put them in the pick-up and drove 'em out there (chuckles). Now, you know, they couldn't walk nothing. And I used to walk there, I was kind of what they call a

walking boss for ten years. And I don't know, I don't think there was a day that I <sup>d</sup>idn't walk thirty miles, or more. Nothing to it, you know. Hell I was <sup>plim</sup>plim, I was just like a greyhound--no belly. I was just like an old teamster right on across there out by Horse Ranch--not Horse Ranch, but the meadows <sup>on</sup> Helmer and Bovill, what do you call it?

SAM: I don't know which one you're thinking of. Is it Shay Meadows?

A A: No, Shay is farther up. Hog Meadow. Hog Meadow. We had a camp there, Camp 5, was sitting right there by the road. And I was out there in the woods, and this fella was holding his, he says, "God damnit, there's something wrong with me, and I don't know. I can't tell <sup>he said,</sup> if it's a back ache or a bellyache!" And by god I betcha that fellah wasn't that thick through. Tall slim fellah (chuckles). I'll always remember it. He said, "I can't tell whether it's a bellyache or a backache, but it hurt like hell. It's all on the same place." (Laughs). I can't think of his name now, he was an old teamster.

SAM: Well, was that the first time that you had a crew of your own, was then at Elk River?

A A Yeah, after we got the first crew I started there, I was kind of a roustabout, bull cooking around the mill and around the town site, and oh I must have had fifteen, twenty men or something, you know. Anything that was to be done, I done it, see, with that little crew of mine. Unload lumber or bricks or cement or whatever come in, I done it. And if they had anything, digging, you know, to be done, okay, I done that. Then towards fall there, they brought up a steam shovel and I dug that pond out in front of the mill, made a mill pond. And we got little dump cars, small dump cars, they held about two yards or three yards of dirt. Had a little yard bucket on the steam shovel. There was an old box car built

in with a hoist in it, and a swing boom on the front of it; had it on rails, got it in there. We dug that hot pond in there. Then we dug a new channel for the creek past the lumber yards, straight up through there for about a mile. The creek meandered all through that lumber yard and under the sawmill and everywhere, so we made a new creek channel, and that's there yet. And I got charge of that.

That winter, oh we logged a little bit around the townsite there, had a little sleigh haul. Had three, four horse team there and we hauled logs and dumped them and decked them down in the pond, you know, in front of the mill. But next spring you know the rail was in and then we had to start and get rails out. There was a donkey setting right there by the power house, the machine shop, and pulled off from the side hill up there, and pulled the logs right into the mill pond--one little ground lead, Donkey 15, and pulled the logs right into the sawmill. That was the closest one there ever was (chuckles) And then they built a camp down below the dam there--if you be there--below the mill pond, there's a little dam down there a ways. I helped saw the timber there when we cleared that, that's the first we done. Cut trees there and cut 'em up and burnt the brush, that cleared that whole pond. That must have been a mile and a half I think, from the mill down to the dam. And they were building the dam. And then we burnt the brush, you know, and we felled the trees and limbed 'em and burnt all the brush.

And after that first fall there, when they were through with the dam, you know, they closed it, shut it off tight and raised it full; and it froze over, and all them trees come up then. Oh, we were a bunch of us, they had ten, fifteen of us there with the buck saw, and we bucked them logs in through the ice. They were frozen then, you know, and they just sawed 'em off. Cut a little hole and get the saw down and saw them off, measure



off another one, saw them off (chuckles). You know one could cut more logs there than two of us could the other way. They were laying there <sup>level</sup>, you know, and they wouldn't pinch. They were frozen in the ice, you know, setting there solid. You just cut the saw into it and kept on bucking up and down through the water till you got 'em off. No power saws them days. They didn't come in till, oh in the thirties, I guess later thirties, just about the world war time when the power saw come in, gas saws.

SAM: So did you get to see that town of Elk River, from when they started putting in the buildings there?

