WILLIAM STOWELL
Second 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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1.5 hours

Poker in the lumber camps – gambling the wages.

Honesty of lumberjacks – sure repayment of debts.
Preference of loggers for certain areas – he liked North Idaho for its short logs, river driving and lumbercamps.

Fluming on Bear Creek.

Working on the log drives: picking timber off the centers.

Death of Billy Watts in car accident. Getting arrested by Pat Malone. Dick Ferrell, lumberjack preacher.

Lack of reading material in camps; he missed following baseball season. Men gypsoed with partners, often of long-standing. Choosing and working on strips. Rates were fixed despite gypo contracts.

He chose camps with the cook in mind. Cooking on the river drive; moving camp. Cutting adrift while picking was a good way to take a break. Sociability of loggers – easy loaning money. Foremen’s attitude towards men who didn’t work. Ostracism of bad loggers.

IWW’s gone because they were revolutionary. (continued)

Hatred of IWW’s – early conflicts. Killing of three IWW’s by company gunmen near Pierce in 1936. He escaped to Missoula, but was arrested by the FBI and sentenced to a year in Lewiston jail. He was then blackballed for five years, even on the coast. He was an active member of the IWW, but not an official. More about the 1936 strike – the picket line so effective that the mill had no logs. Conditions in the camps had deteriorated.
Worker control. The 1941 strike: Potlatch Rose, a good-looking woman, harangued the men for the company; the mill went out, and the woods had to follow. They always won when they struck during a river drive. Striking at Mutiny Bar.

with Sam Schrager
February 24, 1976
II. Transcript
This conversation with "MICHIGAN" BILL STOWELL, took place at his home in Lewiston, Idaho on February 24, 1976.

SAM SCHRAGER: I was wondering about this in the old days with the lumberjacks. They'd stay in the woods for a pretty long time before they'd get to go in town?

WILLIAM STOWELL: Oh, yeah. Three, four, five, six, seven, eight months, you know.

SS: That seems like a hell of a long time to be out in the boondocks.

WS: Oh, God, yes. I used to do it. But there was always— there was no TVs, of course, there was poker games. And sometimes if you played poker you might have to stay. You know, they'd keep you there, if you weren't winning. See what I mean?

SS: You could lose your stake pretty easy in a game.

WS: Yeah, there was a good game there all the time. I used to play all time, but sometimes— well, you go six to eight months that you wouldn't win, you'd lose. You wouldn't warm the chair even, when you'd sit on it. But then again, you'd get lucky and win a thousand and away you went!

SS: Were the games pretty honest?

WS: Oh, always, yeah. Once in a while a slicker would move in, but, oh, he'd win of course, but they were easy games to win in, you know, never lose, free and easy, you know. Four or five hundred pot, you might win on a high card, you know: Queen, King, Ace, something like that. No pairs or nothing, they just tried to bluff their way out.

SS: Did you usually play the same kind of poker?

WS: Mostly stud, yeah. Five cards. That was the going deal.

SS: That's a good game.

WS: Oh, Yeah. Fast game.
SS: Well, how did they pay you then, in the woods? Would you get paid by the week or by the month?

WS: No. Some camps paid when you quit. If you stayed one month, two months, three months or six months, or no matter how long, they'd pay when you left. Otherwise it was every month, like the Potlatch did. They paid every months. And they insisted on you picking up your check, you see. You know; payday. You could stay, of course, as long as you want to but they didn't like them checks laying around, you know. Pick it up every month. That's the way they worked it. But some of them gypos you could work as long as you wanted to without that, you see. Get it all when you left. One check.

SS: But if you were going to be gambling, you need some money.

WS: Oh, yes, all the time. You could draw, you know.

SS: Draw off your pay.

WS: Well, the Potlatch had a draw day; the fifteenth. That was a pretty strict deal. You couldn't draw otherwise. You could draw once a month, besides your regular payday. That's the way that worked.

SS: Did everybody get in on the gambling or was there a bunch of guys that wouldn't touch it?

WS: Oh, no. Some didn't gamble at all. Just-- well, there was a regular bunch that-- 'course there'd be some that'd drop in an lose what they had and then they wouldn't play again, you know, for another month unless they borrowed or got some. But there was a bunch that played all the time. They were the old, you know--well, they were lucky to have money and they just played every night. Sometimes like Saturday night they'd play all Saturday night and all day Sunday, and then fly at her again, Monday morning. But them games, they don't-- there's no more games now. Not when I left there even. There was a little
STOWELL

game at Headquarters, but it didn't amount to nothing. They— oh, a few had money, you know. But a small game, didn't amount to nothing. I never played there.

SS: Would you figure, that when you gambled, would you figure you'd come out even, or better, or did you come out flat more than—

WS: Well, I think I broke about even. But sometimes I'd go for six to eight months and I wouldn't -- as I said-- I wouldn't warm the chair you know. I'd drop everything in a pot or two, you know. We wasn't getting much, well, a hundred and fifty dollars was a big months, you know. But that was years ago, you know. That was a real, real good month. A couple of hands'd take that sometimes if you happened to get mixed up right with 'em. But I didn't borrow, I'd quit. Wait for another month. (Chuckles) Go at her again! But I usually come out about even.

SS: What about the honesty in the camps? I've heard that lumberjacks were honest as the day is long.

WS: Yeah, they was. You could-- well, you could leave a thousand dollars lay on your bunk and go to work. Someone might come along and put it under your pillow or something, but they wouldn't take it. I don't know how it is now. I imagine it has changed some, but... But I don't know how-- the lumberjack as a rule is a pretty fair guy.

SS: What about debts? Paying back money that you owed?

WS: Well, they--

SS: Men pretty good with that?

WS: Oh, yes. Yeah. They were good pay, all of 'em. Might take a little time, you know. But they'd get it. Might be five or six hundred miles from there, further, but they'd either send it or see that you got it, if they owed you. Lumberjacks traveled around a lot them
days, you know. On the coast and back here, Montana and all over. Gallivanting around.

SS: Did the men have places that they liked specially that they'd stay at mostly?

WS: Oh, yes. They'd run around for a while and then they'd come back to this spot, you see, where they liked to work. Where they liked the crew and one thing and another, and settle down. They'd quite a hitch, as a rule, that's the way it works. Way it always did with me. I'd run around a while and then I'd finally go back to where I liked the best. This Potlatch used to be a good outfit to work for— still is, I guess. I worked for 'em well, when they was building Headquarters. I'd been out in this country quite a while before that, but I was on the Coast quite a bit then. Montana. But when they started up, I used to always work here sometime during the year I'd be here for a while. (What are you doing? Writing a book or something?)

SS: We're hoping to, eventually.

WS: Someone else beside you?

SS: Well, I kind of work for the county; Latah County. But that's what I'm hoping to be able to do that eventually. 'Cause we've talked to a lot of people, about the interesting things from everybody.

WS: Yeah, see what you mean.

SS: Because you know, you look at it from all the different angles, all the different kind of people, you know. It's a hell of a story. Take your time to don't. It's a you can condense it down, you know.

WS: I've been working for---- instead of the Coast, and what made this look--

SS: Well, all those different reasons. --- awful heavy on the Coast. Of course. They had machines on the Coast.
when I went there. But I never drove no machines. I always worked
on the ground rigging and like of that, you know. I don't know, they
eliminated camps over there first. They were the first to eliminate
the camps, see, like here, they kept 'em, you know. And you could go
to camp and stay there in camp. Over there, they got to drive a long
ways, and married. So, that was one reason why I left there. But
the Rainier has still got camps over there, but that's about all. And
there's camps in Alaska, too. But, this country here kept the camps
the longest of any.

