WILLIAM STOWELL
First Interview

Interviewed by:
Sam Schrager

Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society
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WILLIAM STOWELL

North Idaho woods; b. 1903

lumberjack

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The IWW's accomplished wonders with direct action. The strike in '23 was for the prisoners in jail; the '36 strike for better conditions, which were improved after they broke the strike. Democracy of IWW made it much better than the CIO. IWW's strike for better conditions, not money. They were revolutionary and are dead.

People have changed. Lumberjacks were single, footloose, and had the world to gain. Gyppo system was supported by many to make money, and was opposed by the IWW. The work was all by hand and hard. Older men learned shortcuts. Lumberjacks were mostly older and came from the east.

His father had a sawmill in Quebec, Canada.

Fights among lumberjacks. Aberdeen was the roughest town on the coast.

Staying with the job. The foreman rarely checked on gyppos, or bothered working men on the job. Most foremen worked for the company. Malker Anderson was a very good foreman.

Consolidation of Potlatch Forests. The Potlatch Lumber Company woods operation had better conditions than the Clearwater; quality of Potlatch horses. The home meadow at Bovill. Taking horse teams from Elk River to Headquarters. The ground around Bovill was almost all accessible to railroad.

Death of Art Henderson. Early logging and camps on the Clearwater, and foremen from Montana. Cutting the road on the river.
First Clearwater River log drives. Construction of early wanigans – cedar timbers, vine maple binders. Gust Piper was a log "pirate" who took rafts down to the Snake; he took the first drives because he knew the whole river. Silent Joe trapped on the North Fork in different cabins and rarely spoke.

Navigating the wanigans. Swinging athwart the current. Need to keep rafts together. Finding places to land; setting snaubines.

A raft that missed the landing went thirty miles to Big Island and the foreman was canned.

Rear crews and center crews on the river drives. Using powder. Lining the batteaus upstream.

Working in the river. Drowning of three men when their boat swamped near Lenore. Fitting searched for his brother's body.

Taking up collections by the men in camps – a day's wages.

Pierce, a lumberjack town with everything. Tent living in town. Pierce Hotel started as a bootleg shack. Clarkia, a wide open town.

Incline on Marble Creek – 57% grade. Working for Wood 'Em Up George – he lost money with race horses, he liked to fire men.


Old time lumberjacks are gone.

with Sam Schrager
Oct. 29, 1975
II. Transcript
This conversation with WILLIAM STOWELL, who is known by most people as, "Michigan Bill", took place at his home in Lewiston, Idaho on October 29, 1975. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER. (There is some technical difficulty with this tape.)

WILLIAM STOWELL: I come from Canada, but I worked all over upper Michigan. I was born in Canada.

SAM SCHRAGER: I've heard that upper peninsula there in Michigan was some logging country.

WS: Yeah, it was. It's all cut out. Has been for years.

SS: How did you wind up in Michigan?

WS: In Michigan?

SS: Yeah, how did you wind up there?

WS: Oh, just tramping around, I job to job, you know. Finally wound up there. Spent a few years there, not too long. Maybe six, seven years.

SS: When?

WS: Oh, in the early twenties. Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two.

SS: I've heard something about that country. Were there a lot of Finns?

WS: Oh, Christ, yes. That was all Finns, that mining country. That was copper. Yeah, that was ninety percent Finns. Yeah. I knew some of 'em. I didn't never work in the mines, though. I was around 'em a lot. They worked in the woods, too. Yeah, there was lots of Finns there.

SS: Did you come out here from there?

WS: Yeah.

SS: Was this country very much like that as far as the what the logging life was like? Was it similar?

WS: Yeah, practically the same when I came here, except it was steeper ground, you know. There it was all level. But here it is pretty hilly, steep. Its a little different logging, you know. Of course,
they used horses both places. But they used dogs in this country, you know. Nailed together, you see. And long trails of, well, twenty, twenty-five at the most, you know, dogs. And then chutes and flumes. They'd chute 'em to the flume and then flume 'em to the river. That's the way they done it here. Too steep for railroads. There was no trucks at that time, so, that's the way they did it. You know a chute?

SS: Uh-huh.

WS: Well, that's the way they went.

SS: Was it the same thing for the loggers? Same kind of guys out here as there was back there?

WS: Well, there was more foreigners back there than here. But, otherwise it was the same. Camps, you know. Conditions were different here, they were much better, much better.

SS: Were they better here?

WS: Oh, Lord, God, yes. Yeah. Well, they eliminated the top bunks—well, that was later years that they done that, but there was double deck bunks. Two in a bunk. Uppers and lowers. And that is bad business. That is one reason I got out of there. Not much chance to improve it. But this country here was a way different. Clean linen, you know, every week for your bed. It got to be later years all bottom bunks, you know. They was no top. Oh, yes, much better here.

SS: Did you hear much about the W's, the work they did to improve the conditions?

WS: Yes, Yes, they accomplished wonders. Yeah. They did. They was kind of a rough and tough outfit, but they got the work done. They got that job done. Direct action is what it was. There was no political harum-scarum mixed up in it. It was all direct, on the job.
STOWELL

That's how it worked. Yeah.

SS: About what year was it, you got here? In Idaho. Came to Idaho?
WS: '27.

SS: By that time, now, the way I've heard it, is was about back in 1917 or '18 that the IWW's cleaned up the camps.
WS: Oh, yes, yes. And up until '23-- the last big strike was in '23-- general strike, for ten days. That was all. It was for the prisoners that was in jail, see. Those that were put in jail during these strikes.

SS: During the earlier ones?
WS: Yeah.

SS: Was it to get them out?
WS: No. no. They didn't make it but they shut everything down, see, that's all it was. They couldn't get it. But they did make a little uprising here in '36, again, if you remember that. Don't you?

SS: I've heard that.
WS: Yeah, that was for conditions, mostly, and wages. Well, they wanted a minimum of five dollars a day. And clean out the camps. The camps were getting pretty scroungy, you know. I don't know whether it was won or lost. We were out a couple of months. I was working for the Potlatch, then, but we were out a couple of months. I don't believe we lost anything. They cleaned the camps up. And raised the wages. But they didn't do that til after the strike, you see. They broke the strike, that's what happened.

SS: Well, you know that's the story that I've heard before. That way the company says that it wasn't the IWW's that made the changes, because they ended the strike and then they made the changes. But it's all one and the same thing.

WS: Yes, I look it that way. They didn't do it til after the strike, but they did it. But that was the last feeble attempt of the IWW's
that they ever made, in this country.

SS: I was surprised when I heard about the '36 strike that they were still kicking around all that time. Because these others, the AF of L and those groups were getting in and the CIO, too.

WS: Yes. Well, the CIO wasn't too husky yet, in this country, you know. They come in afterwards. The AF of L got booted out and the CIO took over by a large margin, you know. But, I don't know the AF of L, I guess they were... Well, the CIO was political, too, but the other was moreso. I belonged to the CIO, but I never did belong to the AF of L in the woods. I belonged to the piledrivers and the like of that.

SS: I had the idea that the AF of L was more like a craft union than it was a real industrial union.

WS: Sure, it was, that's what it was, yes. It was a craft union.

SS: That way it'd make more sense. To me the CIO would be in the lumber industry.

WS: Yeah, yeah. It was the lesser evil of the two, but I don't know, I-- beings that I had belonged to the IWW, I couldn't see much to either one of 'em. I couldn't.

SS: What do you think made the IWW's so much a better union than the CIO?

WS: Well, you could act, more or less, without all these executive boards and the like of that, you know. You could hold a meeting and you could decide to do something, and majority ruled. Take a vote, and if the majority wanted it, why, that's the way it was. It went, as far as the crew was concerned. We didn't always win, but it was an effort, anyway. So, that was what I liked about it. You got an organization, there's too much political. High salaries. Big shots. All that. It don't work with the common stiff, you know. I don't figure it does.
SS: Most of these unions it never gets down to the workingman. I mean, he never really has any say-so about it. Those decisions are made up there and—


SS: Were you ever in camps that you guys took a vote and then went out on strike?