A A: Yeah, there was Trumball, Ole Trumball had the homestead there. He had a log house and he had a log cabin, and he had a little log barn-- that's all. And the log cabin was the--~~by~~ god there was two rooms in that. And they built the kitchen out of lumber and used part of that log cabin for office, and the other half, the cook house crew slept in it. And the rest of us had tents, we slept in tents. I woke up there a lot of mornings with the hair froze to the tent. I had to get help to get up. If the bull cook had been in a little earlier to serve <sup>us</sup> ~~us~~ warm water, somebody come with the bucket of water or a dipper full of water and put it on the tent, you know, to loosen my hair. And I was not the only one. The tent'd get kind of sweaty, you know, if it was snowing or something, the tent get wet, and in the night that would freeze. And of course there was no barber, you know, the closest was Bovill; and we was in there, nobody to cut our hair all winter. So we froze right to the tent (chuckles).

And the log houses they built, you know--the clerk, he had a family, and he was the son-in-law to the general manager, old man Deary, Bill

Deary, you heard that name anyway. He was the first manager of the Potlatch Lumber Company, before Laird. And them stones laying there in front of the gymnasium there in Potlatch, with Bill Deary's name on 'em? I loaded them on top, out of Elk River up towards Elk Butte, loaded them on the flat car and sent them to Potlatch. And if you ever go to the college there, Whitman College in Walla Walla? Isn't it Whitman College in Walla Walla? In front of that administration building is a big rock with--oh that's Chief Joseph, was it, got killed there?

SAM: I don't know, I don't know.

A A: Chief Joseph, I think was the name. I loaded that rock four miles up from Elk River, picked it out of the river. It looked like a camel's back when it's setting there. It's sitting in cement and it's a plaque on it, you know, with that Indian's name on it, in front of the Administration Building there at Whitman College. If you ever go there, I was the first one to handle that rock.

SAM: Were these rocks real tough to handle?

A A: Yeah, it weigh seventeen ton.

SAM: How did you move it?

A A: With steam. I got two little steam rigs there with a boom on them facing each other. And we guyed the booms up to stumps up along side hills there so that we could pull on it, both of them, you see, and lift her up and set her on the flat car. I loaded it and hauled it into Elk River, and then Milwaukee took it to Bovill, and Northern Pacific took it from there to Walla Walla free of charge. That was two feet, I think it was pretty near three feet wider than the flat car. It stuck over on both sides of the--it was just room enough, you know, so they had to almost have a special train all the way from Palouse to

Walla Walla. Well see, there was nothing else, you know, 'cause it'd stick over the cars on sidings it could be dangerous. So there was a special train took that over. Somebody get hurt, you know, somebody on a section crew stand too close where this one stuck out that much outside the car. They could of get it, sue the company, so that had to be a special way to get it over there. But I was the first one that handled the rock. If you get over there, take a look at it.

SAM: Oh we'll look at it. We'll be sure.

A A: It looked like an old camel's back. I had a picture of it, but that was left. Old man Laird, he was manager, and after he had it set up, by god, then he had a picture and he give it to me. But that was left in Elk River, in the house there, when I pulled out of it, so I lost that. Oh, I lost a lot of it then. One of my daughters, you know, kept the house after I left it. I guess everybody got in that--I had a trunk full of pictures and clippings and junk, you know, you always accumulate a lot of stuff. 'Course I lived there twenty years in the house, and I guess younger ones, you know, "Oh, that's good for nothing. Throw it in the furnace."

I had a lot of pictures from the pathe newsman, used to come up from San Francisco. And he stayed with me there for a week at the time in the winter, and get snow pictures. And he brought me a hell of a lot of pictures back, you know, from Oregon, California, Washington. Of course he'd go everywhere, you know, to take pictures. And he come up there to get snow pictures, that's the only place, and work around them donkeys, you know, and show them. And he used to send them back, send the reel back to us. We had a show house there, there was a Greek there had a little show house, the Pasttime. And he'd send us a reel out of that and show it there and send it back to him. No charge.

He used to stay there, oh he'd stay there about a week at a time. And I'd be with him all day, you see. We'd follow there and go up there and see where they were sawing and where them donkeys were working and setting the chokers, and see the drag go in on the high line, or horses. See our log trains, you know, up on a ten percent grade, them old shay coming down the hill with two, three cars behind it. And listen to them old donkeys there, you know, whistle. I could stay downtown. At one time I think we had nine donkeys working. And by god I could tell each one by the sound of the whistle, where I was downtown; you know some day a whistle or a sound will carry a long ways. Next day you can't hear it, you got to be there almost to it. And them old shays, you know, them little geared locomotives, crawling there in the side hills. Yeah, that was a real sport, the life of Riley right there, by golly I tell you. It was fun! It was a lot of fun, you work like hell, you know, and small pay and long hours. Plenty to eat (chuckles).