SS: What about the men? Did you find that the men around here— I mean
did you get to know 'em pretty good? Feel, you know, like they were
friends?

WS: Oh, yes. Sure. But, well, I had a friend on the Coast, too. They were
tramps, like myself, you know. They were here and there and every-
where. But, of course, there's good people wherever you go. And
then there is some that's not so good, but I never had no connections
with them. You know, if I didn't like 'em I just didn't mix with 'em
that's all. But they were all good guys. Very good. I don't know.
I always catered to the short log, I mean I was— river driving, you
see. There wasn't much of that on the coast. Very, very little driv-
ing. It was all rafting, you know. And there was long logs there
when there was shorter logs here. Always donkey work and I didn't go
for that too much, you know. I liked this short log country; horses,
camps and driving, you know. I used to work on the Coast and I'd come
over here every spring to drive someplace, you know. And you'd meet
guys you hadn't seen for a year. There was several drives in this
country.

SS: Besides the Clearwater?
WS: Oh, Christ, yes, lots of 'em.

SS: Where were they driving?

WS: Well, there was the Coeur d'Alene River, Priest River, Wenatchee River and the Blackfoot in Montana. Priest River. Oh, I can't remember.

SS: Gee, I didn't know there was that many.

WS: Oh, yes.

SS: Clearwater is the one you always hear about.

WS: Yeah. Well, that was the last one, you know. You see, years ago there was no roads in them camps, you know. You hiked in. They were flume camps. You know, there was no trucks or cars or nothing, and they flumed everything. You've seen a flume, of course.

SS: Yeah.

WS: Well, they flumed everything into the river and drove it in the spring. That's the way they did that. But lately, of course, railroads and trucks; it's all trucks now, of course.

SS: Were you in on that Beaver Creek flume?

WS: Oh, yeah, I helped build it. 1928.

SS: How did they organize that whole job there? It looks like a big undertaking, when you see what's left of it.

WS: Yes. Five miles to start with and they extended it, of course, later on. But the original flume was about done for then.

SS: There was an older flume in there?

WS: Well, from Beaver Creek Dam to the river. That was five miles. That was built first, then there was flumes and chutes into that, you see. Into the pond, from different camps around there, you know, P, and N and W, J, and all them camps they all went into Beaver Creek, you know and flumed from there to the river. But that's been quite a while ago. I worked there on that Beaver Creek Flume in 1941. That's the last time they used it. They had about, oh, I don't know— we were
in there right after Christmas, and they trucked to that flume. They had a bunch of Chevy trucks and they trucked to the flume. And that was just before the war. And we flumed 'em right in, too. 'Course, there was always lots of water in Beaver Creek, the flume, you know.

SS: You never had trouble with that, even in the summer? They flumed there all the time?

WS: Yeah, any time. That's a big creek, you know. You been there?

SS: Yeah, I've seen it. It is a big creek. The feeders are pretty good too.

WS: Yeah. Well, they'd back that water up and hold it, you know. They had, one, two-- two big dams, Beaver Creek Dam and the Dam. That was a way up, O and P and them camps come into that. That was above camp M. That was probably ten miles from the river, or eleven. But they had a big dam there and they held water there, too.

SS: How much water--? I've never seen a flume running. How much water would you keep in the flume?

WS: All you could get.

SS: Just fill it right up to the top.

WS: Yeah. 'Course they knew when they built 'em, how much they'd need, and all this and that. But sometimes in the summer-- Beaver Creek never was that way. There was always water, you know, you could flume. But, of course, it would take more water to sluice a log through a dam than it does to roll it in, you know. It takes ten times as much. But, I worked on them flumes, like Camp T, in the summertime in mid August or so, you'd get about four floods a day, and no sluicing except through one dam. They'd about three minute floods, you see. You had to get that timber in-- and you'd maybe flume three hundred thousand a day, you see, that's board feet, you know. But you'd have to get that in in twelve minutes. Four three minute floods, two
in the morning and two in the afternoon.

**SS:** Well, you could have all the timber right by the flood—

**WS:** Right there, yeah.

**SS:** Ready to go.

**WS:** You'd have what you was going to flume. They're all ready. And then call for the water, you see. They opened the dam and give you the water.

**SS:** Gee, they must have moved fast.

**WS:** Oh, boy! There'd about six, seven men rolling in, you know. On the average landing where there was maybe seventy-five or a hundred thousand each fluming, you see. That's about what you'd have. But there'd be four or five of them landings, you know. Maybe trucking to some of 'em, and some of 'em they'd be skidding to.

**SS:** During that three minutes when it was open you'd have to roll the lumber right onto the flume right then?

**WS:** Right then.

**SS:** How many guys would be working on one landing?

**WS:** Oh, five or six.

**SS:** Would they have peavies?

**WS:** Yeah.

**SS:** Must have been a scramble.

**WS:** Oh, yeah. You had to watch your step, too, you know. Short water, you see, and you couldn't double 'em up or nothing, you know, or they'd jam and there you are and you'd lose the flood and everything. You had to keep 'em singled out. Oh, yeah, it was quite an undertaking, but of course, everybody knew this business, there was nothing to it.

**SS:** How big were the logs?

**WS:** Oh, they'd average maybe three, four hundred feet. 'Course, they'd be some with a thousand feet in 'em, you know. Some with a hundred
feet in 'em. The average log maybe three hundred feet. They'd just leave the minute they hit that flume, you know. You concentrate that water there in one small spot you know, and it's got a lot of power. You know how them flumes was built.

SS: Yes.

WS: See a log that there was five hundred feet in the chute, get another one right behind it, and that would be gone a long ways. Yeah. I used to like that kind of work.

SS: Would you ever run into trouble with timing with other landings?

WS: Oh, yes, well, they had to watch the ones below, you know. They had to watch real close. The guy on the upper end, he didn't have to be too particular to let 'em go, but the guys down below, they had to watch or they'd be in trouble. But there never was much trouble. They all knew their business.

SS: How much of the season did they flume? Did they keep that going right through the spring and summer?

WS: Yeah. Well, in the wintertime, when they worked in the wintertime, they would-- there was no water in the wintertime, it would freeze up. They'd deck it. Pile 'em up, you know. And they'd go in the spring before the drive started and flume 'em. Yeah.

SS: On these river drives-- now, I was thinking about that working in the water-- cold in the spring-- I imagine that'd be really rugged work.

WS: Yeah, it's tough. Sure.

SS: You got all them wool clothes on and everything, too.

WS: Yeah. The deeper it got the colder it got. Well, some guys could wade deep, you know and some couldn't. Just a matter of-- there wasn't a hell of a lot to know about it. Just get in there and go.

'Course, there was something, too--you had to savvy a little bit
about it in order to do it, but that was just plain old work. That's all that was. I didn't care much for that part of it. I'd rather work on the timber, you know, like a center or that kind of work.

SS: What?

WS: Like a center, you know, something builds up in the middle of the river, and you got to pick 'em off, as a rule. Like this river here, down along the highway here, the main river, you know, you had to take all that stuff off by hand, them timbers, you know, on account of—well, they used machines late years, but you couldn't use powder on account of the highway on one side, you know, and the railroad on the other. Well, it was machine work or handwork, depends on the kind of water it was. Good big water, why, they'd take 'em off by hand. Just get on their side picking, you know, and loosen 'em up, get slack in it and pretty soon she'd all go, you know. You had to whistle for the boat then. Yeah, that's the way that worked. Used to be a lot of centers in this river here. All kinds of 'em.

