

BYERS SANDERSON
Second Interview

Interviewed by:
Sam Schragger

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BYERS SANDERSON

Bovill; b. 1896

master mechanic for Potlatch Lumber Company.

1.2 hrs.

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with Sam Schrager
November 13, 1975

II. Transcript

Second interview

BYERS SANDERSON

This conversation with BYERS SANDERSON took place at his home in Bovill, Idaho on November 13, 1975. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER

BYERS SANDERSON: -- Have to get back where the snow was to hear my feet crunch in the snow. But now, it's a problem.

SAM SCHRAGER: Did you get ^{overseas} back in the snow during World War I?

BS: No, I was on the Gulf of Mexico. Our main camp was Pensacola - and what was the name of this other place? Well, it was out from Gulf Port there. Out at the Exposition buildings; our headquarters was there. There was a big airfield there and then Pensacola was the principal airport.

SS: Did you enlist, or did you get drafted?

BS: I was enlisted. I was a mechanic on the airplanes. Some difference between them airplanes now and then. You could hear them old crates whistle as they ^{id} come down. Regular kites.

SS: What did you do as a mechanic on them? Was there much you could do to make 'em run?

BS: Yes, you worked on the Liberty motor and the Hispano. Hispano was a French motor; and the Liberty motor and then they had another motor: I forget the name. Hall Scott (?) I believe it was. But it was some difference than what it is today. (Chuckles)

SS: They were made out of spruce, weren't they?

BS: Yeah.

SS: Weren't they made out of spruce: part of those old planes?

BS: Yes, they was made out ^{of} wood and they had wire struts, you know coming down the side and wood, and they was-- Now, you know the Pot-latch-- well, the government reserved all the spruce there was in the country here. Had every spruce tree in the country marked. They didn't last long, though. 'Course, the spruce, if they'd have a

crash landing or anything, it'd splinter instead of cracking up. They'd bend, and they'd break alright, but they wouldn't pull apart.

SS: Well, I've heard that that had something to do with the timber production going on the woods right then.

BS: It did.

SS: They were really pushing to get the spruce out.

BS: Yes, they was getting the spruce out; picking out choice stuff. The airplanes, they was principally made of all spruce. That's what I say, they was regular kites. (Chuckles)

SS: Listen, I want to ask you about-- some more about Bill Deary. You mentioned to me that he was a pretty good salesman.

BS: Yes.

SS: What's the story on that? He actually did some selling himself?

BS: OH, yes. He sent his-- well, I don't know whether it was his nephew-- I think it was his nephew-- he sent him back East to sell white pine and white fir. And he went back there and he didn't get a half a dozen orders. Well, the mill was gonna either ^{have to} shut down or they was gonna get something. Old Bill he fired him, put him on another job-- he didn't fire him-- he put him on another job and says, "I'll go back myself." He went back and called it silver pine. And he put it out 'tween eighteen, twenty dollars a thousand, and he just sold car load after carload, and kept the mill running through them hard times and come out with it. And made money.

SS: Those Eastern dudes didn't know what silver pine was, or they thought it was something fancy?

BS: No, they didn't know what silver pine was. They thought it was another valuable wood. Well, it was, and it is. You can take and build a house with white fir and it's the best building material you can

get, right today. For the inside work ^{stuff} on a house, you know. It'll hold up. Good boards, it won't crack like the white pine and other stuff. 'Course, now they've got preservatives that they put on their lumber and it preserves it, but then, why, white fir was cheap and they could build the inside and the outside of the house and then cover it, and they had as good building material those days as they could get.

SS: Did you say that he didn't get along too well with Featherstone? Was he the first superintendent?

BS: Yes, he was the first superintendent the Potlatch ever had in here, and he'd get his men to working, and Old Bill'd come up-- at that time he traveled mostly by, what they called a hack, a buggy, team. And he'd come up and change his men all around. He'd have his men working doing such a thing, and Featherstone was kind of an independent old codger anyhow, and he said, "Bill," he says, "why do you always come up and change my men around for?" He says, "I've got 'em doing as I want 'em to do," he says, "you come up here and you wreck my whole plant." Bill says, "I want 'em that way." Made Old Frank mad and he says, "Well," he says, "maybe you better take the whole works and run it." "Well," Bill says, "I can do that, too." He was a hard-boiled old customer. And Featherstone quit and Old Bill went to Spokane and he met T.P. Jones coming down the street, and he told T.P., "You're just the man I'm alooking for." He says, "I want you to come and be the superintendent of the Potlatch."

SS: Did he know who T. P. Jones -- did he know T.P. Jones?

BS: Yeah, he knew him back in Cloquet, Minnesota. Jones was a railroad engineer and he ^{id} worked in the camps.

SS: So what was Jones doing up here in Spokane?

BS: Well, he was hunting for work. And when they shut down and stuff up there, he just come West, you know. And Jones didn't want it at first. And finally, Old Deary talked him into it. Well, he come down and took over. And he was a wonderful old fellow to work for. He'd argue with you, but if you convinced him you was right, why, he'd give in to you. Most of them fellows won't give into you, you know, whether they're right or wrong. They want it as they want it, but T.P. wasn't that way. Now, like the men working at the camps; up here at Camp 8, that was the first driving outfit that they had, in here before the railroad got here. Well, he told the men they could have a saw, cross-cut saw, a shovel and splitting maul and a couple of wedges and an axe. "But," he says, "you take anymore, I'll figure that you're stealing." And, he says, "I'll handle it as such." Well, everybody had a saw and a snowshovel and a spade and axe. And they'd even haul wood in, load it on the train and roll it off at their places. They had houses along the track at Slabtown there, and they'd stop the train, roll off two, three logs along for each one and they'd saw 'em up.