SAM: How fast did that town of Elk River grow, once you put that mill in there? Did it just right away?

A A: Yeah, that grew up pretty fast. That had to, you see. That had to grow up with the increase at the mill. And when you got so far, you know, there was no more increase. It only had a certain capacity, you see. So that was the end of it, it didn't grow no more. So that grew up fast. There were gyppos or contractors there building houses there, four, five a day, you know, just raised them up in a hurry. I used to shoot the stumps. I shot out pretty near all the stumps I guess, off of every street there--pine stumps, you know, that big, on the street. Then horses to level it off with. One time we had what they call a begley scraper,

and level off from the church down to the main stem where you come into Elk River now. That done a pretty good job, that worked a little faster than the horses. And then take the horses and level it off with. We didn't even have a good horse grader. We had a little bitty one, little short one, a little wagon like.

There were no gas of any kind, you see, everything had to be done by hand--hand and horsepower and steam. The first time we bought a little steam drill instead of using the hammers, you know, for drilling in rocks? They brought a little steam boiler up and a jack hammer, but that was steam instead of air. Well, that was no good, that was too little, that couldn't do nothing, you know, because you were twice as fast by hand. But we tried it. But then it wasn't but a few years, you know, and here come the air hammer, jack hammers. They brought air in then and got the gas motors then, you know, they had little generators on them and air pumps. Why then after that we were all right. That was in the CC's, when we got them. The first I really saw of it was when I was with the CC's, up here on the Pend Orielle River.

I built twenty miles of road up there in five months. Then up to Avery, or up to Calder--Herrick was where the camp was. In 1933, we had a big flood, two days before Christmas. We woke up one morning, and it was four inches of snow there at the camp. And we all had four days for Christmas. So the next day, you know, we had to leave camp, or that evening we'd leave camp. And they had a cloudburst of rain up at Red Ives up at the head of the St. Joe River. You've heard of it, if you haven't seen it. And that river that day rose a foot every hour! We had to wait for the train till in the evening, and it was raining like a sonofagun all day, and that snow went, you know. And the river raised a

foot every hour, all through the day. So that was up almost bank full when <sup>we</sup> left there at eight o'clock that night. The train come along, went down to St. Maries, me and Doc Grannis--you heard of him maybe. He worked around Bovill quite a bit for long, long years; then he was around Lewiston, up around Headquarters awhile, he worked in the depot I think at Lewiston awhile. He's still alive, Earl Grannis. But he's in a rest home in Lewiston now, but they tell me. . .(Break)

I tell you, we went down, me and Doc, he was my assistant. And we had ticket to Elk River, you see, on the Milwaukee. And the next morning you know, I woke up, oh must have been about four-thirty, five o'clock. The siren was blowing so hell would have it. So I said, "Doc, get up and get the hell out of here!" He said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" I said, "I think the hotel is afire! Let's get out of here." So we both got out pants on, and down in the lobby, you know, and we asked her what the hell is wrong. Well, they said, "The dike broke. The river is coming up so fast," they said, "the dike broke. They're trying to get people to go out and get those people that live down there on the meadow," across the river there from St. Maries, when you go up towards Harrison. You've driven there, haven't you, towards Peterson Gulch and get up on the hill? Well all them people there, you know, they were stranded! And that water was rising, you know, coming, the meadows were all under water. The dike broke. And the same going towards Plummer, them flats there was all under water.

And we walked down to the depot and the water was almost up to the depot in St. Maries. There used to be a roundhouse across from the depot, and there in back of it, there was <sup>the</sup> water. Almost up to the rails! And there was a train crew, they come in just before I got there, and I knew

most of them. So they said, "We left"--I think it was thirty-five or forty kids up there up at the camp, you know, left. And I think there was a second lieutenant left with them, in charge of them. And they said, "Your crew was standing in the railroad when we went by there at two o'clock. They said, "The wa<sup>ter</sup> was right up to the roof of the shacks," the bunkhouses that we had, and cookhouse.