SS: When you say you pick at it; you just tried to separate—just tried like to—get them logs untangled?

WS: Yeah, that's it. That's just it. Get 'em unravelled. The center always builds up against something, you know. It depends upon what kind of water that goes on. Different stages of water will cause centers and some it won't, you know. But, it'll build up on something. It'll start like on a rock, or an island or a bar or something and it'll build way back, you know. Well, maybe back fifty feet from where it started there's twenty feet of water, but everything that hits it goes under, you know, and it keeps raising it up and it'll get built up til it looks like a mountain, you know. But you get on there and—four or five men and get slack in front, you know. Oh, maybe the
width of this room, or something like that. Then if it does take a
notion to go it'll leave the crown on piled higher, or swing and go
off. That's the way that works.

SS: What about them jams that don't want to untangle? I know that hap-
pens now and then, you'd get one that would just build up real big
and--

WS: Well, you stay with her, if you couldn't use powder. If you could use
powder, use powder. (Loud knock at the door- Visitor: Bill, I don't
know if you've read these or not. If you haven't, why, look 'em over
and if you don't want 'em, throw 'em in the garbage.)

SS: Well known fellow around here.

WS: Yeah, he used to run camp for the Potlatch.

SS: I didn't know he run Camp 2.

WS: Oh, yeah. He run some of them donkey camps. He was working for Pot-
latch Lumber Company, you know, before they consolidated with this
Clearwater Timber Company. That was the Potlatch Lumber Company,
you know.

SS: He was a foreman besides being a--he had a poolhall there?

WS: Oh, yeah, he had a joint there. His wife run a restaurant and he run
the bar, and the poolhall. Just beer, but he drank whiskey all time,
he always had a bottle of whiskey there, two or three, I don't know
how many. But I wouldn't want to ride with him that day, I was coming
over here and I had been working in some of them camps there, Camp
7 or 5 or maybe, some of 'em. And I quit and I was in there in there
in Bovill, and I was coming over here and I was gonna ride with him,
but I didn't get up that morning, and by God, he got killed that same
day.

SS: Driving?

WS: Yeah. The door flew open and he rolled out right under a big semi.
Going around a turn, you know and he maybe leaned a little bit; an old pickup and the door flew open and he landed right under the wheel. Yeah, he was a good guy, that guy. But there was some guy, I can't think of his name now, that run that joint, he isn't there no more, he's around town, but he-- there's someone else running the joint.

SS: I forget the guy's name, but there's still quite a few people go in there. People go drink at Bailey's, too, you know.

WS: Bailey's, that's the place. Yeah, that's the place.

SS: Well, there's Bailey's and then there's--

WS: Bailey don't run that no more, does he?

SS: No.

WS: No. Well, that's the guy, an old feller, big, old feller. Drank a lot of whiskey. Yeah, that's the guy I knew. Yeah, Bailey. Has the Potlatch got shops there yet?

SS: Gee, I don't know if they got-- they got a little operation there, but I don't know how much of a shop there is, or how big it is. I'm sure it's nothing like what it used to be.

WS: Oh, no. Used to have an office there. Chet Yanjel (?) did he die?

SS: He's still there.

WS: He retired.

SS: Yeah. Do you know Byers Sanderson?

WS: He's still there and his brother, John, is still there. John is quite old. Ernie Smith just died. Did you know him?

WS: No. I used to know...

SS: Ernie Smith was in the shop all the time.

WS: I didn't know him. Some of those railroaders I knew. I see where one of 'em died here maybe six or seven years ago, the one I knew best.
SS: The depot agent was Joe Holland, he's still around. He's still around.

He was the depot agent for about forty years.

WS: Old Pat Malloy.

SS: Did you know Pat Malone?

WS: Pat Malone I'm thinking of.

SS: That old sheriff, did you know him?

WS: Yes, Put me in jail there one time. I stayed in there four or five

hours and he come over and let me out. They was having a council

meeting there that night, and I had to walk right through where it

was. I don't know, I said some foolish Goddam thing, and I went on

out the door.

SS: Well, Pat was kind of a joke.

WS: He didn't bother anybody, Christ you had to fall right down in front

of him to get pinched.

SS: He drank a hell of a lot. He had quite a reputation.

WS: Drank, you say?

SS: Yeah.

WS: Oh, yes. Yes, he used to be drunker'n somebody he'd punch, you know.

Oh, yes, he would tell a guy, you know, he'd tell 'em, "Go on over

there and lie down for a while." That's all he'd say. (Chuckles)

SS: Was he better than most of these town---

WS: Oh, yes, Christ, he didn't bother nobody.

SS: Yes, I kinda thought that.

WS: Christ, there used to be a lot of lumberjacks around there then.

Right after this whiskey was legalized, you know. Things started to

pick up a little bit, you know. And there was several camps around

there. Horses. That's about the time they was changing then. Pot-
latch had some awful good horses, you know. Jesus, they were wonder-
ful. Old Nogle was the horse buyer. Is he living yet?
No, he's dead but one of the sons, but one of the sons died not long ago. The son named after him.

Yeah, Clare. He died on the Coast.

But his other son's still on the Coast.

What's he doing? Still in the lumber industry?

Yeah.

Some kind of a--?

I don't know what he was, but his other son is still there; 'em. Did you ever know this Dick Farrell?

Who?

Dick Ferrell, a lumberjack?

Oh, yes. I knew him well. Yeah.

What did you think of him?

He was alright. He was a good guy. I don't know whether he was sincere or not, but he was a talker. He come to camp every once in a while. Didn't make any difference who was hiking on the trail when he come along, he'd take your packsack and go. If you was, you know, half drunk or something, he'd take your sack and carry it right into camp. And he'd get up at night and give a little speil. Everybody'd go you know, because they liked him. I think maybe he had some other means of support, but that's all I know of, is what he got around the camps. He was an expug.

That's what I heard. I wonder if that's why people, you know-- guys listened to him a little more, because they knew he'd been there.

I don't know. I guess that's something he just picked up. I don't know whether he was sincere about it or not. But he talked it anyway. He talked like he was sincere, you know.

Was he fire and brimstone? Or was he--?
WS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. (Chuckles)

SS: I'd think he'd be talking to the wrong bunch if he— (Chuckles)

WS: Well, they listened to him. He'd come around if you was asleep, tell you, "Come on, come on over." (End of side A)

SS: When you guys were in camp did you have— was there much reading material around?

WS: No. No. Not years ago; there was nothing, except what somebody brought in there. You take like Bradbury, Howard Bradbury, he was awful good, he was superintendent up there, you know. He always come in with a load of magazines and stuff like that, but otherwise there was nothing. Nobody brought anything with 'em when they come in. Daily papers, that was out, you know. There was no such a thing. The mail'd come in, oh, once a week maybe or something like that. Packhorse, you know. Pack string. And, if you had any mail you'd get it, and of course, if you didn't, of course you didn't. I never had no mail come in or anything like that, but I used to like that old paper once in a while, of course, everybody did. Like sports, you know, or something. Christ I used to be lost in the summertime. I liked baseball, you know, and I used to follow that pretty close. But, everything'd go right by me.