WS: Oh, yes.

SS: What kind of reason would make you decide you had to do that?

WS: Oh, well, different reasons. Mostly— especially the IWW's. They were mostly for conditions. Working conditions and living conditions. Get away from them old double bunks and lousy camps and bum chuck and all that. They were trying to get something better— well, better living. Is what it was, really. They never did strike too much for money, because they take that away from you anyway. That money. Oh, I don't— I think there are IWW's never come back, you know. The IWW, they're done. They were revolutionary, you know. And a revolutionary organization at this day and age don't get along very good.

SS: Do you think it made more sense in the old days than it would make nowadays?

WS: Well, that's kind of a hard question to answer. I wouldn't attempt to answer it. I don't know.

SS: Conditions have changed a lot. I sometimes wonder, whether it's changed all that much, or whether—

WS: People change, you know. People have changed an awful lot. Oh yes. That's what makes it, I think. Is the people, themselves. You see the lumberjack was always a single man, a footloose man, you know. He didn't give a Goddam for anything. He had nothing to lose. And
the world to gain. So that's what made him that way, I believe. I'm pretty sure that's the way it was with me. Say a hundred and fifty men in a camp, they might be two percent married, or maybe one percent. All single. And they had no responsibilities except themselves. Anything they could gain, was for them. Now, you see, they're all married. They got responsibilities. Payments on cars and homes and TVs and whatnot. Those days, all a man had was his packsack. Just what was on his back, that's all.

SS: It seems so different than it is, as you were saying then and now. I can't even think of how the situation would arise, so many men would be single and not be tied down by anything.

WS: It's hard to figure that out, isn't it?

SS: Yeah.

WS: I don't know why they never got married. I can't figure that out. Well, I never did. I was just from job to job, you know, and I didn't have no responsibility. Couldn't afford to have many, unless I wanted to settle down and take less money for some other job, you know. We always made a little more than the town workers.

SS: Why was that? You guys could go anywhere where there was a job?

WS: Where the money was, yeah. Well, then the gyppo system come in. Of course that changed everything. There was a minimum wage but it was awful small. Everybody wants to gyppo, gyppo, gyppo. And they always made it so you could-- well, you'd come out a third above the regular wages, anyway, you see, by going the limit, you know. Doing the utmost, your very best, every day, you had to. That's the way that was.

SS: Was that a good deal? I mean it sounds-- they must have got a lot more work out of the men.
WS: Oh, yes. Sure. No, that wasn't a good deal for us at all. No, we tried to abolish it, but you couldn't. There was too many that wanted it that way. You know, really wanted it that way. Right down in their hearts they wanted it that way. I mean, good militant union men, too, they were. But, if there was any trouble at all there were always ready to help out. Most of 'em wanted the gyppo system. Little more money. You know, that's what drives people on, is that money.

SS: Sure, for a few years a guy can break his back working if he's young, and really can put out the work, but seems like it's gonna catch up with 'em after while.

WS: Well, it does. Naturally it does, sure. You may think you can do it, but you can't. You'll poop out pretty Goddam sudden like when you get older. That's awful hard work in them olden days, you know. Everything was handwork. The sawing was all handwork, bucking was all handwork, and the skidding was, oh, well, the horses, you know, but peavy work, you know, you had all that to do, and that run into work.

SS: Did the IWW have a position on that? Did they say gyppo was no good?

WS: Yeah. That's the stand they took. Absolutely no good, no.

SS: If you really believed in the union, then the gyppo would be very unequal, because the guys that could put out the work could make a lot better than the old-timers, who couldn't do it. Is that right?

WS: Yes, but when you got old enough, you quit gyppoing, though, you couldn't. You had to quit. (Chuckles) That was the way that worked. Well, you were good up til fifty years old, you know. You knew a lot of shortcuts, by that time, that you didn't know when you were younger.

SS: What?
Well, just generally speaking, you know.

The way to do the work -- you mean, like you learned, you really mastered the whole job.

Yeah, sure, that's it. Yeah, that's my idea, yes. It's just as I say, you learn a lot of tricks and shortcuts. It all helps out at the end of the day, you know. You have accomplished a little more than than the absolute greenhorns would, and done it just about as easy.

I heard that most of the early lumberjacks that were out in this country were old men. Older men. Is that true? As far as you knew, in the early days?

There were a lot of old men, yes. They were a lot of 'em pretty old when they come to this country, you know, from the East. They were all from the East, practically. Eastern Canada and the Midwestern states, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. That's where most of 'em were from when I came out here. And they were all men along in their years.

You were one of the young ones?

Yes. Yes, sure. I was only about twenty-three, I think, when I landed here. But, all I'd ever did was work in the woods, you know, when I was a kid at home. Well, the Old Man had timber, you know. The old sawmill.

Yeah.

Yeah, old waterpower sawmill.

You must have seen it ever since you were old enough to see things.

Yes, sure.

Did he let you work on it?

Oh, no. No, I just was around it, you know. I never done nothing around it. Piled a little lumber, something like that. Worked on the pond a little bit. I was going to school then. I didn't do
much work.

SS: Where was that in Canada?

WS: In Quebec; the Province of Quebec. Little small town about the size of Pierce, I guess.

SS: What kind of operation did he have there?

WS: Oh, no, he had a sawyer, that's all. The neighbors, they helped out. Do a little work for a little lumber. Work a day or two and get some lumber.

SS: Did you come down to the States because there was more work here?

WS: No. No, I come down to go to school.

SS: Oh!

WS: Yes.

SS: You were still just a kid?

WS: Yeah. I was about seven, I guess.

Side B-

SS: You know in the Midwest— those lumber towns were really tough towns. You could do anything you was big enough to do.

WS: Oh, yeah. Of course, they had calmed down some, when I got there. They used to fight for the fun of it. But, I don't know, they kinda cut that out. People change, you know.

SS: Fights were just over -- when drinking and that.

WS: Well, yes. There'd be one tough guy and the other think he was tougher, and he'd maybe go over to the camp where the other guy was working just to challenge him. That's the way that worked. And they were rough, too. Lot of 'em done all their fighting on the floor, they'd chew and bitin', and if they were on their feet they were usin' their shoes.

SS: Cork boots?

WS: Yeah, they went in to win, regardless.
SS: Did any grudges go on for a very long time?
WS: Oh, no. They were forgotten. Sometimes they weren't, but most of the time they were. Have it out and over with and go back to drinking.
SS: Well, was that the same out here, too? Were the towns pretty tough? Out here, the logging towns?
WS: Some of 'em were, yes. Like Aberdeen and Hoquiam. Aberdeen was a rough town. Washington. That was about the roughest on the West Coast, I think. Well, they was longshoremen there and lumberjacks and everything, you know. Timber was close to town. And that made a difference, and it was still the single men that was working then.
SS: Did you usually stay with a job for very long?
WS: Me?
SS: Yeah.
WS: Yeah, I have stayed six to eight months. And I've stayed two days. Varied, it depended on how the job was, or something. I usually stayed pretty good. Well, it all depends on how things go. If it suited you, you'd stay, if it didn't, you'd go.
SS: The different bosses, you know, formen, did that make a big difference?
WS: Well, it would, yeah. Sometimes. But some people—with me it didn't make any difference who I worked for. I could work for anybody; long as I get along with 'em. But the bosses never interfered with you much. If you were gyppoing you wouldn't see 'em, maybe, from the time you started until you quit. You'd see 'em in camp, you know, but you wouldn't see 'em on the job. But if you were working by the day, you'd see 'em. They'd be around then every day. But they didn't bother you much. No.
SS: Do you think there was much difference between them? Were some
foremen really working for the company and others working more for the men?