And so when I come back, by golly, the fourth day--well then they had, the side track washed out quite a bit of road up there at Calder, but they fixed that in a hurry, and then there was some washout, but they could run the train in a couple of days afterwards. That goes down pretty fast, you know. It come up in a day and dropped down in about the next day, it was pretty near down again, you see. But that river raised twenty-nine feet at Calder in twanty-four hours! There was a store in there, and they were telling me when I come back, the water in that store was even with the top of the counter in the grocery store, inside, on the other side of the railroad. There was a bridge there, you know, built out of four, two inch cable, the forest service put it in, anchored back. And the driftwood come down there, a big cedar they said come first, and lodged agin' it, you know. And it lasted just about fifteen minute and it broke all them cables, broke it loose!

And coming up on the train there after Christmas--I was home there at Elk River--and there was pigs, and chickens, and sheeps, and everything hanging on the cross-arms on the telephone line along the railroad track. They were hanging up there in the cross arms--dead. The water was that high (chuckles), along the railroad track, in places, not all along. I found a shack, you know, that stood, oh that was up about a mile above Calder. And I walked down the river bank there afterwards. We built that bridge, that concrete bridge that's in there now, I helped start that one, that

spring before I left. And I found a cabin over there, and I looked in and there was a bed in there and a pig laying on top of it. Dead. If he starved to death or what, I don't know.

(End of Side D)

A A It split in the middle and flattened out, cookhouse and dining room that we had--you know that was forty foot wide I think, or somewhere in there, with the wing to it with it--that split. And the officer's quarter and the one that us foremen stayed in--they were down the river about a quarter of a mile, hanging in the brush there. And the captain come back the same time that I did, he was in Spokane, so he called me in. They put up a wireless from St. Maries up to us and in to Fort Wright, (Fort Wright was the headquarter for the CC's, you know <sup>Some</sup> could talk. So he called me in there and he asked me what I thought of how much damage it did. And I said, "Not too much--a lot of work. We can put it together." And he said Fort Wright had called him, and he said he reported <sup>a</sup> 95% loss, the whole camp. And so I told him, I said, "Captain, don't tell that to Fort Wright." He says, "Why?" I said, "You'll be the laughing stock of the fort! If you can say that to them, that 95% <sup>I said,</sup> they won't believe ya! And I said, " They got plenty right <sup>to</sup> not believe ya." "Well," he said, "I'm going to send it in." And I said, "Okay, that's you!" So he did.

And the next day now here come, oh that big major, Murphy, I think his name was, and a couple of captains, and oh there were quite a few of them officers. They come up on an extra train. And they called me up in on that carpet. And I was working there, you know, just starting in. And Fittings was the supervisor, I was working under him in the forest service. I was on the forest service, not the army, you see, but the army had the



camp and I had to work on the outside, I done the work. So they called me in, and he asked me, that big major there, he said, "Did the captain ask you what you thought the damage would be?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "What was your answer?" "Well," I said, "I couldn't answer that any till after you get started, and not even yet, and I've been here two days now." And I said, "Still I couldn't tell ya just what that'll be." "Well," he said, "the captain send us in a report, he said it was that, 95% loss, the camp was ruined." <sup>He said,</sup> "Did you hear the captain say that?" And I said, "Yes, I heard it." And he said, "What did you tell him?" <sup>He said</sup> "Did he say that he was asked to send that in?" And I said, "Yes, he said he was going to send it in." "What did you tell him?" "I told him," I said, "that you'll be the laughing stock of Fort Wright if you send it in." He said, "He is!" He said that, and the captain was standing right there, and that was the very word that we had talked about before. So they said, "Could you fix it, could you fix the camp up?" And I said, "I guess so. But you talk to Fitting," I said, "he is my boss. So talk to him." He was standing there too. "Well," he said, "we'll talk it over." "Well," I said, "you talk to him while you go up to Avery." There was another camp there was washed out, Avery camp, and this one at Calder or at Herrick. The one on the top and the one at the bottom washed out in the water, see, on that road.