SS: Was that OK by T.P.?

BS: Oh, yes. Yes, they'd cut those old white pine, you know, dead, old dead tamarack; they never used any of that wood at that time.

SS: When did these families move into Slabtown? *And Collins?*

BS: They moved in there- that'd go back into 1905, '06, they settled up in here. At 1904, I think, they started to work on the dam before the railroad ever thought of getting in here, and they made the dam up here in 1904, I believe it was. Old Tilley Pelton--

SS: Tilley was working for Potlatch then?

BS: Oh, yes. Yeah, it was all Potlatch then.

SS: These first men in there at Collins and Slabtown, now, did you say

that the Fries were in there right early?

BS: Yes. They was in there in the '90's. And that was the outpost for the mails being delivered. Old Corrin that lives down here, out from Pullman there, was the mail-- he was fourteen years old and driving mail truck.

SS: Yes, I spoke to him. Well, Frei, now-- did you say that he was independent at first and he had his own sawmill-- he wasn't part of Potlatch when he was---

BS: No, no. He was never part of ^{the} Potlatch. He had a little store and the post office and a couple, three buildings there at-- oh, what was the name of that place? He called it? And he run the store, and there was a schoolhouse there. And then Old Abe Frei, he had a homestead and Jake Frei had a homestead; John Frei and them, they all had homesteads right around Collins there. And they'd come up and turn around there with the mail and go on back down to Troy. They came out from Troy. The railroad come to Troy, you see, and they'd get their mail. And Old ^{Abe} Ed Frei, he sold out. He sold his-- he's the one that made the money at that time-- he sold his homestead for ten thousand dollars. He come out smelling like a rose for that time!

SS: I guess. He sold to somebody else?

BS: He sold ^{it} to the Potlatch.

SS: They must have wanted it pretty bad to pay that.

BS: Why, he had timber on there-- white pine was four feet through! Just like hair on a dog. And then Sam sold his later-- later sold his homestead-- he didn't sell 'em the homestead, but he sold 'em the timber off of it-- and he got four dollars a thousand for cutting it and hauling it and loading it down to the railroad.

SS: He didn't make out so good as his brother did, eh?

- BS: No. But he made money at that. You could really do something with money at that time.
- SS: What kind of people were Freis? Were they a real independent bunch of men? Sounds like they weren't too anxious to go to work for the company.
- BS: No. No. They didn't work for the company at all. They was an independent outfit. 'Course, Old Sam raised cattle. Not a big amount, but he had ^{a few} his cattle and he had his horses and he done farming and he had his store. And they made a good living. One of the girls-- not the girls-- but his wife taught school. So they had no worries at that time. And then when the railroad come through they picked up quite a lot of work from the railroad, hauling freight and stuff that way. Had a regular freight outfit hauling in.
- SS: Was there actually much of a settlement at Collins, of homes?
- BS: Well, yes. They was, I don't remember how many people there, but they was the Freis; Jake Frei and his outfit, and then they was Abe Frei, Old John Frei and then they had the school in the store, and it was an outpost.
- SS: Sounds like a family town.
- BS: Yeah, it was, good deal. But there was lots of outsiders that come in there.
- SS: About when Potlatch came in, or before?
- BS: Well, yeah, before the Potlatch come in. And after the railroad got in and everything, why, they'd stop and put their freight off ^{right} at Collins. But, the Freis, they was pretty ambitious. There was nothing lazy about 'em at all. They was workers, but they was independent. And then, when they left here, they went to Moscow and got that old White Hotel. There on the corner at the intersection down there by

the service station. And they run that, well, I guess they still own it.

SS: Huh. Are there any of the old-timers left of the Freis?

BS: Yeah. Yes, I think the girls are all alive. I run into 'em every little while, there in Moscow.

SS: What about Slabtown? When did that come in?

BS: Well, I think Slabtown was built in, oh,-- 1904 or '05. You see, Sam put in a little sawmill there, and that's where it got it's name. Slabtown. And he built a store and a post office, and then they had about a dozen houses there. And Old Dave Gentry, he was always a cattleman, but Dave worked for the Potlatch when the Potlatch come in, and he bought and sold cattle on the side. He had a cabin across the river from Slabtown. They used to have quite a time there at Slabtown, they'd go out and lasso the steers and ride 'em bareback!! They always had a rope tied onto 'em so ^{that} the steers couldn't gore 'em when they-- As a kid I would go out there and we'd ride 'em and ^{they'd} get bucked off, why, sometimes they had two, three men on the ropes to hold the steers from going in and horning 'em. They'd bawl ^{and butt 'em}. They had a regular roundup there every weekend. Old Dave Gentry, why, he-- it'd just tickle him to death, you know. He ^{was} a jolly old fellow, anyhow, you know. They'd put up prizes for the best riders.

SS: Rodeo.

BS: Oh, yes. It wasn't only just Camp 8 affair. And then at the dam, the lumberjacks'd take and put on a birling contest.