SS: There'd be a World Series and—

WS: It's be over with. Yeah. I used to take time off at the Series sometimes and come out.

SS: You could do that pretty easy, I mean, you could leave if you wanted to.

WS: Oh, Christ, you could leave anytime.

SS: That's a pretty good deal.

WS: Well, there's some of them guys didn't stay over ten days anyway. Just
enough to make a road stake and move on. But I never worked that way, if I got a job that I liked and making money, I'd stay with it, you know, for quite a while. But then, when I went to town after after I went broke I always go someplace else. You know, move around a little bit. See how they done things other places.

Well, when do you figure on completing this book?

SS: Oh, it's probably going to be a couple of years.

WS: Oh, quite a while. Well, there's more than you working on it?

SS: Nope. Just me.

WS: Just you? Well, I'll be damned.

SS: That's why it takes so long. Just going from camp to camp now. That's something that you didn't like to do. But did most of the guys like to move around like that?

WS: Oh, probably, half of 'em, yeah. Some of 'em used to stay, but fifty percent of 'em that was what they called jumping jacks, you know. They'd work a few days and go. Yeah, there were lots of them.

SS: Was it always by yourself, or did you chum around with— would you go with another guy?

WS: Well, when there was different ones come out— that was when I come to this country— you always had a pardner, you know. If you were falling, you had a pardner. You usually travel with them or pick somebody else up. Or you went into camp alone, the push would mate you up with somebody, you know. If he wanted you to go to work. I'd travel around with some guy, oh, maybe two or three years at a time, the same guy, you know. Some guy I'd work with. Some guy you'd like. Good man you know. I would stay with him. And someone you could get along with you, know. That way, it made work a little easier. You knew what he was going to do all the time. That way, why, you'd keep your
pardner, you see. I've waited in town for several days for a guy to get sobered up to work. Or he'd wait for me, or something like that.

SS: Well, was it—Were there other gyppo jobs besides falling that you'd need two men?

WS: Oh, yeah, skidding.

SS: Two men?

WS: Teamster and a swamper.

SS: Did you do a lot of both of them?

WS: Yeah.

SS: Both falling and skidding?

WS: No. No. I didn't do any falling.

SS: Oh. But you did the skidding and swamping?

WS: Yeah. That's about all I did. That is, for years, you know. There was pretty fair money in it. Oh, I don't know, I liked horses, so I stayed with it.

SS: You did that by marking out strips, and you took a strip?

WS: Yeah.

SS: And you did that for so much for the whole strip? Or did they do it by the thousand?

WS: Well, it was by the thousand, but the way it used to be, they'd—a strip would be all blazed out, you know. Up this draw, or some place. And it would run back to the riggs, and it depends on what the timber was and everything. It would all be falled, you see ahead, you know. And they'd set a price on it. You'd go out and look at it. Like you come into camp this afternoon. And the push'd come and say, "Want to go to work?" You'd say, "Yeah." "Well, come on then, and I'll show you a strip." So he'd take you out. He wouldn't go over the strip with you, but he'd take you down the flume or up the chute, or where-
ever the hell it was, and say, "There you are." A line here and
other lines up there— "Look it over." Well, then you would, you see. And he'd already told you the price, you see. Then you'd go back to camp and probably the next morning, he'd say, "Well, you gonna take that patch?" "Well," you'd say, "you gotta raise the ante a little bit." Something like that, you see. "I can't go no higher." Well, then you'd take it or leave it, you see. And probably leave it, and go. But, if he'd raise it two-bits or something— say the price was two and a half a thousand or three or four or five or something—if you wanted four-bits or a dollar or two-bits more, why, you'd tell him. If he seen fit to give it to you, he would, and if he didn't, he wouldn't. You could go or take it, one or the other; whatever you wanted to do.

SS: You could size it up pretty good without doing it on how much it would take you to make good money on it? You could just tell from looking at it.

WS: Yes, if you had a pardner that you knew and you knew what he could do, you could tell just about how close you could come. You know, just about how you could come out. Yeah.

SS: What was the difference?— Did it vary a lot, how much money you'd be able to make on gyppoing? I mean, did it change a lot? Or was it pretty much set?

WS: No. No. Like this Potlatch, it was pretty much of a—— they'd let you make so much. If you went over that, they'd cut the price, after you started on. Some outfits didn't.

SS: They'd cut it while you were still on the strip? Sounds like—

WS: You signed a contract, but it didn't mean nothing, you know. Except if you killed a horse, or something like that. You had to pay for it.
A team of horses was valued at five hundred dollars. That was standard value. But, if you killed one or both of 'em— that doesn't happen very, very seldom. But if you broke a leg or something— like I mean a horse's leg or something— they'd naturally destroy 'em, you see. But that didn't happen very often.

SS: It sounds like — I mean, they change the price in the middle of the— doing a strip, it didn't pay for you to work too hard or you wouldn't—

WS: Well,—

SS: You worked too hard and make too much money—

WS: You take like at Bovill— at one time you could make about a hundred dollars a month; a hundred five, a hundred and ten, or ninety, something like that, you'd just stay in between that. There was nobody went over that, regardless of the price. But when this Clearwater started up, they were a little different. Nobody made the same. You could— you got a good strip, a big enough strip that you could lay it out properly and go ahead, you see and figure it to your best advantage, you know, leave some shorthaul and take the long with the short and keep it mixed up you could come out with a pretty fair average. That's the way I always did it. And most of 'em did it that way.

SS: What's this idea that— to mix short and longs?

WS: Well, there was some long skidding, you know. Maybe— well, we skidded three thousand feet, thirty-five hundred feet, you know, and some of it would be a couple of hundred feet.

SS: You'd mix 'em.

WS: Uh-huh. That's right. Like, if you didn't time to make a trip, you see, maybe you was skidding four trips a day, maybe, using dogs, you see— You know what them dogs are?

SS: Yes.
WS: Well, you maybe— say it was steep ground and you was using maybe twenty-five dogs— well, you was making four trips and you couldn't get— you'd get caught short some day and you couldn't make four—

Well, you'd jump in on the short haul, leave the swamper up in the woods, let him stay there. You'd pick up some handy stuff, enough to keep your average up. That's the way that worked.

SS: Did they pay your bonus on the— if you hit a certain amount every day?

WS: Yeah, yeah. The Winton Lumber Company, they were out of Coeur d' Alene, they set a price and didn't change. They might raise it if you weren't making it and they wanted you to stay, they might raise it. But, otherwise it didn't change, and if you made a hundred dollars a day, they paid you. But nobody ever did that, you know. Regardless of what you were making they'd leave the price after they set it.

SS: That sounds really bad to me, changing the price in the middle. I mean if they make a deal, it ought to be a deal.

WS: I know, but, I didn't say they cut the price, but they'd raise the price, if you weren't making it on a strip. I never knew 'em to cut any.

SS: Are you talking about Potlatch?

WS: Yeah.

SS: Oh. They raise it?

WS: Yeah, if you weren't making it.

SS: That's different. That's Okay then.

WS: Yeah.

SS: I've heard it said that if you made good on one, that's when they try to cut you back, so that you wouldn't—
Well, you -- when you took another one.

SS: Yeah.

WS: Well, they all tried that. Yeah, that was customary.

SS: That'd be a good reason for leaving to go to another place, wouldn't it?

WS: Yeah. That's usually what they did. Most guys quit after they'd put a strip in anyhow of any size, say a couple of months, you know.