So when they come back I was called on the carpet there again, and he asked me a lot of questions. And I said, "Well talk to Fitting. If he says we'll do it," I said, "I'll do it! That can be done." <sup>I said,</sup> "I'll get it up there, but I got to have lots of help, lots of material." And the captain had ordered three carload of lumber. He said, "Should we order that?" And I said, "Hell no, we don't need it." <sup>I said</sup> "We need a few thousand feet of lumber." <sup>And I said,</sup> "I'll give you a rough estimate and maybe we'll have to increase it a little later on. And some of it I wouldn't tell you now. I got to

have a little time to figure some of it. But <sup>"I said,</sup> I'll give you something to work on, and send that up right away so we can start to fix the buildings." Which <sup>they</sup> did. And he said, "How long will it take you?" And I said, "Come back here in ten days, I'll have it fixed." And by god, you know, he said, "I'll be up," which he never did. When he left he said, "you'll be in charge!" And I said, "What about the captain?" "Well he'll be here." And I said, "Then leave the captain in charge and I work with him, I work with him. But I know there can't be two men in charge. That's absolute. The captain is in charge of the camp, I got the work!" "Well," I said, "What are you going to do with him." He said, "I'll take him with me." "Okay." And that's all there is to it. (chuckles). But I said, "We can't be <sup>the</sup> two of us here, 'cause we can't agree." And I said, "It's only, be only one boss. Got to be one and only one." I said, "Either the captain--if they leave the captain here, give it to him. <sup>"I said</sup> if you want me to do it, take the captain with ya."

SAM: Do you know what the men in the camp did when the camp got flooded?

A A: Well they didn't call 'em back for a long time, see, didn't call 'em back till the camp was fixed. We had them thirty-five kids that was left there in charge when the flood come. I had them and we were doing a hell of a lot of good work, all of us. We all worked like hell. We didn't have any hydraulic jacks, but we got them screw jacks. Ad we got the mechanic back, and we got the cats all cleaned up, and the dozers, so we had a little power, to pull with. And I went up in the side hill there and got long skids, and jacked up <sup>each</sup> bunkhouse and set 'em on them timbers and bolted them together so we could pull them, swing them and set them in place. And that way, you see, we got 'em two feet off from

the ground. Before that, the captain was up there and they built it, and they had four by six sills set in on the floor and level off the ground, and that was the foundation and nailed the floor onto it. Well you know, if you don't have air under a building it'll sweat, it'll warp the floors. No matter how you try, it'll always warp them. So for two months there, all fall there, you know, he had crew, he had probably half of the crew in there fixing floors in them camp cars, camp buildings. And after that come, I said, "I'm going to put it up two feet off from the ground, and then I'll build a sidewalk clean around it." <sup>"And I said"</sup> "I want two inch lumber, two inch, two by twelves, sixteen foot." And I built a sidewalk clean around and into every bunkhouse, into the office or into the captain's quarters, work quarters where I slept--I had three, four men with me, straw bosses or assistants--and into the cookhouse, dining room so nobody ever stepped on the ground anymore. Two feet off from the ground.

In the upper camp there at Avery, they sent this Ervin Fisher--I told you to get Mrs. Fisher, go and see her. Her husband, he come up from Bovill, a carpenter boss, and he fixed up the camp up at Avery. And my camp, you know, I fixed it myself, we fixed it, we didn't call anybody. Just with the kids--that's what we were supposed to do, learn the kids--so we did, we worked them. They did good too, by golly, they worked like hell (chuckles). First camp I was in there up around at Ruby on the Pend Oreille River, we had twenty-six old lumberjacks, and by god they was a menace to the crew. So I asked the captain one day, <sup>we</sup> sat there and talked and I said, "Anyway at all that we can get rid of them, get rid of them old lumberjacks." <sup>"And I said"</sup> "We'll have a pretty nice outfit here."

L S: What was wrong with the old lumberjacks?