SS: Yes, you were telling me about that.

BS: Yes, they'd get out there--

SS: Was Slabtown right next to Collins, just about?

BS: Oh, no. Slabtown was only about two and a half miles up here. Col-

lins is four miles.

SS: Were they real different from Bovill as towns?

BS: Oh, yes.

SS: They were just small settlements?

BS: Small settlements. When Collins was in there, Bovill was just one or two little houses down here. Old Grandma Warren, she had a couple a shacks there. She had three log cabins, and then she sold out to the Hughey Bovill, and he was gonna make a, well-- they had cayuses for traveling-- sightseeing outfit.

SS: A resort? Was that what he had in mind?

BS: Yes, that's what he had in mind. Then the Potlatch come in and they wanted to buy the meadows to put their mill, instead of at Elk River. Later on, you know, they put it in at Elk River. But Old Bovill wanted so much for the meadows at that time-- he was gonna make his fortune there-- he wanted so much that Old Bill Deary says, "We'll just go on up to Elk River." 'Course, Elk River wasn't any town, but there was a good meadow there and his cruisers had told him that there was a good meadow up there and lots of water, and so, they put the Elk River mill in. And at that time, they put in what was supposed to be the best mill in the world. All electrical. 'Course, they made their own juice and everything. And it was a wonderful mill, after it got to going, they had around two thousand, twenty-four hundred people, working there. Then they had all the logging camps out there. Logging camps was all donkeys at that time. Then later on they turned to electric donkeys. They had steam at first, then they converted 'em, put 'em into electric.

SS: Do you remember the Bovills?

BS: Yes.

SS: What were they like?

BS: Oh, they was a real accommodating old couple. They was English. And they had that accent of the English. And they held ^{thar} themselves aloft. (aloof) 'Course, the Englishman does that, holds himself aloft. Now, Henry Mallory, he was going with one of the girls, and one night they had trouble down at one of these old shops where the ladies were; hook shops, as they called 'em, and he went down to settle the trouble. Well, the girl heard that Henry was down there, and boy, she put the skids on him right now!! And the Featherstones was just as independent as they were--

SS: He was a Featherstone?

BS: Yeah, Old Henry was a Featherstone. After Frank quit Deary, why, he took over the post office in Bovill here. He handled the post office for years here. And the Featherstones - the rest of 'em worked in the stores and things that was coming in, new.

SS: So they stopped going together, right then?

BS: Yeah, they stopped right there. She wouldn't have nothing to do with him, 'cause he was down at this sporthouse!! (Chuckles) And he went down there to quell the trouble. Some of them old 'jacks got down there and got into trouble and he was helping 'em out!!

SS: Charlotte Bovill?

BS: Uh-huh.

SS: I heard she was sort of the town nurse and general information source for quite a few years.

BS: Yes. Yes, she was. Old Hugh used to come up and visit with me and ^{thar} we'd go up on the hill here and he'd show me an old mine, used to be over on the Robbins Creek Divide. He said, he used to go up and watch him come out with an old wheelbarrow and put the dirt on

the dump. He had a tunnel there. They called it the Black Lead.

SS: He, himself, it was his mine? It was his mine, or was he just working there?

BS: No, he just watched the old fella. Across the canyon, he could see the old fella come out. I went in there in later years and found the blacksmith shop and all of his tools and anvil and everything was right in there. And it's probably in there yet. If they haven't packed it ^{all} off.

SS: Well, did Hugh mix with the people, real well?

BS: Oh, yes, yes. He was quite a leader in sports and things that way. He figured on having a span of horses and take 'em out on sightseeing here. ^{and there in a day} Hikes and things that way. But things kinda changed.

SS: Pretty fast, huh?

BS: Yes, they changed pretty fast. He'd a been lots better off in the country here; been lots better off if he hadn't been so greedy, charging the Potlatch such a ^{big} exorbitant price for these meadows and things here. We'd a had the mill at Elk River (?) instead of being at Lewiston, why the mill'd a been here yet, today. Because this is always been the center point ^{for 'em.}

SS: Do you think maybe there wouldn't a been that mill at Lewiston, if they had had the mill here instead?

BS: No. I heard Old Charley Weyerhaeuser and ^{Fred} Frank Weyerhaeuser when they was up talking to-- (end cassette A)

SS: Your father?

BS: Yeah. About the mill; putting the mill down at Lewiston. He says, "We'd a never put the mill at Lewiston, if we had it to do over again." He says, "We'd a kept the mill at Elk River." Which they would of. The mill at Lewiston, they done away with the mill at Elk River.

And Elk River's always been the center point.

SS: Why did they decide to go to Lewiston and quit Elk River in the first place?

BS: Well, they figured they could get all their power and everything on the river there. Which they could, you know. They put in that dam and they run the mill right off of the dam. 'Course, they could a done the same thing at Elk River. That's what they done at Elk River. They had a good flow of water in there.

SS: I wonder why at the time they thought they'd be better off at Lewiston. I'd always thought it was just because they had so much of that timber up on the Clearwater.

BS: No. No. They was bringing the timber-- they never started to bring that out til later years up in there. 'Course, I think when they foresee the object of the river being there, ^{that} they could flume right down to Lewiston. Another thing. But you see, all of this country in here where they've logged for all these years is come into Elk River anyhow. And, in later years they commenced to flume, every spring they'd flume down to the mill at Lewiston.