SS: That much.

WS: Yeah, when they'd get the strip in, they'd go. And when they got ready to go, why, they'd go back to maybe someplace else, or maybe back there. It didn't make any difference.

SS: Well, how big a strip are we talking about?

WS: Oh, some were a hundred thousand and some were a million.

SS: How many acres?

WS: Oh, I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know about the acreage.

SS: It sounds pretty big. Couple of months is a lot of work.

WS: Yeah. But, I know a guy that went into camp and took a million feet; all summer, all summer long. Maybe he wouldn't get it again, but they knew who they were giving it to, see. They were pretty steady guys. They wouldn't give it to somebody that was just going to dig in a little while and then and then wheel, you know.

SS: How big-- how many men would be in these camps, guys working on the strips?

WS: Oh, a hundred and fifty.

SS: In camp?

WS: Yeah. That's about the average.

SS: Were these camps tent or car camps, or what?

WS: Both. Frame, tent and cars. Railroad camps, sometimes was car camps,
but like the but like the home camps, they was all either rag camps, either tents or frame. Potlatch had a couple of log camps. Built a couple of log camps.

SS: Were they just the older camps that were standing there? I mean, the early camps were--

WS: What?

SS: Them early camps were log?

WS: Oh, yes, sure, they all were. But, no, they built Camp G up there on Silver Creek.

SS: And that was a log camp?

WS: Yes, that was built in '31.

SS: Well, what did you think of the— Was there any one kind of the camps that was usually better, or better to live in?

WS: Yes, yes.

SS: — than others? Which was the best?

WS: Well, the way it worked, wherever there was a good cook, that's where I'd go. I used to kind of keep track of the cooks. There was a lot of bum ones and a lot of good ones then, you know. The good ones were well known, so were the bum ones. I used to kinda keep track of the good ones and go where they were.

SS: Did you know Shorty Justice?

WS: Oh, yes.

SS: I talked to him in Spokane.

WS: Is he living?

SS: Oh, sure.

WS: Jesus Christ, he cooked the last time I worked, he was cooking at Camp 5 Bovill on the highway.

SS: He was supposed to have been a pretty good cook.
WS: Oh, yes. He was a good cook, yes. Sure he was. Hell yes. I ate a lot of his chuck. He's living?

SS: Yes.

WS: He must be pretty old.

SS: Oh, he's about eighty.

WS: Yes. You talked to him in Spokane?

SS: Yes. After he left this country, he went and he was purchasing agent for the Ridpath there in Spokane. For that big hotel there. That's what he did.

WS: He bought the chuck?

SS: Yeah. Bought for 'em.

WS: That was just a sideline for him, he wasn't doing that with his full time?

SS: I don't know what else he was doing.

WS: Probably wasn't doing nothing else. That's after he was retired?

SS: Yes. Well, was there really a big difference between the good chuck and the bad?

WS: Oh, yeah.

SS: World of difference?

WS: Yes. Yeah, a bum cook, you know, he wasted so much. Garbage can's full all the time. But a good cook he'd take the leftovers and he'd do something with 'em, and they'd be good, you know. Fred Thomas, he lived in Coeur d'Alene-- he must be dead-- he was an awful good cook. He used to cook on Marble Creek on the drive. You know where Marble Creek is?

SS: Yes.

WS: I drove there for quite a few years. The Rutledge Timber Company. And I seen him poach eggs right on the bank of the river for a hundred and fifty men in the morning. That is something, isn't it?
By Jesus! He was a dandy cook and a good guy. I haven't seen him since he left over there.

SS: What kind of outfit did they have to cook on? On the river drives? They didn't have a full camp cookout? Did they have to move the damn thing?

WS: Well, yeah. Well, you'd either throw everything in a couple of boats or put it on a packstring.

SS: Did they have a big heavy cookstove?

WS: Oh, yes. Sure. Like this river here, you know, the cook had it good here. A lot of 'em didn't like it. They had everything right in front of 'em all the time. It was only thirty men, you know. But— why they could bake bread while they were moving. You take like Marble Creek and the Coeur d'Alene River and them-- Priest River and them, they would, Well, they'd throw everything in a boat and move maybe five miles, six, miles, three miles or something, that depends on the river down the river, and then the cook would have to come and have the supper ready for a hundred men maybe, from three o'clock on in the afternoon to set that camp up. That was something. 'Course the push, he'd always give the cook lots of help, you know, off of the river crew, you know. And the guys liked to do that, too, you know. Change. You take like— well, after you've been at that old drive-- I drove a hundred days one time. One hundred days without, well, just every day the same Goddam thing. And we had the camp on the banks. We'd move five or six miles, packstring. Well, we got to take that stove all apart.

SS: Oh, yes. Huh.

WS: Well, they'd have to put that on a mule. Pretty hard to get it balanced up, you know. You overload the poor old mule. You know what a big stove'll weigh.
Yeah. Well, he used to have packsaddles built just like a sawhorse, you know, take everything off of the stove you could and put it right on top of them, and lash it down, you know. But they were big, strong mules; good mules. Just like the government had in the Forest Service, they got good mules. But, Jesus Christ, that was an awful job.

Moving that camp?

Yeah.

Every day.

Not every day. No.

No, that's right, you'd move it —

Whenever you needed to. Whenever you got too far away to hike. It was all hiking. Fact, lately here, the last few years I was on here they had jet boats on this river. Christ, you didn't hike no place. Jump in one of them' go up river, down river, anywheres. Nothing to it! And them fellers kicking!

It must have been a whole day's proposition to break the camp down and move it and set it up.

Oh, yeah. You'd take a lunch that day, you see. Cook would have a lunch ready for you in the morning in a paper sack. You'd take that lunch that day. That's the only day you took a lunch, otherwise you'd come in. But that day you took a lunch. As time went on, you know and two or three moves and four or five moves, pretty soon there was only two or three more moves to make, you know. That's the way I looked at it.

Would it be maybe once a week or twice a week that you'd move that?

Depends on the water, --

How fast you're moving on the river?
WS: Yeah.

SS: Well, now like on the drive, when you worked a hundred days— would you be doing much work from day-to-day, or would it wind up being a— would you have one job— would you be set on a— the same job on the whole trip? How did they break 'em down? You'd be a peavey hand?

WS: Yeah. I never run boat. I'd just ding around a little but, but I never— I was always peavey. I don't know why I— I never cared to run boat. Well, there's too much responsibility. They swamped them boats, too, you know. Lose men, Jesus Christ! No, I never wanted nothing to do with that.

SS: Well, working on a peavey, did you have much— wouldn't it have been pretty tricky when you were breaking a jam?

WS: Yeah, you had to know your business. If you wanted to drift you had to know how to be able to take care of yourself, you know. If a chunk broke off or something and the boat couldn't get to you, why, it was up to you. The crew might scatter, you see. Might be a man here and a man there. Well, you can't get 'em all. There's somebody got to ride her out, you know. They'd usually pick up the ones that was least capable, you know, and to hell with the other son of a bitch, let him go. He'd make 'er. That's the way they figured it.

SS: Well, what would you do if you got cut adrift like that? You'd be on a log?

WS: Yeah.

SS: Just have to hang on to it?