WS: Well, you can't be both ways. You couldn't be both ways. Some lean a little bit towards the crew, if they come up from the crew, you know what I mean. If they were picked out of the crew, or something like that. They would lean a little towards their fellowman, but, ordinarily, of course, he was working for the company. But, you can't hold that against him. And in order to hold the job, they had to be. That was my idea, always. Generally speaking, they were pretty good bunch of guys. I never seen any of 'em that weren't, anyway.

SS: Axel Anderson, do you know him?


SS: Yeah, I talked to him up there. Oh, I talked to him for hours and hours.

WS: Gosh, he must be old.

SS: About ninety-one, maybe.

WS: And did you know Malker, his brother?

SS: No, I don't know him. I've heard of him.

WS: He was a good guy. Real good guy. Axel's alright too, but, Malker was a really good fellow. He killed himself. He shot himself. Drinking.

SS: He was a foreman, too, wasn't he?

WS: Yes. Good one.

SS: What would make a good foreman like him? What did he do, that made him a good foreman?

WS: Well, I don't know. He mixed with the crew, in town on the job. And he drank with 'em. Just generally speaking, he got along real good with 'em. He give 'em a good price for their work, and he got a lot of work done. That was the whole sum and substance of that deal.
SS: Axel said that he thinks the push was in a kind of mind, between the company and men. He said he used to like to try to do good by the men and every once in a while he'd get on the carpet with the company.

WS: Sure, sure. I imagine they did. I know they did. I never was a push, but— I kinda imagine that some of 'em would get called on the carpet for being a little bit too lenient, or lean a little bit towards the crew you know. I know they do. Sure they do. Bound to.

SS: Was Malker a big man, like Axel?

WS: No. He was tall, but— a little taller than Axel, but he was slimmer. He was a little different man than Axel. I don't know why, but he was. Axel was pretty much company. But Malker, he didn't seem to lean that way too heavy, but he was a good push. He was good— really— good for both sides. He got a lot of work done and he was good with the crew. I always liked him real well. I worked for the both of 'em. I used to work for Malker whenever I was on that side. See, this outfit here, what time did they consolidate? Tell you what— '31.

SS: Something like that.

WS: I remember I was working up here at Camp H, and we got our September-October checks and they had a little strip of paper up in the corner— white strip of paper— They used to be the Clearwater Timber Company, you know. The cheks was made out that way. And here was a little piece of paper pasted onto the check— it said Potlatch Forests. I think that was in '31. I'm pretty sure it was. I know I was working at Camp H for Old Brooks.

SS: Malker was on the other side?

WS: Yeah, he was always over there.

SS: Was there much difference between the two sides? The camps and the
men?

WS: Oh, yes. Yes. That other side always had better chuck, better camp conditions and everything. That's before they consolidated, you know. It was Potlatch Lumber Company.

SS: Right.

WS: That's what it was. And they had awful good horses. I used to like to go over there on account of the horses. They was good and they took good care of 'em. You couldn't abuse a team of horses there, you know. You wouldn't stay. Them pushers were all pretty much horse lovers, you know. And that old Nogle, you know, he was horse crazy, that guy. He'd sleep with 'em, I think.

SS: Didn't he do most of the buying for them when he was a push?

WS: Nogle, you mean?

SS: Yes.

WS: Yeah. Sure, he did. Him and the vet. But Nogle did the buying. I don't know where the hell he got 'em then. Oh, this outfit here used to get pretty good horses in Oregon.

SS: I know in the early days, they bought quite a few from the farmers.

WS: Yeah, that's true. That's where they bought 'em all. And then raised 'em, that was their business, raising horses. They bought wherever they could. This man here on this side, White, he died, he was fifty when he died, I think. I went with him a couple of times buying horses. He'd hear of a team of horses someplace, you know, he'd hear about 'em; he'd go and look at 'em. If they weren't too old and looked good to him, why, he'd buy 'em. If they were well matched, you know. But they used to buy 'em, oh, they'd buy one here and one there and a half a dozen here and so on. Match 'em up themselves, after they got here. Bovill has a nice big meadow
over there, you know. And, gee, I used to go over there and look
at them horses, right in grass up to their knees. Fat and slick.
Nice big barn. I used to like that.

SS: Gee, they had a lot of horses, too. Probably two hundred and fifty,
three hundred head of horses in that barn?

WS: Oh, yes. See, I've been in that barn. I brought horses out of there
one time over here. That was in the fall of '32. I don't know how
many teams we had. We must have had thirty pair, anyway. We
brought 'em to Elk River, stayed overnight and then come across the
North Fork, there was a big island, and into Headquarters. Old Nogle
hated to see them horses leave.

SS: How did you take 'em? Was there many guys on a run like that?

WS: There was about four of us, I guess, or five. 'Course I knew the
route, too, but there was a guy that knew the route, that is, from
Elk River to Big Island. And, I don't know, maybe six, but we had
a wagon with a load of harness in it. They were unharnessed. Unhar-
nessed 'em all, you know.

SS: Just drove 'em?

WS: Oh, no. Put the harness in the wagon and then led them behind in
twos, you know. Had four horses on the wagon and then lead them be-
hind. And there was a guy with a saddle horse, he took a big bunch,
too. That way, we got 'em over. They were alright after they'd be
on the road a little while, you know, they'd kinda calm down. But,
otherwise, when we first started from Bovill, why, they were all har-
nessed then, you know. Had the harness on 'em. They was tangled up.
Lose a team once in a while have to stop and pick 'em up. But, we
made her, I think in three days.

SS: How many horses?
WS: Oh, they must have been thirty-five pairs, anyway. I can't remember exactly.

SS: That's a pretty big job. Not an easy one to do.

WS: Yeah. The Bovill side wasn't running nothing then, and this outfit didn't run nothing that summer.

SS: You mean this is when the Depression was on?

WS: Yeah. '32. They started up a couple of camps here in the fall. That was that rainy fall, the bridges washed out and everything, between Orofino and Headquarters. They quit at New Year's, that time, Christmas was the high water. I think there was fourteen or fifteen bridges went out between Headquarters and Orofino on the railroad to Camas Prairie, I guess it is.

SS: Well, I've heard up there, said that it was a lot rougher up there. One or two guys have said to me that they had the idea that the logging over on this side was a lot rougher.

WS: Yeah, it was. The ground was rougher, steeper. There was some rough ground at Elk River, too, you know at the tail end of their operation there, but to start with, they had a lot of nice ground. Them camps all around Bovill was real nice ground. Two, Four, Five, Six, Seven, they was all nice, well, just little rolling hills, you know, little humps here and there. You could lay steel anyplace pretty near, very little grade. Lot of nice, big pine.

SS: That's probably why they didn't do so much with the stuff like that.

WS: They didn't do any. They laid the railroad right to the stump. They had quite a big railroad crew working. They all had them steam rigs loaded with tongs, you know.

SS: Did you know Art Henderson?

WS: No. I've heard of him, though. Who is he?
HE was a— He loaded cars for years, and then he got to be a push. He got killed up here at Camp Y. He was running that camp then. But he come up below a bulldozer, you know. Bulldozer working above and he come up from below. It was shoving over trees and snags and everything else, you know, and he got underneath one. He was a good guy. Damn good guy. I think— Do you know? I can't think of his name, but he married Art's daughter, anyway. He was some kind of a wheel over there.

SS: Where?

WS: Bovill. They haven't got much going over there, have they?

SS: No, they got. They got some work there.

WS: They're on the East Fork of Potlatch Creek, I hear. Aren't they?

SS: I don't know. I haven't been out there— I haven't noticed they're logging around there lately.

WS: They used to have a big camp right in town.

SS: Did they?

WS: Yeah, right there— well, old Camp 8 was there. That was years ago, that's before my time.