SS: What I'm wondering why there'd be a difference between building the mill at Elk River or here, as far as what would happen in the long run.

BS: Well, we was the center, at that time, we was the center of their main timber. A lot of this timber that they got ahold of in later years, but their main timber was around Bovill here. Well, they had fifty years of timber right here without moving at all. And they've still got timber here.

SS: I've heard that-- somebody say that Hugh Bovill didn't like the idea of the land getting changed around. He was sorry to see the Potlatch

come in, and everything change. Do you think there is any truth to that?

BS: Well, I don't know about that. But he wasn't very cooperative with 'em when they come in here and wanted the meadows and stuff. If he'd a cooperated with 'em ^{if} they'd a give him his price, but they wouldn't give him his price. 'Course, that might a turned him, I don't know. it might a turned him, that he wasn't cooperative with 'em. But, I don't think it was, because he built that hotel-- you see, he only built half of it then later on he built the other half over to live in and run the hotel. And then, when the other outfit took over the hotel, why, they joined the old house and the hotel together; made one building that stands there yet. They joined 'em together and give 'em a nice hotel, for that time.

SS: You said to me that the Weyerhaeusers were common people, in a way. And that made me wonder something about it, how people that got to be so rich and could still be common people.

BS: Well, they was old stock. The people; they wasn't anything airy about 'em at all. They started out back there in Minnesota. They'd work and they'd put every nickle into land. They could buy it for practically nothing. Then they commenced to build up. Now, when they'd come out and visit here, when they first started out, they'd come out ^{about} every year and visit around. Well, they'd go right in at the cook-shacks and they'd sit right along -- they'd fix 'em a special table, not special, but the same table, but it would be up at one end. They'd eat right along with the lumberjacks and talk with 'em. And you take Old Billy Watts and my father and Old T.P. Jones, if they was doing a good job, why, they'd go and buy 'em a suit of clothes, deck 'em out to show their appreciation. And anybody could talk to 'em. They

wasn't stuck-up at all. Billy Watts was running the incline when they come in about one of the last times I remember, and the incline sat down til they seen the engine coming around the bend that was bringing 'em up to the camp and they started the incline up and while they stayed there it went through perfect. The logs was just coming in, and they no more than started down to Bovill here, got around the bend and it broke down. *It never started up.*

SS: What incline was this now? Just the endless line?

BS: Yeah. It was the endless line. And the Weyerhaeusers ^{pronounced} ~~thought~~ it was the greatest invention that was ever invented for logging. (chuckles) But it cost, oh, at that time, it cost a hundred or a hundred and fifty dollars to experiment with it. 'Course, I think Old Jones covered up a lot of expense, too! But they didn't care about the expense. They thought it was a great deal. Then they commenced logging with teams and donkeys. They'd skid 'em in to the track and load 'em with the old *marions* and slides. If they got four cars of logs a day at a camp, why, they was doing good from the woods. The old donkeys; rigging centers.

SS: The endless line, now where was it at that they put that up?

BS: That was on Beales Butte here. They logged the whole side of the mountain with the endless line. But they'd log a little while and it'd break down and then they'd take three, four days to fix it up again; log a little more and it'd break down! It got too expensive and they quit it.

SS: Now how was that different from the-- was that real different from the regular logging that they did?

BS: Oh, yes. Yes. It was just-- the cable started in at the donkey here and went around-- clear around a big circle, and then they had another --

the cable come on down to the donkey, here, you see; well, they had one donkey-- one drum'd come in and the other'd go out.

SS: All one line.

BS: Yeah. And one would wind up while the other was going out and the other'd wind in when the other'n was going the other way. And then they'd whistle and they'd let these lines down and they'd take chokers and tie the logs onto this carrier and then they'd give 'em a sign and they'd-- the donkey'd tighten up on the main line and lift 'em up in the air and they'd start to come on in til the next landing and then they'd whistle 'em down again and they'd loosen up the line and they'd go down and put on some more logs. Well, they had these lines when the Weyerhaeusers was here, they had the logs right at the line so that they could stop and whistle and pick up the logs and keep right agoin' to show off!! Well, they come down and bought Billy Watts, because he was running it, bought him a nice suit of clothes, and bragged about him, and made (over) him!! Billy laughed when they was gone. (Outside conversation interruption)

Yeah, I think T.P. he-- 'course the fire was a going and everything, but he wanted to get rid of Gus Verdun, because Gus was the headquarters for the IWW's. And when the fire was in one section, why, he'd holler to the fellows-- he'd get ahold of the hose and he'd pull it down to some other place and let it burn. Verdun told him afterwards, he says, "you burnt me out apurpose." Jones says, "You're crazy." "Well," he says, "I got proof that you did." He says, "I've got proof enough to give you all kind of trouble, if I wanted to give you trouble." But Verdun says, "I'm not a man looking for trouble," he says, "I'm gettin' out anyhow." And I suppose he had the place insured anyhow, as far as that goes, 'cause Verdun was a good business

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man.

SS: So Jones actually-- was he directing the firefighting?