WS: Well, you'd stay with it. It didn't seem to bother them guys much. I was the same way. If you went adrift, you went adrift. That was up to you then. Lot of 'em did it apurpose to get out of work. Sure,
ride around a bend or two and jump off. If it's a nice sunny day, lay down. Sure, I've done it myself, too. (Chuckles) I've done it myself a thousand times, not a thousand times, but I did it quite often. If I didn't feel like working. But, I don't know, I kind of liked to work. I'd stick around and bullshit, you know. (Laughs)

SS: Well, I think about having to-- about living in a camp of a hundred and fifty men for months at a time, I think about that-- I've never had to live that close, you know to men all the time, and get along. Used to short period of time, you know. It's a little like the army that way. All be in one place together all the time. I was thinking about that. You'd all have to be able to all get along pretty good or it would be pretty easy to get a lot of tension going.

WS: Well, nowa days, I believe there would be, but at that time there wasn't. But nowadays, I believe that people are different. I don't believe these young fellows could do that. I don't know why, or what makes me think that, but I don't believe they could. I think they'd be more fisticuffs going on and the likes of that, you know.

SS: Maybe they're more selfish, I don't know. It seems like if you're not as used to thinking about considering other people maybe. Maybe that part-- I don't know.

WS: I don't know. I couldn't say, but I've often thought about that. I believe if you put them in together for six months at a time -- Of course, they work every day. They get rid of their energy that way, you know. But otherwise, I don't know. I don't know how it would work out. Well, it'd be more or less as bad as being in prison, wouldn't it?

SS: Well, if a person is in prison, you can't go ride a log around--!

WS: Oh, no, but I mean-- be the same thing every day, every day, every day, you know. Of course, you might come home at night and you
can relax, play poker, wash clothes, and you're tired anyway, you know from working all day. First thing you know it's bedtime and down you go, see! Of course, I don't know, these young fellows now, I can't see 'em doing that. It seems like—well, they don't work as hard, when they do work. And it seems like they always want to go someplace, you know. Go. Go. Go. They've all got cars, you know.

SS: That's got to be part of it— to be back there and isolated for a long time, that'd drive guys crazy. I don't mind it. I've worked on lookouts and that kind of thing and been up there for months and I kind of enjoy it, but then you're kind of by yourself, too.

WS: Oh, Jesus, I don't like being alone. Do you?

SS: Well, you know, it's been a while since I have been. It's hard to know. Back for a while I didn't mind it. But I don't know how I'd feel about it now.

WS: Yeah, it's kind of hard to say.

SS: You weren't alone in the woods at all.

WS: Oh, Christ, there was always something going on. And at night there'd always be some new guys come in, you know. Guys that you knew and you'd get to talking to them and find out what's going on here and there and around the country, you know. Sure, I always used to look for who come around in the evening, you know, other guys. Stay with 'em. If they didn't go to work, you'd always slip 'em a little money you know. Ten or twenty or something you know to go on, see. You know. They'd pay you back maybe five years from then, or whenever they met you and had it, that's when you'd get it.

SS: But they wouldn't forget?

WS: Oh, no, no. No! Christ, no. If you ever met 'em and they had it you'd
get it. And if they didn't have it, you wouldn't, that's all there
was to it. Simple as that.

SS: What about these kind of guys that— I'm sure there must have been
some guys in the camp that were really jerks. You know, guys that
just--- there must have been a few guys that were just no good.

WS: Yeah. Sure.

SS: What about them guys. Did they get kicked out of camp?

WS: Oh, yeah. Them old-time pushes would get wise to one of them right
quick, you know. There was some of 'em, they would try 'em at dif-
ferent jobs, trying to find out something they could do, and even-
tually they'd either let 'em go or find something they could do.

Them old-time pushes was pretty fair. A lot of 'em were tough, you
know, too. Out, you know! But a lot of 'em were good. They were reasonable men. I knew a guy on Mica Creek, a push, you
could go and lean up against an old stump all summer and he wouldn't
fire you, but he wouldn't hire you back the next year. You could
stay there as long as you want to, but, of course, you had to do a
little something, but no matter how much it was, if you were work-
ing by the day, he'd leave you there. He wouldn't never tell you to
go. He might make it a little miserable sometimes for you, but he'd
never can you. But the next spring, of course, no use acomin' around
to him. He wouldn't hire you.

SS: So, he was a pretty nice guy?

WS: Oh, yes, sure.

SS: What was his name?

WS: Fife. Steve Fife. That was Mica Creek.

SS: What about a guy that got a--- Did some 'jacks get bad reputations
with the--- with other men? Did they get an idea that this guy was
no good? And to stay away from him?

WS: Yes, Yes. He was pretty much a loner then.

SS: I'd imagine.

WS: They wouldn't have anything to do with him. Didn't want to work with him. If they did they'd do something to drive him off the job, you know. Try to kill him, maybe. Can't tell.

SS: What would a guy do to get a reputation like that? Steal, or lie?

WS: Just no good. Don't pay your bills; pay any debts. Never give anybody any help, that needed it, you know. You were in a position to help him or something like that would put the injun sign on him.

SS: You know, I've been thinking about the Wobblies since we talked before and this is really interesting to me - that union. It just sounds like a good union. I like the sound of the way they were democratic. The way they really seemed to be out for the men instead of themselves.

WS: Yes, they were real good. The only reason the IWW's isn't in force today - it was revolutionary. You see, they believed in the overthrow of the government by force. That was right in the preamble of their constitution. (End of Side B)

SS: Trying to overthrow the government, but trying to improve conditions of the men.

WS: Yes, that's exactly what they did. But that was in their, as I say, in their preamble to their constitution: overthrow of the government, by force, if necessary. But, of course, it never came to that, but they had some awful hard battles, you know, the IWW's. In the mines, you know, and on the Coast, here. They were run down by practically everybody except those that belonged to 'em. All these civic organizations was against 'em, you know. American Legion was was dead on 'em. They lined right up in front of the hall there in Centralia
and opened fire on 'em! There was four or five killed that time. Of course, the Wobblies, they shot back, they had an arm, too, you know. There was some of 'em, I don't know whether there's any of 'em left in jail yet, or not. Wesley Everetts, he was one of the last ones. They were all tried for murder. Five of 'em I think there was that time. But the last stand the IWW made was right here in this country; '36, that was Diane Everetts.

SS: What happened that time? Did they get very far?

WS: No. Well, the company wanted 'em out. They wanted to break the strike, which they eventually did. They got a bunch of gunmen, you know and started the shooting works, you see. They killed three that time. That night. They tried those guys that-- they only got two hundred and fifty dollar fine. Eight or nine of 'em.

SS: Where did this happen?

WS: Well, the shooting happened up here near Pond, just out of Pierce. We were coming off the picket line. I was in the bunch. There was about twenty-four of us in the truck, I think, an old flatbed with stake rack. And it was just about dusk, they were up on the sidehill, you know; nine of 'em, I think there was, nine rifles in the bunch, you know. And they just started blasting, you see. Just indiscriminately, you know.

SS: Into the back of the truck?