I know

SS: Yeah, old Camp 8, I've heard of that quite a bit.

WS: This other camp, was set up right there where Camp 8 was.

SS: Well, do you think that country was more— it seemed to me— I have the idea that a lot of the people— more people, maybe in the woods there were people who had families.

WS: Yes, they did. Lots of 'em.

SS: Did that make the camps more settled than on this side?

WS: I don't know. This was always just kind of a— when it first started up was kind of a hurly-burly outfit, you know. All tramp lumberjacks, all of 'em working there. There was no married men like in Bovill.
There was a lot of married men working in Bovill in the camps. You could tell on Sunday, you know, the camp would thin right out, you know. And here, it wouldn't make any difference. Tommy Kinny was the superintendent then and he come over here from Montana and took over. There was several pushers come here from Montana. Tommy Stevens. Dave Herman. Fellow by the name of Henderson. And Kinney, of course, Kinney was superintendent here until '36, then he went to the Winton outfit. And he was down in California for a while, for River Lumber Company. But he's dead now, Kinney is. Bradbury took over after him. He's dead, too.

SS: Well, when you first came out here in the twenties, was there much going on this side in the way of lumbering, up around Bovill and that country?

WS: Oh no. Well, this mill started in '26; in August of '26.

SS: So they were just getting going pretty big then?

WS: Yeah. They hadn't got into the river yet, but there were railroad camps here out of Pierce and Headquarters. Oh, yeah, they put in a lot of timber here '27. A hundred cars a day. Then they got in to the river, see. They was cutting a strip into the river and they built a road, and then they started up them river camps; B, C, D, E, F, G,.

SS: Was that before the Depression started here?

WS: Yeah. Yeah, well, the first drive was in '28, so you see they had to get in there-- they logged there in '27. Camp B and C. Yeah, B and C. Camp A, that was at-- Camp A was right there where that dam is built now.

SS: Right there near Orofino.

WS: Yeah. All they took out of there was piling for bridges and stuff for the mill, you know. Had a little mill there.
There wasn't no timber there much except— (Blanked out with noise)
Lot of people never knew where that camp was. Camp A. (End of Side B)

SS: --- What that first one was like, they had on the river?

WS: Sure, I do, I remember all about it. Who the hell had that? Webb. Joshua Webb. I think he must be dead, though. But they drove from Big Island then, you see. That Big Island, that B and C and them camps put that timber in, all flumed. And then the next spring, they drove from Beaver Creek. They had dug in to the river and started camps up there. And Old Brooks brought that drive down as far as Big Island and Webb took it from there on in. But then the next year Old Brooks went all the way through. He— they had wanigans, you see. Well, Webb had wanigans too, but Brooks had to build 'em, too way up the North Fork. But his were just kind of a skimpy affair compared to what Old Webb had. Webb had regular, I guess. They were all square timber together. But the ones Old Brooks built, they were— there was no bolts or spikes or nothing in them, just all made out of wood, you know. They were different lengths of cedar, interlocked this way, you know. And they real flexible.

Stuff about eighteen, twenty inches on the butt, it was. Forty and sixty feet long, they were. They were held together by— they were about eighty-five feet long, possibly, about twenty-two feet wide. I helped build 'em. They were held together by what they call widths— they was wild cherry. And they laid these binders across—

SS: What?

WS: These binders, you know. They was mostly maple, and they was bored, you know, these timbers, this stuff here that the raft was built out of, was bored, you know, and they put this width ) in and a square peg with it, you know, in the round hole, 5/8 was the size
And that's what held it together. This binder. If you wanted to dismantle 'em you had to cut 'em up. There was nothing come apart, otherwise.

SS: So, it was pretty solid.

WS: Oh, yes. Sure. But flexible, you know. In rough water they oscillate, you know, up and down, so there was no breakage in 'em that way.

SS: This was for the first drive?

WS: Yeah, they used them all the time after that.

SS: The same kind?

WS: The same kind, right up til the last drive. Except they put rubber on. They had rubber, you see, the last. The last ten years, maybe they had pontoons.

SS: Well, this first drive, were they well constructed, well made? Were they serviceable? Did they do the job?

WS: Yes. Sure they did.

SS: How did the first drive go? I take it they had never drove down the Clearwater before? It must have been a new experience for 'em.

WS: Well, there was an old guy by the name of Piper, he's dead years ago, he run the first rafts. And, he knew the river, he lived on the river. He was an old prospector. But he rafted cedar poles on that river when he used to, I call it pirating or highgrading or whatever the hell you want to call it, before this dam was built, you know. They'd make up wood rafts, cedar rafts and run 'em down into the Snake and on down and sell 'em, you see. But he used to do that. It was his business, he done that. But he knew every pebble in that North Fork. And he run the first rafts down for the company. Helped build 'em. He built 'em. He was the supervisory element, building 'em. He showed 'em how to build 'em and run 'em. So that's how they made 'em at
that time.

SS: Did they hire him on just for that job? Was he working for them before? Or was he an independent gyppo?

WS: No, he was just independent. He used to make up three or four and run them, cedar rafts a year, you know. That's before the company started driving.

SS: So this pirating? Was this really company timber a man was taking?

WS: Anybody's. On the bank of the river, you know. Standing close to the bank. Well, they done a lot of it, yes. Everybody was doing it. Woods and cedar.

SS: Could a guy make a living that way?

WS: Oh, Christ, yes. Cedar you could, yes.

SS: You had to come down on your raft to be sure it made it?

WS: Oh, yes.

SS: I wonder where they sold it; how far down did they have to go?

WS: Oh, I don't know. A lot of 'em was sold--made up in posts, cedar posts, you know. They're at a premium down the river, you know. There's no timber down there, down that Snake. You know where that is?

SS: Oh, yes. Probably wouldn't have to go too far.

WS: Tumbleweeds, is all it is. But, yeah, they made a livin' at it. This Old Piper was a fine old guy. They found him dead in his cabin. He was a funny old guy, he'd never come to town. He'd land out here at the mill with them rafts, that is, when he was driving for the company, you know. And he'd charge back up river. And he was a ragged old thing, you know. I don't think he ever went to a barber or anything like that. He was just an old hermit, is what he was. But a good old guy.

SS: Did you ever talk to him and know how long he'd been in this country?
WS: Yes. He'd been here for years. I don't know how many cabins he built on that North Fork. He trapped some, too, you know. And he'd get-, well, he'd wander off, you know, going looking his trap line over and he'd have a cabin to stay in. He built just leantos and cabins of all kinds up and down that North Fork. There was another guy come along after him: Silent Joe. Truckee, his name was. He built a half a dozen cabins, too, but he built better ones. But he made a living trapping. And he'd work on the drive in the spring. He was a good driver. French Canadian. Real good. And he died up there right on the Goddam flat.

SS: What did Silent Joe come from? He didn't talk?

WS: Yeah. Wouldn't talk.

SS: At all?

WS: Well, he'd say a word or two, of course. But he wouldn't try to keep a conversation or nothin' going. He'd just sit there. I used to go up and see him after he had quit working. He was too old to work. And I used to go in a little earlier than the driving crew, you know, there'd be five or six of us to go in and build them rafts. And he lived about a mile from where we'd be building, and I'd go up to see him. Well, he'd sit there, he wouldn't talk. I'd keep on talking, you know, "Yes," "No", is all he'd say. And there was nothing in the shack, an old frying pan and a couple of old kettles of some kind. And an old wooden bunk. I said, "Well, I'm going to go, Joe." "Well, sit down." So I'd have to set another half hour. He would never say nothin'. I'd finally get out of there. But he died right there. He never come out.

SS: Same thing as this Piper. He trapped and he did the river drives, too?

WS: Gust Piper. He didn't drive too long. He was down there about five years.
Piper, you mean?