BS: Oh, yes. He was directing the fire fighters. And he'd pull the hose down from upstairs and had 'em turn it on other places where there wasn't any fire practically burning, at all. Well, without a question that's what he was doing. Now, Frank, my brother, when Verdun had the trouble with the-- over the IWWs and everything, -- Now, Frank was a mechanic for the blacksmith for the Potlatch, and he come down and Gus told him, he says, "I'll give you the place, Frank, and you can pay for it as you take the money in," he says, "I've made around a hundred thousand dollars clear here, since I've been here, and," he says, "you can do the same thing." And so, Frank, says, "Well, I'll take it over." And Verdun was tickled to death to get him take it over. That was just before he burnt out. And Jones was coming up to Camp 8 and Frank and I was walking down home, here, and he met Frank and he says, "Frank, I understand you're taking over Verdun's place." "Yes," Frank says, "I intend to. Verdun has made me an awful good proposition, and I'm going to take it over." He says, "Frank, I'll fire every man that comes in there. Every lumberjack that comes into your dump, I'll fire him." He says, "Verdun is fighting me with fire," he says, "I'm gonna fight him back with fire. I'm gonna run him outta town." "Well," Frank says, "I don't see why you hold it against me taking over the place. He's selling me the place and I can pay for it just as I make it." And Old T. P. says, "He's fought me with fire ever since he's been in here, and I'm going back at him. He's not going to sell that place. I'll see to that." He says, "I'll fire every man that goes in there and trades with you." And Frank backed out. He told Gus he wouldn't take it. He told Gus about it.

Well, when the fire broke out, why Old Jones was right there holding the hose. (Chuckles) There's no question but what Jones ^{did} pull 'em out so it would burn down.

SS: Do you think the fire might have been set, or do you think it was an accident?

BS: No, no. I think it was probably a cigarette was dropped, but Old Jones happened to be in town--

SS: And took advantage of it.

BS: Took advantage of it.

SS: Well, do you think Gus Verdun wanted to sell his place because the heat was on him from Jones?

BS: Yeah.

SS: That's the reason?

BS: Yeah. That's why Gus wanted to get out. He says, "As far as the IWWs goes, this was just a meeting place!" He says, "I've got to cater to the working man. They met in here right along, and I was getting my trade from 'em." And, he says, "They wanted to meet, and I rented 'em the poolhall every so often for their meetings." Well, that's what Jones wanted to do. He wanted to get rid of the IWWs. They had a bull pen, you know over at Moscow, and they'd round up every so often the IWWs, whether they'd done anything at all, and take 'em over and keep 'em a few days and then turn 'em loose. And, the camps up here were filthy. They had bedbugs-- you couldn't go to sleep. And there was pigs in under the camps-- running right in the camps. And they raised their own pigs and butchered 'em all themselves, you know for the meat. And the IWW-- when the State Inspector come in Jones met 'em with the shay and took 'em up on up on a flatcar - he had one camp fixed up in first-class shape, the rest of the camps was all filthy,

And he took 'em up and showed 'em the camp and they was really indignant. They thought the camps were fine. Well, they was smooth enough that they kept 'em there until late at night and then they had to get down. And the IWWs caught 'em now, and says, "You've inspected these camps. This camp is fixed special for you fellows, but" he says, "we want you to go to these other camps. And, we demand that you go." And they went up there and boy, they shut the camps down, right now!! Old Bob Jones a hundred and fifty hogs running in under the bunkhouses. They was on cars, you know, and the mud was that deep!! And in the summer evenings, why, -- you know how a hog smells! Well, the smell'd raise up there. And I've seen 'em pick up water out of the creek where there was hogs a hundred yards above 'em: was getting into the water. They'd pick up the water to make lemonade and stuff out of the creek!! They had a platform fixed out in the creek, you know, and they'd dip the water up. Well, the IWWs made 'em clean it all up. They put the clamps on 'em. And, of course, that was the thing that teed Old T.P. off so, because the IWWs had made 'em clean up the camps. That's one thing that the IWWs did do, they made 'em clean up their camps.

SS: How about these bedbugs? I've heard that it was real hard to avoid getting 'em.

BS: Oh, they was terrible!! I've gone in-- I was railroading at the time-- I've gone in and we'd pull in at one, two o'clock at night from bringing the logs in, putting 'em on the sidings-- and I've gone in to lay down and I felt something crawling on me, and I turned my flashlight on, and I bet I coulda counted a hundred and fifty bedbugs crawling over. Well, I got up and went out behind the cookstoves in the kitchen-- they kept fire all night for the cooks-- and laid down between

the wall and the stove, where it was warm, and I'd sleep out there. And yet, I was firing on the railroad-- tired. And you take their pillows-- I've seen their pillows just dotted all over with blood where they'd smashed those bedbugs. Stink!! Look at the mattress: I've seen patches of bedbugs that big around on the mattresses. Well the Potlatch-- they'd made such a rumpus about it that the Potlatch went to painting creosote-- they'd paint the sacks with creosote and spray it all around. Well, that done away with a lot of 'em, but it didn't do away with all of 'em. And then the IWWs called for beds. And a sleeping mattress, cots, you know. And they made 'em furnish the blankets and wash 'em once a week. The laundry come in once a week and they'd get the blankets; give 'em fresh blankets. And they gradually got rid of the bedbugs. But, I'm right here to tell you, the lice and bedbugs was terrible! You couldn't stay there, but what you'd get lousier than a pet coon. Mother run a boardinghouse in Potlatch; oh, that was in 1908, and they'd come down outta these camps and they'd stop there. Well, Mother'd make 'em take a bath and take their clothes and put 'em in boiling, scalding water, before she'd even let 'em stay at the boardinghouse. She wouldn't tolerate it at all!! (Laughter)

SS: Did she keep 'em out that way?