A A: They wanted to teach the kids, you know, they still had that old Wobbly thinking in them. Destroy, not build--destroy, do nothing. Well, those kids there, they were sixteen, that bunch were all from Spokane and Seattle. And the lumberjacks was the usual run from the skid road here in Spokane, that they hired up. So we got rid of them and by god--all but two or three that I told the captain, "We <sup>Keep</sup> them, they're good, they're all right, they'll work with us and with the kids." You know if you can't get the kids to work with ya, the foreman is stuck, he can't do nothing. If the crew don't work with ya, you're helpless, you can't do it yourself. You've got to have the will of the camp with ya. And I got them kids there, by golly, they worked fine, fine, we done a hell of a lot of work.

After the flood we come up and all them people there on the river, you know, they lost pretty near everything they had. And I gave them, oh, shovels, and picks and axes, dynamite, and whatever they needed. I give it to 'em as long as I had anything. And here come Fitting up one day, and he was the supervisor see, he was my boss. And I said, "What in the hell are you doing? What are you trying to do?" He said, "I am trying to get an estimate of the camp." "Well," I said, "that's a hell of a time to come. You know we haven't been on the project for six weeks, pretty near now. We had to build a bridge across the river first, so we could get across and get to our jobs." Camp was on one side of the river and the road was on the other, we put up a cable bridge across there. The one that was in there before that, the water took it you know. And I was the only one that could cross the river. They drowned a few of them, two or three of them up at the camp at. . .

L S: Avery?

A A: No, not at Avery, one of them others, down below Avery. It wasn't Marble Creek either, the one--Hoyt, Hoyt's Flat. I think the ranger's station is there now on the Hoyt's Flat. There's a bridge there, you go up to--I forget the name of that creek now, I used to go fishing.

SAM: You say they drowned trying to cross the river?

A A: Yes. So they wouldn't let no kids go over anymore. There was a farmer lived on the other side there. He was an old Bovill man, I might pick up his name in a minute. So him and I, we worked on one side against the whole crew on the other side. He had a boat, and he come over one day with the boat and I went over with him. After that I used the boat. We took one horse, you know, and pulled the boat up there a half a mile above the camp, above his place. And I got in the river and sometime I couldn't get--the river was high in the middle, and the force was so strong I couldn't get in or land where I wanted to. Sometime I went a half a mile below camp before I could get landed on the side, and then have the kids come and help me pull it back again.

And we worked that way, we dug down, deadman, you know, what we called, I dug that down fourteen feet down in the ground for an anchor. That was 350 feet across the river. And we put up an A-frame on each side, I put in one on one side, and the crew was on the other side. And then we got cables and strung over on top of them A-frames. And we had those turn buckles to tighten the cable to where we wanted it. And then we started to build, we had to build the bridge from one side to the other. We had hangers on with clamps, you know, to hold it from the wire up above, to hold it so the bridge was level, you see. When we got across then we had

to adjust it--some of them drop 'em and some of 'em raised 'em, you know, 'cause it was pretty hard to go from one side and get it straight. We tried to go up as much as we could, go uphill all the way. And by the time we get over to the other side see, she'd be down, the weight of it. That took a lot of lumber: 350 feet of four foot wide, and I put in double two inch planks on it, we didn't have cross pieces. We made it. But I think the water come and took that one too, (chuckles), but it stayed there till I left.

SAM: Was it difficult to get the cable from one side of the river to the other, to start with?

A A: Yes, yes it was. We took a rope, I took a rope in the boat first. I got the rope over on the other side and hung on to it. And then the man there with me, he held it, and then he got the team, you see, and we pulled the first cable over with the rope. He'd ride it and swim the rope across, and we'd pull another cable across. I took a dozer across there at Calder, twenty feet of water, the same way. The old fella there, I forget his name too. ( Oh he's dead long ago, a nice old feller. His son I think is a lawyer in St. Maries now. But, you know, names, will slip me, names will get away from me. Sometimes I can't think for myself, and a little bit--there they come, just like taking it out of the sky.) Well we done the same thing there, we swam the rope across the river there. And then we got the rope and we fastened that to a five-eighth cable and took that across. And then I had a light block and line over there and we put an anchor on it, and the horses, and we pulled that dozer across twenty feet of water. Dozer went on the ground underneath, the bottom of the river. Got 'em up on

the other side (laughs). No bridge, they were gone. That took, jesus, I don't know, I think it took 'em about four months or five months to build that bridge. They drove pilings first too, and put up coffer dams after the water left. So they go down and then drove piles as far as they could, get 'em solid, butt till they hit bedrock. And then go down there about ten feet with concrete and fill up around 'em, till they got up on top, so they could put their beams on it, for the bridge.