Yeah. He was back up there one spring and they found him dead in the doorway of his shack. They don't know whether it was foul or what happened. I don't think it could be foul, because there was nobody ever around there. I think he just died. He was pretty well decomposed when they found him.

This Piper?

Yeh. Gust Piper. Let's see, who took them rafts then? Frank Larkins. He's dead, too, now. He run 'em then. He wasn't near as good as Old Gust. And then they had different ones after that. I used to work on 'em all time, help move 'em, you know. But I never did run 'em.

That first year, how many of 'em did they have?

Rafts?

Yeah.

They had, one, two, three. They had a sleepin' raft, a cook raft, and a chuck raft. You see they couldn't get no in. There was no roads in there then until they got to Big Island. See, there was sixty miles there, I guess. And if the river was heavy and you were movin' slow, you know, that is, say, a mile a day or something like that, it took a lot of chuck, that's why they had the chuck raft. They had a regular crew. Well, there was one man that run the rafts, and then he'd pick up men out off the crew to help him move. And they usually got a day off for that. Well, it took a day. There was a lot of hiking. Say you moved five miles, you had to hike fifteen miles back, three different times. And then if you missed the landing or something, which we did, that caused more complications then.
STOWELL

SS: What did you do if you missed the landing? You had to rope it back or something?

WS: Oh, no. Impossible to do that. That was out of the question. No, you went to the next one, or you got in someplace where you thought you could. This Old Piper knew every bend in the river, you know. And so did Frank Larkins. They were lucky that way. They always had someone that knew. But later on, when they got motors on them—they put motors on them rubber rafts, them were the first ones they put motors on. Big seven horsepower motors, and they didn't draw that much water; pontoons. You could go up river in places with 'em. You could come to a dead stop anyplace. That is, not anyplace, but if the water wasn't too wicked, you could fetch 'em right to a halt. Yeah, that simplified everything.

SS: How many men would run that raft in the old days? How many men would move it?

WS: Oh, there'd be usually five.

SS: Did they use poles?

WS: No. Sweeps. Long oars, you know. There was an eighteen foot blade on about a forty foot stem. The butt oar'd usually have three men. You run and back and forth across with it. The guy run from the stern, the pilot. He would call the shots from the stern. If he wanted to go over to the right, why, he'd holler, "Right!" And you was always in position anyhow, you see, then you would dip your oar and give her a gut to the right, you see. Your oar would be about this high.

SS: Above your head?

WS: Yeah. That is, the back end of it would be. The shorter man would be--

SS: Down close to the edge.
WS: Yeah, he'd be reaching up. But you could bring it to time.

Take quite a few clubs you know. Landing was the worst part of it. They'd run through an ordinary eddy, you know, they was so heavy. If you went into the upper end of the eddy they'd either swing on you or run through. If it was a really strong eddy, why, they'd swing on you. They load up with water in front, you know water'd be up to here, and they'd swing. And there you were, you were in a hell of a shape. That used to be trouble.

SS: What would you do?

WS: Well, try to straighten it out. You couldn't run from the stern because the stern was loaded, it was down. The stern was in the water, there was water over the stern. It was too heavy to handle, you had—the bow was up, you know. You had to work it from the bow. You'd turn it again if you could, get the bow ahead. And then try to land. If you got—If you had two rafts, say, the sleeping raft and the cook raft and the chuck raft, well, you had to have 'em together. At night when the crew come in. If you didn't have they couldn't be a mile apart, you know. If you missed with one, you'd have to pass it up with the other one, and go where the first one was. And then maybe you'd have to hike three or four miles back to the rear in the morning. That was no good. They used to try to keep 'em as close to the rear as possible. That was the idea. Eliminate that hiking, because when you're marching, you ain't fightin'. (Chuckles)

SS: What kind of a spot did the pilot have to pick out on the river? Did he have to be a real sizeable cove?

WS: Yes. That would be the best. And the bank you know, they try to get a place— he wouldn't run into a brush pile or nothin'. You
had things and stuff to set out on the bank and build fires for the crew at night. They had places, you know, after the first couple of years. They had places, regular places, where you landed, as a rule. If the river's moving fast, they'd miss one of these or one or two of 'em, otherwise they'd run in there and tie up, you know.

We used to have snublines, and we had a boat, and old batteau. We'd go ahead and set this snubline, see. It was just a long, they were two inch lines, I think, with a bolt in it, you know. And you'd set that a put a stick or something under it, so you could see it. A guy had to bail off of that raft, 'cause it would be tootin' right along. And you had a sort of a line on the raft, maybe thirty feet with a big snap in it, you see; a big iron snap, that long, with a spring in it, you know. Well, you'd grab that and bail off, the guy that was supposed to do the snubbing. There was always one good active man done that, you know. And you'd grab this line with the wrap bone in it, and there was one on a tree, one wrap as a rule, a tree or stump or something. Well, you'd make the joint then you see, with the big snap in the bone, and then you'd drop that and grab the other line, and pay out a little slack. If you snubbed around real tight, and it was in straight water, it would take the stern of the raft down and probably break the line. That's happened, too. Just give it a little slack on the stump and you could snub it any time you wanted to, as far as the-- you had the hitch to do it with, you know.

SS: That spring cushioned --

WS: No, no, that spring was just to keep the lines together. It wasn't a coil spring. It was just a spring that kept the lines together. After it got in the snap, you know, it couldn't fly up. No, it was no coil spring.
SS: It sounds like you had no time to play or something like that.

WS: No. No. It had to be done. If you missed you was looking at it going around the bend. And there you were; you didn't know where the hell they were going. And you made kind of a day for yourself, too. (Laughter) That was part of it. They'd kid you about that, and maybe find someone else to do it, if you missed too often.

SS: Now the deal on this was that they'd take one raft at a time down and then go back for the next one?

WS: Yes. But when they got the rubber, you know, that's just a few years that they had that rubber. But that was all in one. That was a hundred and eighteen feet long. Motor on each end. Cookhouse in the middle, the sleepers on each end. three sections. They was awful flexible. But, they was rough to ride, you know. Rough water they'd be just like a bronco, jumping around. But when you landed that thing everything was there. You didn't have to go back after nothing.

SS: I'll bet the old-timers must have really thought that was quite a change.

WS: Oh, yes.

SS: Because you fellows on a drive never could imagine what the old days were like.

WS: No. I remember one time we missed with the sleeping wanigan at Robinson Island, that's just above the Little North Fork, and we never got tied up til we got to Big Island. I don't know what in hell the idea was. It was thirty miles there; I was new on there, too. I didn't know where the hell we was going. But the others did. Larkins, he knew. Nobody ever did find out, he got canned, anyway.

SS: For that?
WS: For that. When we got to Big Island there was another raftsman there. But I hiked back up. I don't know, we had to sleep on the bank then. Well, we was twelve days on that barge, and we slept on the bank. We had the cookraft, you see, we landed the cookraft. Another crew moved that. They landed with no trouble, I guess.

SS: It took twelve days to get the sleepingraft?

WS: Yes. Sleep on the bank every night, and no blankets, but they built a big fire, oh, as long as from here to that house. Had two or three men cutting wood all day. Keep your feet warm. There was snow on the ground up there. Howard Bradbury was keeping time that spring. That was in '32. That was the year Roosevelt was elected, I think. Yeah, 1932, in the spring, it was. That was just the start of the depression.

SS: Well, that's a hell of a thing. Was something wrong with him or something, that he didn't--?

WS: Well, I never could figure it out. Nobody ever did. Everybody tried to, but he missed the landing, alright, and after that he didn't--oh, he had tried a couple of other times, but he didn't make much--I knew myself, he was going to miss them other ones. But the line broke, you see is what happened at Robison, the first landing, see. Broke the snubline, and lost a man off of the raft, you see. The guy that went ashore, he couldn't a got a raft, he was there. Broke the line. However, that didn't make any difference, he could a got in someplace. The water wasn't too high, it was up pretty high but hadn't had the big water yet, it still came after that. I never could figure out why he--- But he got relieved of his command as soon as that old push caught up with him.