BS: Yeah.

SS: Well, this time you were on the railroad and you stopped and slept in the bunkhouse, now was that one of the only times you had to do that? Or was that a normal everyday--

BS: No. That was the railroad. Whatever camps that we was stationed at, why, that was our headquarters. 'Course, we'd come in here at night. But, if we was, like ^I say, over on the other side of the divide, over

by Clarkia, we'd have to stay in the camp til the next morning and then-- But our headquarters was at home, here. But there was a week and ten days at a time, we'd never be able to get home.

SS: Well, you must have encountered that a lot. I mean running against the bedbugs and lice.

BS: Yes. And old Camp 6 was the same way. Our headquarters was down there. On the weeknights, we stayed at Camp 6, then on Saturday nights, why, then we'd come in home over Sunday, and we'd go into the shop and repair the engines and things that way.

SS: Now what's the deal about this? It sounds to me like for common people the Weyerhaeusers didn't care too much about improving conditions in the camps until it was forced on them.

BS: They was back East. They only come out about once a month or once every six months.

SS: Whose responsibility was it?

BS: T.P. Jones. He was running the camps, you see. Well, he was the superintendent of the woods. But they finally-- When Nogle took over, Nogle went through the camps and he really cleaned 'em up. He put in lady flunkies in^{to} the camps and he put in special bunkhouses. They made the bunkhouses that would hold four men; that's all they would allow in there. And he made 'em keep clean. And the first camp-- old Camp 2 was up above Bovill here--well, it was on cars-- the camps was on cars, and the bunkhouses instead of having them old wooden bunks and things, they had these steel cots. And he just cleaned out all that bedbug stuff and really used disinfectant and stuff around in the bunkhouses and got rid of the bugs and put in new mattresses and stuff that way. And he really cleaned the camps up.

SS: Do you think he did this because of the IWWs had put pressure on them

to do it?

BS: Well, yes, at that time, yes. They was the instigators of the Pot-latch having to clean up the camps. Because they showed Old Jones up for not cleaning the camps up. And that's the reason Old T.P. was death on 'em. (Chuckles)

SS: I've heard that most of the men in the camps were Wobblies there at one time.

BS: Oh, yes, they were. They was all Wobblies. I was scaling at old Camp 2, and they put in the-- The Wobblies come in the bunkhouse while I was keeping time. The scaler had to keep time at that time. And there was old Wobblies there-- they were good men-- all they wanted was just a fair thing-- to clean up the camps so that they didn't live like hogs-- and he says, "I'll tell you, sonny, I won't get to see it, but you'll see the day that these camps are just as nice to stay in as your home is. And, that's what we want." He says, "We want things half way decent." "Well," I says, "I can't blame you for that. I know, I have stayed around in these camps and the bedbugs and lice are terrible!" And, the wood rats around the barns with the horses. The rats is-- well, take old Camp 8--they took clubs and went in there, three or four of the foremen, and they killed two barrels of wood rats!! Throw 'em in a barrel; had 'em hauled off. And the next morning they had two barrels full of wood rats. Well, you know what they are; they stink terrible.

SS: They killed 'em, when? At night?

BS: Yeah. They'd get in there with lights and they was out into the grain, you see, with clubs, and they just killed 'em right and left. And Old T.P.-- Old Doc Connors was the doctor, he come over to the mine and I was over there-- went over for the weekend-- Dad run the mine,

and T.P. was one of the big stockholders --

END OF TAPE 126.2 AB (0250-B

Transcribed 07-27-76

Original sent to Sam Schrage this date

Balance of this interview will be typed as continuation of this draft when
received from Sam.

SANDERSON

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BS: And T. P. was telling about ^{him} killing two barrels of wood rats, about when they killed 'em here. Old Doc was a happy old go-lucky fellow. He says, "T. P.," he was a laughing and going' on and he says, "T.P., what did you do with that club you killed them rats with?" Oh, T.P. says, "Why do you want to know what I done with that club?" "Well," he says, "that's quite a relic, I want to put it on exposition!"
(Laughter) Old Jones was telling the truth, but Old Doc, you know, he was a retired-- he married Mrs. Laird, after Laird died, and he was a rich old codger, and he come up there for a vacation.

SS: Well, what do you think the deal with T.P. was? Do you think that it was just-- do you think he didn't care about the welfare of the men very much?

BS: Yes, he did.

SS: He was just stubborn then?

BS: No. They didn't have any disinfectants at that time. And they carried their beds on their backs, from one camp to the other, well, if they got rid of the bedbugs in one camp, why, the next time a man come in there from one of the other camps, why, his bedding was lousy with bedbugs. And they multiply like everything. And that's the way they traveled. T. P. was awful good with his men. He'd catch a man not working or anything, he'd fire him, and he'd fire him outta camp. "Don't want you in here at all." Well, he'd go into town that night. He'd meet these jacks on the street, "What are you fellows doing down here, tonight?" "Well, you confounded old reprobate, you know what we're doing down here. You canned us, run us outta camp." And he'd grin, show his gold teeth, and he'd say, "Well, I'll tell you. You go up and tell Old Tom Mallard, I said to put you on."