SAM: You say that a lot of people were washed out and you gave the homes and people. . .?

A A: We gave 'em tools. And so when he come and wanted as estimate of the loss and I said, "Holy lightning, jesus, I've done things here that I shouldn't done. I'm honest. I don't want you to think we lost--we didn't lose a godamn thing in the water. I gave it away." He said, "Axel, don't worry. The flood took care of all of it. I already took care of that. I want to give credit to the camp." And I said, "For cripes sake, I haven't been on the project for six weeks, we ain't got no credit." He said, "The way you're sitting now, you got twice as much credit as any of the other camps on the whole line to your credit. Look, you hauled rock all the way from here into Calder on the old road. You built half of a bridge going across. I was gonna build a truck bridge across the river too, and I had it half built, you know; it went to hell, that went in the flood, and was discarded. You're so far ahead on your progress there is no comparis<sup>o</sup>n with the others." I said, "Okay, go ahead then. You're the boss. (laughs) I'm just here to work."

SAM: Was the camp able to give any help, assistance to the families that got washed out?

A A: Not much, no we didn't. We couldn't, we were too far away from them see.

SAM: They were down near St. Maries, huh?

A A: No, there was lots of farmers. That farmer there at Calder, he lost eighty-six head of cattle in that one flodd. That's quite a lots. And the man there that worked with me, he got four dollars a day, working with me. And we gave him a dollar a head for the horses, we used his two horses, so he got six dollars a day with him and his horses. That's pretty good. He was satisfied. And that was the only one there that we could help any, was him. There was a schoolhouse there, and they had a Christmas doing that Christmas, the water hadn't come up so they had a little doings. And I give 'em oh a dozen gas lamps and a lot of gas. So they had light, oh that was lit up like a church that day. Otherwise they had those palouse lamps, or kerosene, but we had gas lamps and I let 'em have a dozen of them. I don't know what become of them, I guess they went through the flood, I don't know. But I must have gave away a couple dozen of cross-cut saws, a dozen or two, a couple three dozens of axes, shovels, picks, whatever they needed. 'Cause they had nothing.

But that farmer there--Buel was his name, the fellow at Calder, that was his name. He lost eighty-six cows that night. He didn't think of it either. In the middle of the field there he had a haystack on a mound, and that was up oh twenty-five feet higher than the creek or more. Anyway, the water didn't get to it, when the water kept a-comin' a little closer and closer, but the water never got up to that strawstack or haystack. But the old cows--when he want to bed that night he shut the gate, and the old cows headed for the barn. And in the morning he woke up, you know, and here was the water, and here lay the eighty-six



head of cows at the gate, trying to get in. And he didn't wake up. And all the calves, you know, they stepped in the water and back up again. And he had about twenty or thirty calves, they all stayed on the less side, opposite side from the wind, you know, at that haystack. They were fine, they were fine and dandy, they stood there dry and eating hay. All he had left was calves, all the calves was left. They didn't try the water, they didn't try to go for the home ranch at all, they stayed.

And this man that I worked with up there at Herrick, he come out and he had one calf left, but he had all his in the barn. He woke up in the middle of the night, you know, and it was raining like hell. And he had a boat at the house, and he stepped down, you know, and by god here he stepped in the water. The water was over the kitchen floor. He was up in the attic. "Course I guess he was figuring on it, but anyway that night him and his family, there were two kids and the father-in-law and his wife, they got in the boat and they went across. And the next morning he had one calf rolling along, sailing along in on the barn floor on a bale of hay. That's all he had left, the others were all drowned. If they were loose they would have made it, see. they would have got the hell out of there. But he had them tied up in the stanchion, you see, he lost them all. Ballas was his name, what that hell was his first name now--Ballas. He had milk cows, and he used to haul milk up and sell it up there at Avery.

SAM: We should get going.

A A: Yeah, by golly, come back some time!

SAM: We'll come back soon.

A A By golly, I'll come over and see ya.

Transcribed by Sherrie Fields

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