SS: Without the snubline, how would you stop it?

WS: Well, you'd have to improvise.
They had more line?

Oh, yes.

You could pretty much rig up another?

Oh, yes, sure. Anything. Well, there was places where you wouldn't need one, you could step off, you know. If you had to gallop you could get around something, you know and get stopped.

You were new so you didn't know where— what was going on too good.

We was all new.

You guys were waiting for your orders.

Yeah. They was except, well, Old Bill Akins and this Larkins, he was supposed to be the big shot. But, I don't know, he never made a success of it that I could see. But, that's the way it was. But after that they, well, -- Oh, Bill Akins took 'em then and he run 'em for years.

Do you remember how long that first drive took?

By gosh, no, you see, it was split up, you know; changed pushes at Big Island and another push went down from there. Oh, you mean the first drive.

Yes. The very first one.

Oh, I don't remember at all. Lasted way into the summer. No machinery or nothing, and the water got away. The river was new to 'em. They got late water that year in June, but it didn't— it helped, of course, but it dropped right away again. We were down on them big bars in the main river, cranking them logs off a there by hand! Hot!! That's not very interesting.

These logs drives, I never did see one, myself. And up north there, of course, we never had any. The men working in the water on the logs; what was the techniques they used? What did they do to keep
them logs moving? What did they have to do?

WS: Well, take like the river crew, they'd gang up around a log and roll it in the water, roll it in the river, that's all. That's all they could do. Just keep rolling it til it went afloat. Then there was another crew, more experienced— well, they weren't young men and they weren't old men, they were men around thirty-five, they were in the center crews. They would take the floating stuff, you know, you know like— they land on the center— like the center of the river and it's held there by something, you know, a rock, or something, and they'd pile up. They get to be real long. But you make space in the front; get slack in front, you see, that's the first thing you gotta do. It all depends on the water and general conditions. You get slack, and then it'll start to peel off, you see. Well, sometimes it'll go and sometimes it'll hang again and pile up more. That makes it bad. When it starts to go you hang on to it as long as you can, you see, unless there's a shot or something in there. Then you've got to get the hell away from it.

SS: What?

WS: A shot. You know, powder. A man to use powder, you see. But with these motor boats, you could always come back. But you couldn't. You have to line 'em back. That took a different length of time, of course. Sometimes that was an awful job, depends on how fast the water was and how far down river you went, and you had to line it back. The crew would line it back up, up way above the center so you could land on it again. That's why they didn't use so much powder then. You had to get away from it when you put a shot in, you know. And they didn't want to leave it. They wanted to stay and pick on it until it unravelled, see. If they
sure it was gonna go, they'd leave it. And, oftentimes they did, most of the time, after you got slack and started picking it a while they'd peel off, you know.

SS: When you say line 'em back up-- would you explain that? What do you mean?

WS: Well, they all got what you call a painter on 'em, you know a rope in the bow, and it's a small rope 5/8's maybe. Well, the boatmen stay in and they'd pole, keep it off shore, and the rest of the crew would grab it and get ahold of that line on the bank and crawl along the bank and pull the Goddamn thing back up. Nobody likes to do that. That's why they hang on the center so long. They'd stay right on there, you know. They'd land in a place back pretty well from the front, you know. Get in between the logs, you see, so they could stay there until it went. They'd go. But I don't know, I've drove there three days and a half, one spring, that's as long as it took. And I've driven there a hundred days.

SS: How could you do it in two and a half days? What were the conditions?

WS: Well, the river's at Elk Creek. You know where that is?

SS: Yes.

WS: Well, that's where the river was, and that was in '48. And we stayed in town. We only had one boat. There was only four, five, six of us. Six, I think there was. But the water come up til, Lord God, you couldn't keep up to the rear, (?) We had dinner at Ahsahka that day from Elk Creek, you can figure that out. Then out into the main river we went. The water was in the highway, you know. The water was right in the highway. Webb was the push that year. Young Webb, Bill Webb. That's old Webb's son. He worked on the pond there. And on a Sunday we finished up, we were at-- I don't know, I think we left it
at Lapwai, or something. Three days and a half.

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SS: is he still alive?

WS: Oh, yes. He was the push on that drive, a good push. He lives on Third someplace. I know where he lives, but I can't--

SS: How old is he? Is he retired now?

WS: Yes. He's retired. He was foreman on the pond there for years. He was-- You going to be around tomorrow? No, I can't tomorrow.

This lady that tends bar down here, she lives at-- two houses from Profitt.

SS: Where? At the Silver Dollar?

WS: Yeah. In the morning. She's just there in the morning. Not tomorrow, but she's there on Tuesdays, Wednesdays--

SS: I'll come back here another time and I'll find out.

WS: I haven't seen Profitt but once since he left the woods. He run Camp Two, you know. Yeah, he's a real guy. I didn't think he was that old. I drove with him on the Coeur d'Alene River. Oh, Christ, I was just a young guy. He was, too, he isn't as old as I am. He's about sixty-six, I think.

SS: What year was you born in?

WS: 1903. Seventy-two last April.

SS: How much of the work when these guys were working on the river, on the drive, on the logs? Standing right on the logs? Was that a rare thing? Or was that pretty often you did that?

WS: Oh, depends on what you were doing. If you were cleaning an eddy or something like that, you'd be working on timber all the time. But the rear crew, they weren't out on logs, unless they wanted to be.

What I mean, once in a while they'd get in a slough or something
and get to fooling around, but no, there wasn't too much work on loose timber, except them centers. They get in a jam once in a while you'd get on the stuff, you know.

SS: Most of the time they worked from the batteau?

WS: Well, they'd be out of the batteau, of course, they wouldn't be in the batteau. They'd be out working on the timber. But the batteau'd be there to pick 'em up, see, in case they went a drift, or you know, got hurt or got dinged up some way, you know, or anyway incapacitated, they'd pick 'em up. Unless they got scattered, that's one thing a boatman didn't like, if they got scattered around, you know, too much. Like a center breaking up, and the crew gets scattered and they couldn't pick 'em all up. Maybe someone wasn't capable of handling himself, in that position, you know. Get excited and get out of hand like. But mostly they got along pretty good. lost about four men on this river. Oh, yeah, that's all.

SS: Did you ever see anybody go? Get lost?

WS: Well, yes, I see them three at Lenore that spring. We went to pick 'em up but we were too late. We were just above 'em. They were on the right hand side of the river going down, just above the bridge. And there was trees there, there was half a dozen bull pine trees scattered around there, and the water was maybe six feet deep, but awful strong, you know. It was smooth, but running fast. Strong water, you couldn't commence to swim against it, or nothing like that you know. You couldn't row a boat against it. Well, there was a boat working just below us on one of these trees, you know, taking this timber off the tree, and when the center moved out, when they slack and everything else, why, course, it just picked up and left and there was a big sweeper, big steer, oh, like pulling a stump,
pull tree lengths, stump and everything, you know. Underneath that you couldn't see it. And it come up under the boat, you know, and swamped the boat. It come up under the bow and the stern went down you know, and it just rolled her right around underneath. Well, these guys that drowned were in the boat. But there was four of 'em went up this tree. Well, of course-- I seen it. I was from here to that house, I guess, upriver in the other boat, we was working on a little center there. Someone said, "They're going to swamp that boat." They seen it coming back, you know. So we all jumped in. The boatman hollered for us to jump in. There was only four of us, we had the forward boat, and we took after 'em, you see, we left the guys in the tree, we didn't stop for them at all, we could see one guy, _his head just going under the bridge as we got as close as we could to him, and he disappeared. The water was high and awful dirty, you know. You couldn't see nothin', you know. So, I guess, I don't know we landed at Cottonwood Island. And there was some guy going down along the bank, he was in the water, too. His name was Chase. There was Fitting, Chase and Anderson. There was the names of the guys that drowned. This Anderson, his daughter works in the liquor store here, that little blonde. She's forty-two years old now. But anyway, we landed at Cottonwood Island on the highway side, and it was on a Sunday and oh, quite a bit of traffic. I got up there and stopped an old flatbed truck that come along, And we put the boat on it. It was a way longer than that old flatbed, but three or four of us sat in the bow of the bow and held it down and tied it on. And we had to come back up and put that boat in the water and land on that tree where them guys was. That was a tricky proposition, but we made her. Picked 'em all off: the four of 'em. This Tom was one of 'em. He lives in Orofino now. He works for a construction outfit. He's sixty-three
I think now. But he was one of the guys up the tree.