(Laughter) He'd hire 'em right back. And if the men'd come into camp and they didn't have any work, they could stay there two, three

days. Bunk up; lots of 'em slept in the barn, you know. And they'd bunk up and they didn't charge 'em anything for the^h food. Lots of fellows'd go from one camp to the other til they did get a job. And every camp they'd go into, why, they'd stay three, four days and didn't have to pay anything for it. Eat like kings, as far as that goes. They had steaks that big around, you know, and all kinds o f cakes and cookies.

SS: I remember, I've heard guys that got into the habit of doing that called camp inspectors. Have you heard 'em called that, too?

BS: Yeah. Yes, they sure changed. After Nögel got in, why, he cut all that stuff out.

SS: No more free meals, you mean?

BS: No more free meals and no more clothes for the foremen. Before that, why, every year they'd go to the warehouse and they'd fit 'em all out; wool shirts, wool pants, wool socks and German rubbers. Mackinaw pants and jumpers, gloves. They'd give 'em two, three dozen pairs of gloves that they could take up and keep up at their room. But after Nogle come in, why, he cut out all that stuff. Nogle was tight. He didn't care for nobody, only himself. Now, his own brother was working in the camp-- or come up there to camp, and he says, "Claire," he says, "haven't you got a job that you can put me out on?" "Yes," he says, "I got a job for you. The No. 2 scoop here," that's a small shovel, he says, "go down and go to work on the railroad." Well, his brother felt highly indignant and he says, and he swore at him and he says, "You just keep your old job," he says, "I can get work." He says, "I don't have to work for you." Well, Nogle says, "That's fine and dandy with me."

SS: The No. 2 scoop wasn't a very good job, as far as the brother was concerned?

BS: No. Shovel and pick.

SS: Ohhhh-

BS: And Nogle was partial to his men. If he liked you, you was fine and dandy, but if he didn't like you, you wouldn't work for the Potlatch. He wouldn't have you around, at all. He was awful partial that way. Now during the Depression: the town was starving to death here. I've seen people right in the towns starving to death. And we had cattle and when we'd butcher I'd take down different families roasts and steaks and I had lots of potatoes and apples and stuff that way I'd trade for. I couldn't get no money, but I'd trade for it. And I'd distribute it around. But Nogle had three sons and he kept every one of 'em during the Depression a working. And here married men in town was starving to death. ^{They was} Right down to hot cakes and gravies. I had a family up here, lived up on the hill right here, all in the world they had before I found it out for over two weeks was just flour, no salt or sugar to make syrup or anything. And they'd make gravy out of their flour and hotcakes, three times a day. They wasn't sayin' a word. Another family up at-- well, there was several families up here at Slabtown-- that I went up there and I had beans. I was cuttin' wood and gettin' it out to the road for two and a half a cord for tamarack wood, sixteen inch wood. And you can imagine. And I was gettin' out eight cords of wood a day. They'd skid it in and I had a popsaw and I'd saw these blocks and then we'd-- Bill Damon was haulin'--they ^{had} a hundred and fifty or two hundred horses here in the camp and they'd haul the grain in with a loadboy, and then he'd stop and pick up eight cords of wood and I'd help him load it. I had two men ahelplin' me.

SS: Were you doing this for Potlatch or just as-

BS: Ourselves. There wasn't no work.

SS: Who was doing the skidding?

- BS: My brother, John, over here. He had a team; we had the team together. And we had tongs and skiddin' riggins.
- SS: So you were picking up all that wood?
- BS: Yes, we were picking up that dead tamarack and cuttin' it up, and Damon couldn't get no cash out of it himself, but he'd take it down to Genesee; he had a farm down ^{at} to Genesee, and he'd trade it to those farmers for-- like I wanted a pig, they'd butcher me a pig. Butcher it out. I wanted coffee, he'd trade it and get me twenty pounds of coffee at a time and sugar, but very little-- The only cash I got was a few dollars that Damon himself would give me to buy gas with for my saw.
- SS: So you were getting food, and that was it?
- BS: Yes, I was gettin' food. I had a rootcellar out here. I had, oh, forty, fifty sacks of apples and forty, fifty sacks of potatoes, and I had a hog and I had lard come up. A hundred pounds of lard at a time. The farmers'd render it out you know, and they was tickled to death to get the wood and I was tickled to death to get the food.
- SS: Well, this meat that you had that you were giving people, was that from your own supply?
- BS: Oh, yes.
- SS: And you were just giving it away to people that needed it?
- BS: Yeah. And they stole, on an average, these people-- now there was one family up at Slabtown there I knew-- we'd miss a cow- a steer- now and then. And Dad knew where they was a going alright, but he says, "They got to have something to eat. You can't hold 'em up." And he'd never say anything, as long as they didn't steal a whole bunch.
- SS: But you were just giving away meat to people?
- BS: Well, yes. There wasn't any money in the country. ^{then} June Cholsher,

one of the prettiest girls that ever come into this town, beautiful girl, well educated. Her father was a-- well, he never got to be a-- runnin' in Boise there, but he worked under the Boise. He was a judge. And he raised a girl and a boy, and this girl was, oh, she was a beautiful thing, and she got married, and they never had any work. Well, I met her one time, and I kinda surmised that they was pretty hardup, and I asked her, I says, "June, wouldn't you like a nice roast?" and a couple of steaks?" Well, she says, "I'd be tickled to death to get 'em." Well, I took her down a nice big roast and a couple of steaks, but I had no idea that they was as hardup as they were. And her husband married a brother of the fellow that wrote SMILES.(?) There in California.