WS: Yeah. I baled out and went to Missoula. (Chuckles) They shot through the windshield first. Stopped the truck, you know. But the law come, the state troopers, you See Pierce was under martial law then. The troopers was-- I don't know how they happened to get there. They must have been planted or something around there, because they come right now; eight or nine of 'em. They broke it up. And they
pinched quite a bunch. It was dark. I hid out. I didn't want to go back to Pierce. I knew I'd get pinched. So I started hiking come daylight the next morning. I was going to Missoula. I made it to Missoula. I had maybe a hundred dollars in my pocket and a ranger picked me up that was going in the general direction, you see. The second day he picked me up. He had an old pickup of some kind. He knew right where I come from and everything. The pickup was parked along this old— just like an old skidding trail, it was— and I come along. I didn't go by it, I stopped and waited, you see. I knew there was someone around there. I see the sign on the— US Forest Service, so he come pretty quick. He said, "How's everything in Pierce?" I was a hundred and fifty miles from Pierce then! I said, "Alright, I guess." So he said, "You going to Missoula?" I said, "Yes." So I jumped in with him. And we got to talking. He give me a couple of sandwiches, and he let me off in Missoula. Really, he knew; I told him where I was from and everything. I knew that he knew it, "Sure, I come from Pierce." Well, we had a hall in Missoula then, the IWW. Or, I didn't go there when I first got to town, I stayed a day, I think it was, and then I went down to the hall. They knew I was in town. I went down. You know how the word gets around, grapevine business and one thing and another. Someone had seen me, of course. I knew a few around there, not too many. It was a long time since I'd been there. But I went down to the hall and got to BSing with some of them guys. They told me the FBI was around there.

SS: Pierce or Missoula?

WS: Missoula. So, the next day I got picked up. I was in a bar. I was sober, but I was having a drink or two and this guy— I looked in the mirror— was watching me, you know. And everytime I looked
he was watching me. He was standing back next to the wall. I figured I'm going back and ask him what the hell he sees about me that looks so funny. I turned to go back and he met me then, you know. Showed me the business; FBI. Took me down to the sheriff's office and I stayed that night there and he brought me back to Orofino. Didn't take me to Pierce, took me to Orofino jail. The rest of our crew was in there, you see. Seven or eight of 'em, I guess. So that jail filled up so they brought me down here.

SS: Lewiston?
WS: Yeah.
SS: What did they hold you for?
WS: Inciting a riot. That was the charge.
SS: Was that supposed to be because you encouraged those thugs to shoot the guys in the pickup truck?
WS: I don't know. I don't know how you could incite a riot out in the woods! Well, of course, I didn't contest it. We got a lawyer from Spokane. I got eleven months. A year.
SS: Did you serve it?
WS: Yeah. Right here.
SS: In town? What about the other guys? Them, too?
WS: Well, yeah. They got a few months—Let's see, who was sheriff then? Sure. Dent. Oh, yes, I was a trustee. I used to go out, get half drunk, go back again. But I served about eleven months, I think it was. Then when I got out, of course, they were all back working and they'd called the strike off long before that. Oh, they called the strike off in August, I think. That's just a few days after the shooting match. They had to, you know, they was broke anyway. But the company did clean up a lot of things, during the strike and afterwards, see. Well, we never had sheets on our beds before.
They put sheets on.

SS: This was in '36?

WS: Yeah. Every week you could get sheets, or twice a week, if you wanted 'em. It made a difference. But I didn't go back to work here for five years.

SS: What did you do?

WS: Well, I went to the Coast; California, Montana, all over. But I was blackballed on the Coast, same as here, you know. I'd work about ten days and they'd get word, you see. Call me in-- well, I'd know what it was. So I went down to Crater Lake, I knew a guy down there, he was running camp and it was getting along towards Christmas time and I thought, "By God, I'm going to make a Christmas stake somewhere, so I'll go there." So I went there. His name was Gaffney. He used to be superintendent for the Rutledge, that's how I knew him, you see. He was running a camp there. So I went in there, went right to work. I'd been there about ten days when the clerk came in one night and he says, "Mr. Gaffney wants to see you over at his house." He lived in a house. He was a married man, you see. So, I didn't go over. I knew what it was, you know. So I just packed my sack and went to bed. The next morning, why, the clerk come in again, says, "You didn't go over to see Mr. Gaffney?" I said, "No." "Well, he wants to see you." I said, "I know what he wants." So he came in the bunkhouse after the crew left, and told me, "I gotta let you go."

And he showed me the list; there was about a hundred names on it. That's the only time I ever seen that list. I was about the fourth or fifth name I think on it. But they got new labor laws in then, about discrimination and all this and that. I come over here to Orofino and was skidding poles for Charlie Clark-- he lives over
in your country. Palouse Country, it is. He's in Spokane now, he's about ninety years old. I heard about him the other day. I was up there to skid poles for him on Orofino Creek, and this Nelson, they had an office there, you know, personnel office where they hired. And this Nelson, he was the hiring agent, and I was in the City Club and he come in there, and he looked all around him and tapped on the window, and I went out. He said, "Do you want to go to work?" I said, "Where at?" I knew him, you see. He used to be postmaster in Headquarters. He's a graduate of Moscow, up here. I said, "Yeah." He said, "Go up to town." I said, "Alright." So I went up the next day. That was in '41. And I left in '36; just five years.

SS: And you didn't get canned?

WS: Oh, no. I set right in again solid and I've been there ever since, You see, I didn't go any place after that.

SS: Well, did you lead the '36 strike?

WS: Oh, no.

SS: Is that why they put you up so high on the list?

WS: No. No, I was an active member, is what I was. Just a member. I never held no position or nothing you know what I mean: I was never on a strike committee. I was just a member. But I happened to get involved, you see at certain times. Certain things happened, I happened to be there. Like that shooting match, see. Ordinarily if it had happened at any other time, I wouldn't have been there. And then running away, you see, and all that I guess added up, anyway.

SS: Well, when the '36 strikes started did (it) come from out of Spokane? Or did it start from around here?

WS: No. It started here.

SS: Was it from meeting and guys deciding to do it?
WS: Yes. You see, the IWW is different from the IWA or the CIO or something like that, you know. If there was enough here for a meeting, say five or seven or whatever it was, you could hold a meeting here, right in the camp, you see and decide on what to do there with that particular camp. You didn't have to send to no executive branch or international or place, you could act on the job. And that's what happened here. Individual camps and then they just all come together, you know and elected a general strike committee and set a date and presented our demands and they were turned down, of course and the strike was on. That's the way that happened.

SS: Was this '36 strike then the whole thing just Clearwater Timber?

WS: No, it was general.

SS: Potlatch's over North Idaho and Eastern Washington?

WS: Yes, Winton, and Diamond and Long Lake and all of 'em. The whole works. And that was it. It lasted two months. And the companies, they had to shut these mills down, you know.

SS: In Lewiston?

WS: There was no logs. And the mill wasn't out, you see, the mill didn't belong to us.

SS: The woods? They couldn't get no logs down to the mill?

WS: Yes, no logs. The millpond was empty. And they wanted to start that mill, you see. It was affecting too many people. So that's the cause of the shooting. See, they started this bullet throwing deal, you know, in order to get the law in and break it, you see, is what happened and what they wanted. They don't care much for human like, you know in a case of that kind.

SS: Not if it's going to get in the way of profits.