SS: What year was that?

WS: Forty-nine. Because me and this gal over here in the liquor store, you know, I get whiskey for the Silver Dollar you know. But anyhow, I used to talk to her, you know, she's a nice gal, said, "You knew my dad." That's when I first started getting whiskey there, three or four years ago. I said, "Yes, sure." But I didn't know who she was talking about. I was in the dark, I was going to wait to see if she'd volunteer some information, which she did right away, you know, she said, she was Walt Anderson's daughter. I knew Walt very well.

SS: So these three guys never had a chance, really?

WS: No, no, not after they got in the water, they didn't have no chance, no. Unless—the only chance they had if they had stayed with the boat. The boat didn't really swamp until it hit the pier, you know. It hit the bridge pier, and then it went under. We found that down Cottonwood Creek, washed up on a bar. But it was not serviceable anymore. But, I don't know, there was spare paddles in that boat and everything underneath the seat. I tied them in there myself when we started out. I had two paddles tied underneath. They was not in the way or nothin'. They could have grabbed one of them. Them boats they'll be just about ready to sink and they'll still pack three or four men, you know. But they could have done something if they'd a stayed with that boat. They could have stayed off a that pier; grabbed them paddles, 'course, the oars and everything was gone. Oh, I don't know, excited, I guess.

SS: In a situation like that, you can really lose your—

WS: They found 'em all but one. They found Chase and Anderson, but they never found Fitting. His brother, this guy that drowned was Ray, and
I can't think of the brother's name, but I know him real well, he
was on the police force here. He was chief of detectives in Cheyenne
at the time this happened. He come up, he and his wife, and he stayed
here all summer. He went to work on the police force here then, and
every Sunday they'd take a boat and go up to Lenore and put the boat
in the river and she'd drive the car down and he'd go up every Sunday
all summer long, and they never found him. I suppose he got sanded
in, you know someplace and buried.

SS: When that kind of thing happened, death or a bad accident, was there
any protection for families?

WS: Oh, yes, oh, yes. You mean insurance?

SS: Yeah, from the company?

WS: Well, I don't know about the company. The State, I know pays. Them
guys got around eight thousand dollars, I think is all, but we took
up collections in the camp for them. We got damn near that much in
the camp. After the drive was over, you know.

SS: Eight thousand bucks for the three of 'em?

WS: Yeah. But they got eight thousand apiece out of the State. They kind
of hung off on Fitting for-- maybe they haven't paid it yet, but they
claim that in seven years, they gotta pay it. So I suppose that's
paid now.

SS: That was pretty good, getting that much money. That sounds like a lot
of money to come out of the camps.

WS: Oh, yeah, but them guys are all pretty easy in a case of that kind you
know. They got about that much for the three of 'em, you know. But
it used to be customary -- a collection taken up on a drive, you'd
give a day's wages. Whatever the wages were-- but, of course, I never
paid any attention to that. I always hit her a little heavier. I'd
spend it anyway, you know.

SS: What do you mean? A collection on the drive, if somebody was killed?

WS: Yes, or hurt, or sick, or something. They'd take up collections, you know. It used to be way more so— they don't take up many collections in these camps anymore. But, when I was a young guy around here, every day, there was someone taking up a collection.

SS: If you'd give to every one of those, you wouldn't have any salary left. If you'd give a day's work every day.

WS: I know. But, I mean, it wasn't every day, but there'd be every couple of months, or somewhere around that. But they was all worthy of it.

SS: You know, up North there, it seems like whenever the lumbering shut down the men all went to Spokane. Was that the same here?

WS: Oh, yes. Yes. Until 1918. When they started up, Pierce was the town. Some guys never got by Pierce, for years, unless they come out the other way by Elk River. But I was in Pierce, I don't know, I musta been there twenty years, anyway, and I never got by there either. Everything there you wanted. Women, whiskey.

SS: That's pretty good. I didn't know there was any small towns that had that. I thought you had to go to a big city.

WS: Oh, no, Pierce always had 'em. They haven't now, but, there was always something like that there. I don't think there's any there now.

SS: There was a lot of lodging then, too? Lots of places for the 'jacks to stay? The houses, I imagine were places that the 'jacks could stay.

WS: Well, when I first went there— Have you been at Pierce lately?

SS: Yeah.

WS: Well, you know where the Clearwater Hotel is? There was a big tent there when I first landed there. There was I don't know how many men— The railroad was up at JP then, as far as JP, it wasn't into Headquar-
ters yet. But, I don't know, there must have been three thousand men around there. I don't know how many, they was coming and going, you know. And they had all kind of camps along the railroad; the railroad company, you know. Building that railroad up there. But that's where it was when I went up there at JP, didn't take 'em long to shoot into Headquarters from there. But that old Clearwater Hotel was a big tent, and them army cots to sleep on. No floor in the bottom at all, just on the ground. I don't know what they charged; a dollar, I guess to sleep on one of 'em. I forget who built that. Old Chris Johnson built that Clearwater Hotel. Then old Snyder he built the Pierce Hotel. That was after that, too. There was just one old shack there, he was bootlegging there, and he just built on around it and he made a hotel out of it. It's still there. No! it burnt down. There's a bank there, by gosh.

SS: Were there many of the whorehouses there?

WS: Oh, yes. There was always about three. Four or five gals in each one. And the last year or so it got down to two and then one. The Pierce Hotel, that was always one. That is, after it changed hands, that was always one. That is, after it changed hands, Mr. Lemon got it. The Hotel, that was always— It isn't no more.

SS: In Bovill—

WS: There was never any there, was they?

SS: Yeah, there was, but they were gone by the time you came here. They were gone by about 1915, or something like that. I understand Clarkia stayed pretty wide open—

WS: Oh, Clarkia was— was hell, bing-bang. Everything. Same as Pierce.

SS: It was never so big, though, was it, as far as—?

WS: Oh, no. no, no. Well, they used to go in that way, you know, on that drive. Used to go in from Clarkia, you'd think that they was comin'
out that way, the way they'd perform, you know.

SS: You talking about Marble Creek?

WS: Yeah. But they never come out that way. See, Marble Creek run in at the St. Joe below Avery. It's Marble Creek station, is what it is. That's where it runs in there. But you'd think they was comin' out that way, the way the bootleggers treated 'em. Give 'em everything they wanted. Gals and jugs and corks. And the girls were very free with their wares, too! (Chuckles)

SS: Well, what were they doing on Marble Creek? The logging there on Marble Creek— what kind of thing did they have going there? Didn't they have an incline there?

WS: Yeah, they had an incline coming down to the main line of the Milwaukee. Yeah. Did you ever see that thing?

SS: Uh-huh. Just hear about it.

WS: Well, that was quite a rig. That was a double track layout. Empties come up and the loads went down. No, it wasn't double track, they had an automatic switch, that was it. I've rode up on it. They had a donkey sitting on the top. A big donkey, I don't know, a big— twelve or fifteen, and they used to drop them cars down.

SS: Must have been steep.