SS: Her husband's sisster, you mean?

BS: Her husband-- his brother was a piano player there in-- and a music man there in Los Angeles.

SS: And he wrote SMILES?

BS: He wrote SMILES. He made his fortune there on that song. And he sent for June and her father and his brother to come down. Sent 'em the money to come down on. Well, they went down. June was sick when she left here; went down. And she went right to the hospital, and the doctors pronounced it malnutrition. Said that she was so far gone, starved to death. He pronounced it. He says, "You're starved to death." He says, "I don't think there's much chance for you." And she died in just a few days. There, she'd starved to death. ^{here} Too proud to let it be known.

SS: What about her husband? Couldn't he get any work for food?

BS: No, there wasn't any work. The Potlatch shut down tight, and even the stores wouldn't put out no credit to anybody only their old customers

that paid up, and if they didn't pay up, why, they got no more credit. There are families living right here now that owed Old John Groh, he kept a awful bunch of 'em. He wiped over a hundred thousand dollars off of the books of debts that was run during the Depression. But he kepta going and he give lots of 'em credit that never had a nickel or never had no chance to pay him. That's one thing they can give Old John Groh credit for. He kept a lot of 'em alive here, but at that there was lots of families that was too proud to let it be known that they was hardup that way. That's why Nogle-- they was lots of people awful sore over Nogle, that way. And they had no respect for him, whatever, because he kept his three sons aworkin' when they was families right here in town that needed work ⁱⁿ the very worst way.

SS: What about the government; the WPA and the Public Works Administration.

BS: Well, they never come in until after that.

SS: This was before?

BS: Yeah. Yeah, the WPA never come in til the Depression was practically over. And this fellow over at Moscow was running it-- what is his name? Run the what-you-call-it office there? Or picture show.

SS: Kenworthy?

BS: Kenworthy was at the head of it. And he was pretty hardboiled, too, for some of the people to get stuff. They'd go over there-- that is, after it started to get stuff and they had to have certain credentials to show and everything. I suppose the government held him responsible too.

SS: Was this Depression or rationing in the war?

BS: The last part of the Depression. And then when Roosevelt took over and they brought the CCs out, I'll tell you, there was some awful pitiful-- that was in '33, '34, '35, there was some awful ^{pitiful} sights here that

them kids come out, and they had pants that they could pull clear around on one side of 'em, and shoes that was that much too long for 'em. And old ragged shirts.

recorder was turned off at this point.

SS: They did actually go on strike, didn't they around here?

BS: Well, yes, when the Potlatch wouldn't cooperate with 'em and give 'em a fair shake like cleaning up the camps and everything, they walked out, and they wouldn't go for those camps. But, the Wobblies got blamed for, oh, fires, and stuff. They wasn't no more guilty than you or I were. A fire'd get started and get away from 'em; well, the Wobblies started it. Well, that was all propoganda. The Wobblies didn't start a fire, and they was against fire. I've worked with hundreds of 'em on these fires and go down the trails with dust that deep, and come down off of the mountain and everytime you'd take a step it would run, just like water. And you was the dirtiest thing that you ever seen when you got off a one of 'em. I was pretty lucky, I was pretty handy around the kitchen always, and they grabbed me and put me in the cookhouse. Well, I'd gone like old camp two-- the fire was coming across, at old Camp 2 there, and we made lemonade by the barrels. We had two big barrels, fifty gallon barrels, and we had ice, and nice cold drinks, but there was pigs that I knew was in the water a couple hundred yards up from where we was dipping water out of what we called the spring. It didn't kill anybody but, at the same time, it wasn't good. No, I'll tell you these camps in the early days had everything the Wobblies throwed at 'em, coming to 'em. Because they were filthy. You'd go into old Bob Jones's camp and those pigs, and the sun ^{had} been shining; it was hot anyhow, and the steam off a them would come up and you'd throw up! An outsider'd come in- it'd make you almost throw up; gag you that much. Well, you know how pigs

are.

SS: Oh, yeah.

BS: They're terrible.

SS: I never had to live in with them.

BS: No, the Wobblies got blamed for lots of stuff. Old Pat Malone-- some of the fellows'd get drunk, "The Wobblies--" And old Summerfields'd come over and they'd round up a bunch of 'em that had been drinking, having a good time and take 'em over and throw 'em in the bullpen over there at Moscow. (Chuckles) All uncalled for, at all!

SS: Do you remember any of the-- now I heard that-- I've heard people say that they had some philosophy about-- sure, they wanted better conditions- but I've heard that they believed in ^{the} workers having power.

BS: No, huh-uh.

SS: Not really true.

BS: No. Now, there was this old fellow I was telling you about, I talked lots with him. He says, "I'll tell you, Sonny," he says, "I may never see it, but the time's a comin' when they'll clean these camps up." And, he says, "The Wobblies- the working man," he didn't call 'em Wobblies, he says, "the working man is the only man that can make 'em clean up. And, you'll see the day when these camps are cleaned up."

Well, he was right.

SS: I should get going and I'll come back and finish up.

End of second interview

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins-- 10-12-76