SS: Well, the men that did the shooting—were they Potlatch men?
WS: Yeah. They were working for Fromos, most of 'em.
SS: For who?
WS: Frank Fromos. He was a big, big gyp for the Potlatch.
SS: What about the men that were killed? Did you know 'em pretty well?
WS: I knew 'em just as well as I knew myself. Yeah. One of 'em was paralyzed, he didn't die right away, he died in the hospital in Orofino. The other two died, in a matter of days, three.
SS: Do you remember these guys, who they were, their names?
WS: Old Mike's the only one I can remember. I can't remember the rest of them.
SS: County Mike?
WS: Old Country Mike.
WS: Yeah. But it's the only way you could get 'er agoin', because we had no money, you know. The organization was broke, you know. But there was money coming in all the time from— a lot of it anonymous, you know. A hundred dollars, two hundred dollars and so on, you. There was quite a bit of it, enough to keep the thing going. We had to eat, you know. And, of course, a lot of 'em pulled out, you know. See, the Coast wasn't on strike. after the strike was six weeks old or so, a lot of these guys pulled out, went to the coast, went to work. Which was the only thing they could do. But we still kept a picket line on here, you know. And the railroad company, the employees, they recognized our picket lines, they wouldn't cross it.
SS: Were many loggers crossing the picket line around here?
WS: No.
SS: They weren't crossing it either? They'd respect it.
WS: No there wasn't a Goddam wheel turning. No.

SS: Do you remember the demands? I am sure that sheets would have been one of them. One of the demands. Right? The sheets.

WS: Yes. Oh, the camps were filthy then.

SS: That's funny, I thought they-- You know they like to say they cleaned 'em up after 1917.

WS: They did. But, outfit wasn't started then, you know. This Potlatch, it didn't start until '26, '25.

SS: So these camps down here never--

WS: Well, they started out good. Not sheets, but good chuck, good camps and everything. But they just seemed to deteriorate. Everything went to hell, you know. Then they would build an old rag camp for you to sleep in. First thing you know it was full of holes and everything and no floors. Some of the bunkhouses right on the ground. And double bunks, you know. They'd settle down and the springs would be on the ground on the lower bunks, unless you shimmed up under 'em. Oh, it was awful. Yeah, there was a few concessions anyway. Not directly to us, but that was the result.

SS: Could the-- Could the IWW's guys fight back? Was there anything that they could do besides just run a picket line?

WS: That's all. The law was not with you.

SS: Sure.

WS: They were strictly against you. It ain't like now-- These guys on strike now, they got certain law protection in lots of cases. And sometimes they go beyond that, too; get in trouble.

SS: I guess maybe partly because they don't think of-- like the Wobblies they thought they were threatening worse than they were. These unions these days are pussy cats, you know. They're not about to
really break things up.

WS: Oh, no. Once in a while— like when they were reorganizing the CIO, they got rough. The strike for Ford Motor Company, they had all kinds of gunmen hired for them. Special police.

SS: Yes. Well they kicked a bunch of— they kicked some of them unions out when they— it was going on. And some of the better ones, too. The Longshoremen. The West Coast Longshoremen kicked out. You know the philosophy— the revolutionary philosophy in overthrowing the government— what was it that the Wobblies figured would be the new— I mean, what would take its place?

WS: Well, I can't explain that to you. I used to have an idea what they meant.

SS: I was sort of figuring it would be some kind of workers control of—

WS: Well, yes. Like the different industries, you know, they were an industrial organization, the IWW. They have a head for the automobile industry, one for the lumber industry and a head for transportation, and they'd all centralize in that— then they'd create a government that would function over all. I think that's the way it worked out. I can't think of any other way.

SS: So that the union would run the industry.

WS: Yeah, that's right.

SS: You know, there's an old-timer Potlatch in a sawmill town you know, milltown, that I talked to— it's funny, 'cause he was telling me how in the 1917 strike how the company— all the propaganda that they laid down, all the propaganda about how bad the Bolsheviks and bomb throwers were. And he said to me, "We believed that stuff." And he said, "That at some point, maybe a couple of years," he said, "I figured out just what they were doing." You know what the company would do and what the newspapers were doing, what the lawmen
were doing. Just how we'd been had. They had given us a whole line of bullshit all along. And he said, "It just taught me that you can't believe what you read in the newspapers."

I guess those guys in the sawmills and in the milltowns were--the company kind of controlled them pretty well.

WS: Oh, yeah. The sawmills, they were always apart from the woods until now. Now they're in with the woods. They all belong to the IWA. But that's what I argued, in this strike in '47, you know. I argued--

You see, the mill is what put us out on the strike in '47. They went on strike; the mill. And that's what put us out. I argued to keep the mill out of our business, you know. 'Course, they couldn't because they all belonged to the same organization. Only different locals, you know. Our local's at Pierce and their's is down here at Clarkston. I think that's where the mill local is. So they finally went out first, you see, ahead of ours. Three or four days. So we had to go. You see the mill went to work, that was here long before we did. And the mill was right in behind our picket lines trying to organize those that were working at the time. Can you imagine that? Oh, it was a mixed up, Goddam, bolixed up affair. Potlatch Rose, they called her around here stumping around the street and talking in parks and everyplace. You know she was a woman. She was company hired, of course. She was a good talker. Oh she had a line of shit. She'd get an audience spellbound listening to her, you know.

SS: Was she good looking?

WS: Sure. Hell, yes! Well dressed. (Laughter) I had to laugh, I thought to myself, "You Goddamned old son of a bitch, you're alright, too!" I heard her talk. I was in the mill. A bunch of us came down there one time. This picket line at the mill wasn't functioning very
good, so they wanted some of us to come down, so we come down here. And she was out there and she talked right there. Why, Jesus Christ she could make you believe the Goddam river was running the other way! (Chuckles) Yeah, I liked her, I thought she was alright, you know. She didn't believe it; she couldn't. She sure boosted that old Potlatch! (Laughter)

SS: It sounds like they were pretty crafty in knowing how to try —

WS: Ohhhhh! Jesus Christ, some of them personnel managers, you know, then they're pretty smooth operators. And, they got their publicity men, This Beardsmore, that attorney. you know. Did you know him?

SS: No. I've heard about him.

WS: He was great. Yeah. I talked to him. We struck on the river here at different times, you know. Five times, I think we struck on this river. Won every time. Every time, we won. Strike for a dollar, you know. Something like that, a dollar a day. Get 'er every time! Might have to hang up a couple of days, or something like that. But Beardsmore always come up.

SS: Would this be during the drive?

WS: Yeah. Mutiny Bar, we struck there three times.

SS: Mutiny Bar? (Chuckles)

WS: Yeah, that's right up here. Oh, it's a rock bound son of a bitch of a place. It's above Arrow Junction a ways. Jesus! it's an awful place. Everybody'd be tired and half pissed off, and somebody'd quit or something and someone'd say, "Let's go for four bits or a dollar? It's a good chance." So we'd stack arms, get 'er, you see, right away; next day. Some of them bigwigs'd come up from the mill, "Go ahead." That's all there is to it. But it's easy to win on a drive. I've never seen a driving crew lose yet. No. I've been on a lot of strikes on drives, you know. But I never did see one lose.
Would these be—you wouldn't go through the union for that, would you? I mean, that'd just be a bunch of guys.

Well, this is a wildcatter here, yeah.

What was the union? Was that CIO then?

Yeah. The last time we struck.

I guess that's kind of a deal, if you strike when you've got the cards in there, you can win.

That was the only way. That was the Wobbly theory, "Strike when the iron's hot." But, by Jesus—well, this last time, of course,"We got a contract. We got a contract." I told 'em "To hell with the contract!" I said,"I've drove on this Goddam river for three dollars a day, and ten dollars a day and fifteen dollars a day," and I said, "my labor's worth twenty dollars a day now, before I go another Goddamn inch!" Yeah, you could always win on a drive, but them camps, oh, Jesus, they'd always have a big supply of logs out here every time we struck, you know. By the time they were used up we were starved out. Ready to go. See how that works.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, July 7, 1976