WS: It was 57 percent in one place. That's just exactly what it was, because I asked old what's-his-name, the first time I went in there. I asked him how steep that place was. He said fifty-seven percent, and I thought he was lyin' to me. That was Bill Gaffney. he was the superintendent then. I thought he was lyin' to me. I didn't say anything but I asked several others; all said fifty-seven percent. I guess it was.

SS: Did they flume in there, too, before they had the—
WS: They used chutes.

SS: Yeah, that's right.

WS: They shot 'em to the railroad, you know. Put 'em on skids and loaded 'em out.

SS: Was there some kind of a fire there that they built an incline?

WS: A fire?

SS: Yeah. Was there some kind of a— can't remember what I heard now. I heard something about--

WS: Oh, there was a fire in 1910.

SS: Yeah, I heard about that one, yeah.

WS: The whole State of Idaho was burning then. They didn't try to put it out! I know they didn't. They couldn't. They had no way to get to it. But, I don't know of any fire there lately. Well, let's see, that was the Rutledge Timber Company, yeah. And then the Potlatch took it over. They didn't do much there. By gosh, they truck there now. They landed right in Clarkia, yes. When I worked up there, there was several different creeks—Hobo Creek, Jg° Creek. I don't know how many. I worked there at Hobo for a guy, Wco Em Up George, they called him.

SS: I've heard of that name.

WS: You have, eh?

SS: Sure. Well, what was he like?

WS: Oh, boy, there was never nothing like him. He was a divil, that fella! He got killed down in Oregon. I knew him real well. I knew the whole family. He had two boys and a girl and his wife. Yeah, he gyppoed for himself on Marble, that's when I first caught up to him. He went broke there. He had pretty fair outfit; fourteen teams of horses. All the riggin' to go with 'em, you know. Then he went to work for the Diamond.
And he worked there for years, running camp. But I guess they didn't like his style, or something, because they dumped him, anyway. But he had quite a bit of money, you know. He owned a dandy home in Spokane. He lost everything. He went for the racehorse, you know. He bought a saloon, he run that and he was making money hand over fist, but he bought three old plugs and he started running 'em around and following 'em around from Seattle to Portland and Tacoma. First thing, you know he was on the rocks and had to go back to work in the woods. He couldn't work himself, he was too old then to work. But then everything had changed. He never changed with conditions, you know at all. Never did. I know when 'dozers first come out, the Diamond bought 'dozers, he wouldn't use 'em. He'd skid them logs a hundred miles instead of building a truck road, and the 'dozers sitting in the camp yard. That didn't pay. I think that's one reason why—

SS: This Wood 'Em Up, I heard he got that name because he was always trying to get one more log on there. Is that true?

WS: Yeah, that's it. Wood 'Em Up. And he was— he liked notoriety. He was an awful man to fire men, you know. I've seen him fire thirty men one morning. Thirty! There was them labor agencies in Spokane. Don't know how many more Van Camp and Featherstone, but he kept them busy.

SS: What did he fire 'em for? No reason?

WS: No. no. Hire 'em back the next day. No, he'd just get mad and start cannin' 'em. He'd can one, he might have a reason for canning the first one, but if you happened to come along right after that, you was gone, too. I was working for him five months and never got canned. I never did get canned. He never did can me. I don't know why. If I did kind of read between the lines a little bit, I thought it was coming, I'd quit, you see! (Chuckles) He was a good guy, you could always go along and stay over night in his camp.
and sleep and eat. He might come in and tell you, "Nothin' doing to-day, stick around for a day or two." Or something like that, you know. Yeah, he had a lot of good points. One of his boys is a contract-or, now, you know. Yarno and Company. Yarno is his name, Y-A-R-N-O. But he is, an oh, a construction contractor. He built them sewers in Weippe, I know that. I haven't seen him since.

SS: You know, talking about this guy, or you know, staying overnight to find out if there's work. I've heard— One guy was telling me about these camp inspectors. Was there any guys that went around to camps—to try them all out?

WS: Oh, yes, sure. Why, you see around Bovill, I've met thirty men between Camp 7 and Bovill, on the railroad track. They never said nothin'. They had to set up extra tables for 'em, them guys, sometimes. I never did go that route. I'd go to a camp, you know what I mean, when I was lookin' for work, that was customary then. You'd go into camp and if the push wanted you, he'd come around and tell ya. And if he didn't, why, he'd come and tell ya anyway. That was alright, then you could go. Or go to work, one or the other. I usually went to work. I don't know, I was pretty lucky. I knew a lot of 'em, you know. And a lot of the crew, you see, the crew would put a plug in for you once in a while. Like over on the Bovill side here— like Sturgill, you know. I guess he's living yet.

SS: Oscar Sturgill? He died, recently.

WS: Moscow.

SS: Yeah. He's been dead, just this year. Recently.

WS: He always had tramps working for him. Tramp lumberjacks. And he always had the best horses. And if a guy come along, you know, there'd be some guy in the crew, of course, maybe you might know half of the
crew, but there'd always be someone that'd whisper to old Oscar, "There's a pretty fair hand." And he'd put him on, you know, and then, you'd go to work. If he didn't know you, you know. That's the way that worked.

SS: When you say tramp lumberjacks— you mean the lumberjack that went around to a lot of different places and didn't stay in one camp?

WS: Well, yes, he stayed sometimes; sometimes he didn't. It all depends on, as I say, on conditions, and sometimes they'd be real bad, but you'd stay anyway. I don't know what the hell the reason was.

SS: When you're saying tramp— figure there's a difference between a tramp lumberjack and what— in a family man?

WS: Well, yes, sure there is. The family man, he does stay. He's anchored to his job. The other guy he's just a kind of tramp, see. I don't mean he's a bum or nothing. Just a tramp, is all. Likes to keep moving. To see how they do things other places, or something like that.

Well, you ought to go up and see this Proffit. He's a nice guy to talk to. He's a married man, he's got— I don't know, his kids are grewed.

SS: Was he on any of them early drives on the Clearwater River?

WS: First one.

SS: Was he? And he got so he'd run 'em?

WS: Yeah. Yeah, he run that drive— he must have taken it out seven or eight times, anyway. That was before the war, he started in. He run camp first. Then he took the drive. You see, this Boots— Did you ever hear of him?

SS: I don't know. What's his name?

WS: His name was Edelblute. He used to live in town here. He was married. He married Howard Bradbury's sister. Well, he took this drive after Old Brooks died. That was in '38— Old Brooks died. Well, he took it
he finished it that spring and drove from then on until— I don't know— just before the war. And he got killed, in a windstorm. He was a superintendent then. But there wouldn't be much doing in the spring and he'd take that drive down. He liked that kind of work, you know. And a hell of a good man. He was from that Rathdrum, Coeur d'Alene country. Chum of Profitts, they grew up together. But there was a windstorm, you know, and he was in his pickup, and instead of parking some place, he just kept a driving, you know and the wind threw a big snag over and just crushed him. Fell across the cab, just flattened everything. I was in Camp X. They worked on him all night. Doctors come in there, two doctors come in there. They come in there in a place— they come to Elk River in a plane. They brought him in there in a truck or something, I don't know.

SS: Well, I'll get going. What time you got?

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(tape turned off for a while at this point)

WS: I believe they're all married. I don't know of a single one. That isn't

SS: I figured there must be some old-timers in Spokane someplace.

WS: They're awful scattered. I know of one, that's all now. 'Cause I hear from there every week. There's some guys go through here that's working up in camp. One of 'em. He goes to Spokane. I don't know what the hell, he plays the horses, too, that's what he goes there for. Harry Anderson, Harry the Horse, they call him. But he tells me about some people in Spokane.

SS: Guys that he knew from the old days?

WS: Well, he knows 'em. Not from the old days, but he knows 'em. From Spokane. The only place I ever seen him work was in this still water. I never did see him anywhere else.

END

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, June 8, 1976.